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COUNTRY MUSIC™



4 Letters

All kinds of reactions to Ricky Van Shelton in our last issue, plus readers have the last word on Alabama, Travis Tritt, Cowboy Copas, Eddy Arnold, Asleep at the Wheel and more.

17 People

The Opry goes to Houston, and George Strait goes Number One. Rosanne Cash turns producer, and The Dirt Band turns to stone. Hank Jr. makes a vow, and Randy Travis makes music with a bunch of superstars. Also a CMM Update on William Lee Golden, an industry profile of CBS's Joe Casey, and a sad farewell to original Statler Brother Lew DeWitt.

by Hazel Smith

28 20 Questions with Sawyer Brown

A couple of firsts for this group that has been together for ten years—their soon-to-be-released *Greatest Hits* collection and their debut in *Country Music Magazine*. Michael talks to bandleader Mark Miller.

by Michael Bane

30 Reba McEntire Comes of Age

There's something different about Reba these days. Gone is the naive cowgirl in bluejeans and leather skirts singing traditional country music. The new Reba is a working mother with a new husband. She listens to market research and has a new look onstage.

by Bob Allen

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Country radio's fair-haired boy reached stardom in record time. Who is this guy? Get the photos and the facts.

40 Nashville Catches On to The Kentucky HeadHunters

The Kentucky HeadHunters have been playing their brand of country music for local audiences for more than twenty years. After almost giving up on national success, the band scored in a big way. Funny thing is, they say they're not doing anything different.

by Bob Allen

44 Still Conway After All These Years

Conway just celebrated his 25th year in country music and has no intention of slowing down. In fact, he says he's looking forward to dropping other activities in order to give his music *more* attention.

by Bob Allen

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There's quite a line-up this time around. Second albums by Garth Brooks, Suzy Bogguss and Shelby Lynne come up for consideration as well as new releases by George Jones, Merle Haggard, Rosanne Cash and Reba McEntire. Also check out Gary Stewart, Barry and Holly Tashian and more.

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by Rich Kienzle

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by Rich Kienzle

COVER PHOTO BY PAUL ELLEDGE

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WILLIE NELSON RIDES ON



As a member of the extended Highwaymen tour, Willie Nelson has gotten closer to his fans than ever. Maybe that's why Willie set out to make **Born For Trouble** a fan-pleasing, back-to-basics album. Judging by the first single, "Ain't Necessarily So," it sounds like he's succeeded.

Contributing songs to the new album are some of today's best



Troy Seals, and the all-time great Hank Cochran.

songwriters, including Beth Nielsen Chapman (writer of Willie's recent #1 hit, "Nothing I Can Do About It Now"),

WILLIE NELSON,
BORN FOR TROUBLE.
ON COLUMBIA



SHENANDOAH

Goes That Extra Mile

A lot has happened in the two short years since Shenandoah first stepped into the Muscle Shoals, Alabama, studio to record their second album, "The Road Not Taken." Shenandoah won a TNN People's Choice Award as "Favorite Newcomer." A radio industry trade publication named Shenandoah "Group Of The Year." And most impressive of all, "Next To You, Next To Me," the first single from **Extra Mile**, recently became their fourth #1 smash.



Next up from Shenandoah is the new single, "Ghost In This House," and, undoubtedly, more awards and even greater success.

SHENANDOAH, **EXTRA MILE.**
ON COLUMBIA

TWO-SINGLES-OLD DOUG STONE IS ALREADY A STAR



Newcomer Doug Stone sounds like he's been around for ages. And on the basis of his first two singles, everybody's predicting he will be.

His debut hit, "I'd Be Better Off (In A Pine Box)," was immediately followed by the chart-topping "Fourteen Minutes Old."

Now with his third single about to break ("These Lips Don't Know How To Say Goodbye"), and a debut album that's being hailed as one of the best of the year, Doug Stone's future appears solid as a rock.



DOUG STONE, DOUG STONE.
ON EPIC.

musicland
WE GOT WHAT'S HOT.
Sam Goody
GOODY GOT IT!

Letters

Suspicious Confirmed

Thank you for confirming my suspicions about Ricky Van Shelton in your September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. For this country music fan, his obnoxious personality has destroyed any appreciation I had for his talent! Go jump in a lake, Ricky, and cool yourself off!

Vive DeNunzio
Goleta, California

Not Convinced

I just received the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*, and your articles are as good as ever—thank you! So Ricky Van Shelton is “convincing”? I am not “convinced.”

I am particularly disappointed at his flip attitude about being interviewed for a magazine that is read by so many, including his fans. It seems that he didn't care what your readers would think after reading how inconsiderate he was to Patrick Carr or those strange (and unflattering) comments he made about his brother and his wife. He doesn't seem too grateful for all the free publicity that magazines such as yours give to him. He seemed to think that this interview was a big joke, surrounded by his entourage so he wouldn't be called upon to talk about himself. I wouldn't hold my breath for Ricky Van to answer your 20 Questions in the near future.

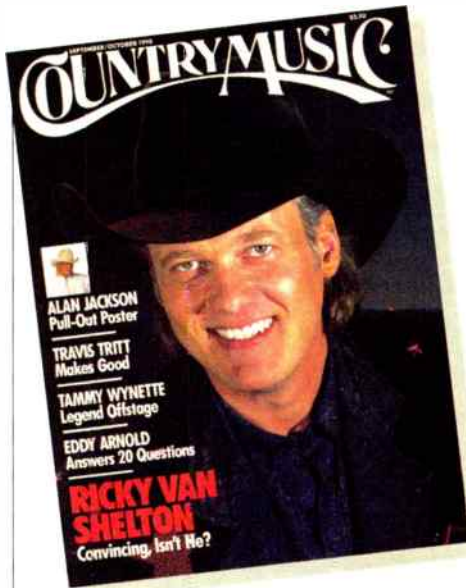
Marcia Flick
San Mateo, California

Personal Attack on Ricky

Never in my life (and I read a lot besides *Country Music*) have I read an article like the one on Ricky Van Shelton by Patrick Carr in the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*! It should have been titled “An Interviewer's Gripes,” done on a bad day with someone he obviously disliked personally before he started the piece. Halfway through the article, I went back to see who was writing this stuff.

I like many different artists including Ricky Van Shelton, but I am surely not a “teeny-bopper” fan in love with him. I am 62 years old and simply like good country music. People like me, just interested in the stars' lives and personalities, sure don't buy your magazine because they want Patrick Carr's personal opinions.

Mary Alice Jensen
Groton, South Dakota



Infuriated over Shelton Article

I am writing concerning Patrick Carr's article on Ricky Van Shelton in the September/October 1990 issue. I have never been so infuriated at a journalist in my life! I will give him a little credit for complimenting Ricky's voice and the way he delivers his songs. But the rest of the article is garbage. He makes Ricky sound like a brainless, conceited snob and he is none of the above.

A local disc jockey had an interview with Ricky Van Shelton and it was spectacular! He knew how to treat Ricky, and open him up to answer questions. I believe Mr. Carr failed in this area, and the article proved it. Yvonne C. Miller
Chenango Forks, New York

Downhill Interview with Ricky

Disappointing doesn't begin to explain my feelings regarding Patrick Carr's article about Ricky Van Shelton in the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. It started out good and steadily went downhill.

Has Mr. Carr thought that an interview before a performance might be better than one after a show? But then again, maybe original questions could have been asked of Ricky to bring out detailed answers. Too bad Mr. Carr didn't build on the fact that Ricky is very convincing, and not just to the ladies.

The article may have been bad, but the pictures were good, and definitely worth a sigh or two.

Ranona Wulff
Des Moines, Iowa

Positive Words for Alabama

What a wonderful surprise to find my favorite group, Alabama, on the cover of your July/August issue. What a surprise, also, to finally hear some positive things about them from Bob Allen.

I've had the pleasure of meeting all four members of this great group, and they are truly the nicest people you'd ever want to meet. Their sincerity and genuine love for their fans show in every performance. There is no doubt, once you've had the opportunity to see them in concert, why they were named Artist of the Decade, and why they continue to be nominated every year for Entertainer of the Year. To Mr. Allen they may be on their way back, but for some of us, they never left.

Debra Berkey
Alexandria, Virginia

Three Hunks of Country Music

I was overjoyed to receive the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. You keep giving your subscribers exactly what we keep asking for.

When I saw Alan Jackson's centerfold, the article on Ricky Van Shelton and Travis Tritt to boot, I couldn't believe that you had given us all three “hunks” of country music all in one issue. Thanks! I enjoyed each and every page. Now let's see an article on our newest sweetie of country music, whom I was able to meet, the talented Garth Brooks.

Sheila Kenaston
Fresno, California

Stay tuned.—Ed.

Compelled to Write in About Eddy Arnold

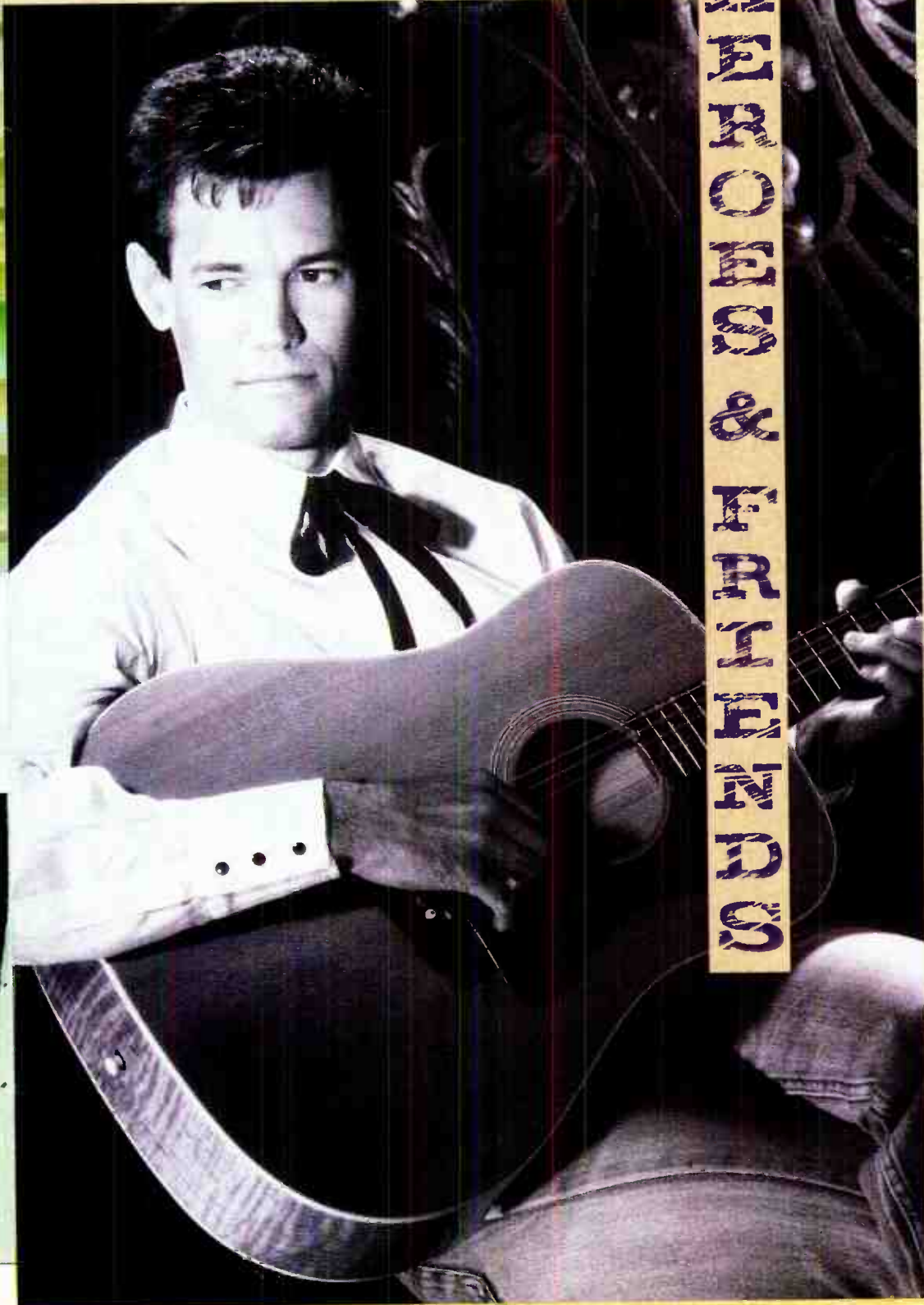
This is the first time we have ever written to *Country Music Magazine*, but we wanted you to know how much we enjoyed and appreciated the article on Eddy Arnold in 20 Questions in the September/October issue. We have always loved his music, and it is so good to hear some news on him. We would enjoy hearing about some of the other old-timers in country music.

Carl and Jan Mench
Pea Ridge, Arkansas

Thanks Be for Tritt

Travis Tritt is “Somebody”! My thanks for such a great article on him in your September/October issue; and yes, he is going to be “big.” Travis is a very good

RANDY TRAVIS



HEROES & FRIENDS

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Nancy Webb caught up with Travis Tritt.

friend of mine, as well as his band, Country Club. He is a great artist and a super person who is so proud and thankful for his rising stardom. The future is very bright for Travis with the door wide open for much more success!

Nancy Webb
Monroe, Louisiana

The Facts on Tritt

Despite the overall excellence of Patrick Carr's article, "Introducing Travis Tritt," I'm afraid there are several factual errors which must be corrected.

First, Danny Davenport—the Atlanta-based Warner Brothers promotion man who discovered Travis and badgered the record company until they finally agreed to sign him—is still very much involved in Travis's career and has played a significant role in his success during the year.

Secondly, when Warner Brothers brought Travis to me in July 1989, he was already divorced from Jodi. More importantly, in no way did Warner Brothers "push her out of the picture." They did tell Travis he should seek the very best professional manager, agent, publicist, etc. he could find, but they never suggested his wife (or former wife) should be excluded.

Finally, Warner Brothers has been completely supportive of Travis's music and his career. Certainly, they have suggested to him which songs they felt were most likely to get airplay, but they have never prevented him from putting anything he's felt passionate about on his albums or in his act. From the very start the Warner Brothers promotion department has championed Travis throughout the company and to country radio. And from the earliest glimmerings of success the rest of the staff at Warner Brothers has been absolutely fabulous in their support of this artist.

These are the facts, irrespective of how Patrick Carr interpreted Travis's comments.

Ken Kragen
Kragen Productions
Los Angeles, California

We are eager to correct any factual errors in what we publish. The statements appearing in quotation marks, however, were made by Travis Tritt and were accurately reported in context by Patrick Carr.—Ed.

COUNTRY MUSIC

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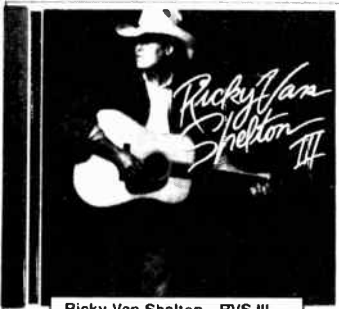
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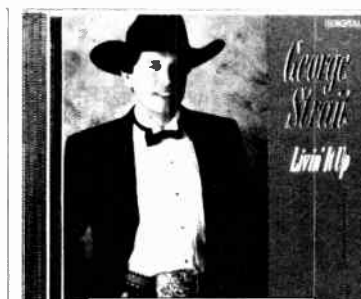
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LES TAYLOR That Old Desire 406-934			Christmas Favorites		<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Modern Rock
EDDIE RABBITT JERSEY BOY 402-909	AMY GRANT A Christmas Album 334-615		LARRY GATLIN & GATLIN BROS. BAND A Golden Family Christmas 319-107	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Black Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Easy Listening
M.C. HAMMER Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em 403-477	OAK RIDGE BOYS Christmas Again 356-659		BARBARA MANORELL Christmas At Our House 336-180	<input type="checkbox"/> Robert Plant	<input type="checkbox"/> Luther Vandross	<input type="checkbox"/> Ray Conniff
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Kenny Starr Speaks Up

Thanks for the insertion in the May/June Letters section of *Country Music Magazine*, "Seeking Information on Kenny Starr." I have kept busy in the music business. I've had two songs in two movies—*Search for the Titanic* and *The Villain*, and I appear on *The Ralph Emery Show* every week. They say it is the highest-rated locally-produced show in the nation. I'm not on a major label at this time but do have tapes available. If you have time, check out "Ode to Mrs. Johnson," my latest endeavor. My star-shaped record of "Blind Man in the Bleachers" was the first of its kind accepted in the Country Music Hall of Fame Library. Ken Starr

Nashville, Tennessee
Anyone interested in obtaining the words to Kenny's touching song, "Blind Man in the Bleachers," send us an SASE.—Ed.



Kenny Starr's busy in Nashville.

More Texas Playboys

In the March/April 1989 Letters section of *Country Music Magazine*, I read the letter written by Robert Reed wondering where the rest of The Texas Playboys are. I would like to tell you about one more Texas Playboy not mentioned, Joe Andrews. Joe is a wonderful musician and friend. He started his professional music career in 1946 at The Nite Owl Club in West Texas. The band he worked with was Bud Fletcher and His Texans, which included Willie and Bobbie Nelson and their father, Ira, George Uptmor, Coset Holland and Joe Andrews. Joe left the group in 1950 and joined Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys. He worked for Bob Wills for seven years. After leaving Wills, he formed his own band.

I know Joe has fans, but they don't know where to reach him, so here is his address: Joe Andrews, 185 Stanfield Drive, Mesquite, Texas 75181.

Dee Arnold
Dallas, Texas

Our Favorite—Garth Brooks

My sister-in-law, Dede, my twin sister, Julie, and I had the opportunity to speak with Garth Brooks on his bus for 1 1/2-hours while at the MaCoupin County Fair in Carlenville, Illinois. He is one of the sweetest, nicest guys we have ever



Jill Temple's sister-in-law, Dede, Garth Brooks, and twin sisters Jill and Julie—or Julie and Jill?—together in Illinois.

met! We've been following him all over the state of Illinois. This last time we gave him an Illinois sweatsuit with lettering on the back of the shirt that said "Garth We Love You!" On the butt of the matching sweatpants, it read "Dede, Jill & Julie." He's definitely our favorite in country music. He deserves a cover story!

Jill Temple
Sheridan, Illinois

For more on Garth, see record review in this issue.—Ed.

35 Years of Cash

Dear John,

Congratulations on your 35th year in country music! They say a picture is worth a thousand words. This picture of you and me taken in early 1960 in Omaha, Nebraska, is worth over a million words to me. It started a friendship and love of you and your music that has been an inspiration to my life. My mother, Della, and I cannot put into words how we feel about you and your family.

A dream of mine was fulfilled in 1987 when I got to introduce you not once but twice at concerts in Council Bluffs. Thanks for being my friend for all these years! May you have many, many more years in the business, and may I get to see you and listen to you as much. See you at a concert somewhere.

Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa



A very young Dennis Devine, 30 years ago, met a very young Johnny Cash. This year Cash celebrates his 35th year in country music. Dennis celebrates their long acquaintance.

Cash is a Miracle

After months of hospitalization, painful tests and daily medication that made him unable to play or attend pre-school, my four-year-old grandson, Travis McDowell, requested a prayer session with Johnny Cash. At that time, the prognosis for Travis was for up to two years of medicine and treatment to re-train a nerve with the possibility of a reoccurrence of a life-threatening attack. This would have meant immediate surgery to remove some intestines.

Johnny Cash held Travis tenderly and prayed. He dedicated "Peace in the Valley" to him during a concert and gave Travis a T-shirt "to grow into and be healthy." Then a miracle occurred. The next day Travis was healed. Was this from a little boy's deep love for and faith in his idol? I think Travis said it all—"I knew I'd be better today because God loves Johnny Cash."

Since then, Travis has never needed any treatment for his condition, and he is now seven—healthy and happy. I am Travis's grandmother, and I agree with thousands of others when I say, "There just aren't words to describe this very special man—Johnny Cash."

Simone Nugent
West Camp, New York



Ricky Van Shelton revealed in concert.

Hats Off to Ricky Van Shelton

On May 26th, I saw Ricky Van Shelton at J.R.'s Executive Inn, in Paducah, Kentucky. I had the seat everyone wants, front-row, center. When we were seated, I didn't think I'd be able to handle all the excitement. He stood three feet in front of me, and believe me, I took all the pictures and made all the requests I could. When I tell my male friends I went to the concert, they say, "He's a good singer, but he's bald. Why do you like him?" Well, here is a photo proving Ricky is not bald and is just as sexy with his hat off.

Tabetha Mamula
Dyersburg, Tennessee

New Light on Waylon Review

Bob Millard did a "fair" job of reviewing Waylon Jennings's album, *The Eagle*, in Record Reviews in the September/October issue.

Contrary to Mr. Millard's views, I love every song on the album. I do want to give a little insight into the title song,

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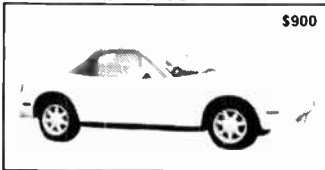
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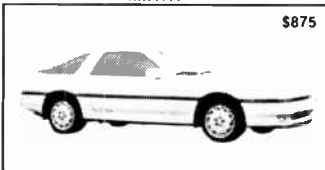
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"The Eagle." Mr. Millard refers to it as "boastful, the back-porch bravado of an overweight graybeard." At first I thought it was a tongue-in-cheek statement of some macho guy and thought it was fun. However, I heard Waylon explain on a TV talk show that the songwriters, Hank Cochran, Red Lane and Mack Vickery, wrote it about the U.S. Air Force and the bombing a few years ago in Libya. Doesn't that put a whole different light on it?

Jean Butler
Phoenix, Arizona

Reaching Our Troops

Associate Publisher Leonard Mendelson has been corresponding with airmen in the Persian Gulf. The answers to his letters have been wonderful. So far, he's heard from E/5 James Brannan, Master Sergeant Bob Taylor and Staff Sergeant Russell Hambrick, all career members of the Air Force and all confirmed country music fans. If you'd like to write to servicepeople in the Gulf, direct mail to Any Serviceperson, Operation Desert Shield, APO New York, New York 09848-0006.

Carter Ahead of Her Time

I just received the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*, and when I saw the Record Review section, I was impressed. Thank you, Bob Allen, for an honest and on-target review of Carlene Carter's album, *I Fell in Love*. I have said that Carlene was about ten years ahead of her time, and now the rest of the world has finally caught up to her. I just had the pleasure of seeing her show in Smyrna, Georgia, and all I can say is "Hang on to your hats and expect to have a good time!"

Carol Adams
Panama City, Florida

Wild about Wild Rose

Since Wild Rose is our favorite band, your review of their album, *Breaking New Ground*, in the July/August issue came as a real disappointment.

You were right when you said everything had to be "just perfect." They are such excellent, conscientious musicians that they really do try to put on a perfect performance every time. Here's hoping you'll enjoy their second album, *Straight and Narrow*, due out in October.

Carol and Lonzo Gadd
Burlington, Kentucky

P.S. Yes, Pamela Rose Gadd, the bonjo pickin' lead singer, is our daughter!

Close to The Wheel

My great appreciation goes to Bob Millard for the well-deserved recognition he granted Asleep at the Wheel in Record Reviews in the September/October

issue. Ray Benson is an intelligent, knowledgeable and dedicated musician, who enjoys what he is doing. Even more important, Ray is a very kind-hearted man who loves his family and is a great dad to Sammy and Aaron. How many dads take time to call home each day and talk to their little sons when they are on the road?

That is a very dedicated and deeply caring fatherly love, which we rarely see these days. I am very proud of Ray and thankful that he is my son-in-law.

Dorothy Carr
San Antonio, Texas

Is the Breast Collar Strait?

Just a short note to let you know two things. First, I really enjoy your magazine, especially articles on George Strait, Clint Black, Randy Travis and Ricky Van Shelton. Second, speaking of George Strait, as I was looking at the article on him in the March/April 1990 issue, a friend of mine noticed that the picture of George and his horse at the top of page 33 has been printed backwards. If you take a close look, you will see that the word "Strait" on the breast collar of the horse is backwards. Patty Jackson

Bapchule, Arizona

We love it! A year or so ago, readers caught us on Ricky Van Shelton's jacket. Now you're into horse collars. What's next?—Ed.



Country Music Magazine staffers George Fletcher and Robin Tesei caught up with Becky Hobbs in Forest Park, Queens. Most people in this picture are wearing the right shirt. Becky insisted on changing into hers!

Coverage for Becky Hobbs

I enjoy reading your magazine about our great country singers, and I love country all the way. I have a question for you, "Why haven't you mentioned anything about Becky Hobbs in your magazine—or have I missed it?" I don't think you're doing her justice. She's a great country singer and has written some really nice songs.

Marilyn Dumas
Oakville, Connecticut

We're on Becky's trail.—Ed.

Send Letters to the Editor to *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters.

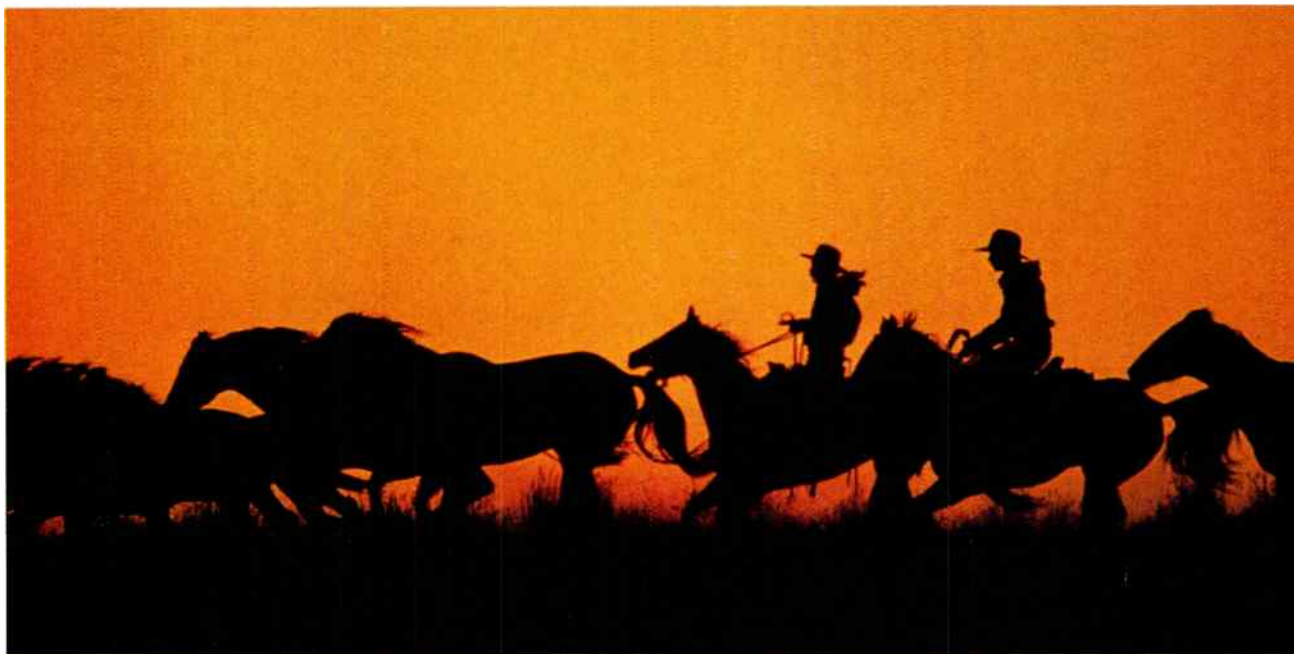
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People



The entire cast of the Opry show in Houston joined in to close the show with "I'll Fly Away." Yes, that is President Bush hugging Loretta Lynn in the left corner. Inset, Roy Acuff with one of the mandolins given to each head of state.

A LITTLE GOOD NEWS TODAY

Remember the **Anne Murray** hit that went, "What we need is a little good news today"? Well, friends, I got some, and headlines at that. If you watched TV, read the paper or magazines or listened to the radio at all, you'd have to know about the economic summit held in Houston this year. But whether you did or not, here's some inside information you may not have heard reported.

Since our beloved leader, **President George Bush**, has such excellent taste in music, he wanted to give all those foreign dignitaries a whiff of the best America has to offer. With the heads of seven nations on hand, including British Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher**, Canadian Prime Minister **Brian Mulroney**, Japanese Prime Minister **Toshiki Kaifu** and European Community President **Jacques Delors**, the Prez

and **Lady Barbara** allowed as how they wanted a Grand Ole Opry Show in Houston. No quicker said than done, your majesty. The invited Opry entourage included the First Lady of Country Comedy **Cousin Minnie Pearl**, the Designer of Bluegrass **Bill Monroe**, the King of Country Music **Roy Acuff** and the Coal Miner's Daughter **Loretta Lynn** along with **The Gatlin Brothers** and **Charley Pride**. They traveled first class on Air Force One. If that wasn't fine enough, each act and their band had an individual limo and driver at their disposal. Lo and behold, the interstate was closed to traffic until the stars reached their destination. The entertainers must have felt like they were looking at the six o'clock news as they schmoozed through the dining hall eating that Texas barbecue and watching there p's and q's. There was **Margaret Thatcher**. She's always got her face in the news, and there she was face to face

with **Loretta**. Shoot, I betcha **Loretta** called **Miss Meg** "honey" and asked her what fragrance she was wearing.

With political bellies filled with barbecue, the powers that be did get their bellies filled with good country music, too. A replica of the actual Opry stage was built in Nashville, dismantled and taken in pieces by truck to Houston. In addition, each head of state was given a satin Opry jacket and a Gibson mandolin, custom-made at the Gibson Guitar Corporation's plant in Bozeman, Montana. The event was broadcast on WSM in Nashville, the United States Information Agency's Worldnet television network and Voice of America Radio.

The Prez and Miz **Barbara** sang "I'll Fly Away" with the hillbillies and won my heart as they did. **Minnie Pearl** said that it was the most exciting time of her career, but not her life, thank you. I would hope that hubby **Henry** knows about the most exciting time of her life.

Reporter: *Hazel Smith*

Editor: *Rochelle Friedman*

People

CMA

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Artist and record company	Vince Gill/MCA Records
Album of the Year	<i>Pickin' on Nashville</i>
Artist and record company	Kentucky HeadHunters/PolyGram Records
Song of the Year	"Where've You Been"
Songwriters	Jon Vezner/Don Henry
Female Vocalist of the Year	Kathy Mattea
Male Vocalist of the Year	Clint Black
Vocal Group of the Year	Kentucky HeadHunters
Vocal Duo of the Year	The Judds
Vocal Event of the Year	Keith Whitley and Lorrie Morgan
Hall of Fame	Tennessee Ernie Ford
Horizon Award	Garth Brooks
Music Video of the Year	"The Dance"
Artist and director	Garth Brooks/John Lloyd Miller



Billy and Terry Smith

With a humble heart I realize that no longer are my family and myself the most important people in the lives of my boys. You, the buyers of records, the goers to concerts, joiners of fan clubs, writers to CMT and TNN, callers to radio, you the country music fans will become the most important people in Billy and Terry's lives. It's supposed to be that way. And I give them to you with my blessings. Country fans feed the hungry, nurse the sick and applaud the singers. I have no fear.

Lastly, if I might close by saying that I do take a lot of pride in the God-given talent that Billy and Terry are blessed with. I take more pride in the fact that they have grown up to be good, honest men who know and love country music and country music people. If either of those boys have an enemy in the world, I don't know it. Besides all that, aren't they just gorgeous?

HANK AIN'T SINGLE NO MORE

Sorry, darlings. Hank Williams Jr. ain't single no more. One of the most eligible bachelors in show biz, Hank said his vows with **Mary Jane Thomas** at a little white church in Wisdom, Montana. All the best to Hank and his bride. This is Hank's fourth go-round to the altar. He's practiced so much maybe he's got it right this time. Hope so. They'll honeymoon in Africa. They met in 1984.



Bride and groom—Mary Jane Thomas and Hank Jr.—to Africa they will go.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MY SONS, BILLY AND TERRY SMITH

Friends, this is by far the most important introduction of my entire life. From my heart to your house, let me introduce my sons, **Billy and Terry Smith**.

Through the years I've made you aware of **Randy, Patty and Clint**, and I've kept you abreast of **Waylon, Willie and Merle**. I've laughed at **Minnie Pearl's** jokes, cried when **Keith Whitley** died and every other emotion I've had, I've shared with you. Finding the right words to say now is most difficult. Lord knows, I would never hype you.

Billy and Terry's first Epic Records single and video is The Delmore Brothers classic, "Blues Stay Away From Me," done up in a 90's fashion that takes your feet dancing and your heart romancing and puts your mind on anything but the blues. Simply titled **Billy and Terry Smith**, their album was skedded for a fall release. As their mama and manager, I have a problem knowing where mama-ing and managing start and where they end and vice versa. So I won't go on about their incredible vocals or their outstanding choice of songs. I want to leave all that up to you. Once you hear my boys, please, just let me know if you think my pride in them is justified.

JETT WILLIAMS'S BOOK

Published September 17 to coincide with **Hank Williams Sr.'s** birthday, **Jett Williams's** book, *Ain't Nothin' as Sweet as My Baby*, written with **Pamela Thomas**, should be in stores by now. In a long-drawn-out court struggle that went all the way to the Supreme Court, Jett won the right to a share in **Hank Williams Sr.'s** estate. Now she's gone nationwide—to 23 cities—to publicize the book, appearing on TV and radio talk shows. While in Nashville, she signed copies of the 338-page book at Tower Records and Books. Also scheduled was an appearance by Jett and **The Drifting Cowboys** at the Texas State Society Ball in Washington, D.C., in October. The entire Texas Congressional contingent and **President and Mrs. Bush** were due to attend.

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People

STILL STONED

All you country fans are still stoned, so I understand. Well, it's okay. So am I. Once you been **Doug Stone**...d with "I'd Be Better Off in a Pine Box" and "Fourteen Minutes Old," you know what it means to be stoned. Don't you just love it?

BILLY JOE SELLS OUT 28 TIMES

Billy Joe Royal played 28 sold-out dates the first seven months of 1990. Congrats, Billy Joe.

DEAR AUNT JEAN

Yes, **Aunt Jean**, this is Hazel writing straight to you. And I am so proud of this big promotion your nephew, **Randy Goodman**, has. What I know, however, and you may not know is that Randy is largely responsible for the careers of superstars like **K.T. Oslin** and **Restless Heart** and **Lorrie Morgan**. See, Randy, **Joe Galante** and **Jack Weston** have a first-string team going over there at BMG/RCA. They made the late, great **Keith Whitley** a superstar, and they've made an overnight success out of **Clint Black**, whose name is on the lips and in the heart of every warm-blooded female country music fan on the planet. Yes, Aunt Jean, Randy is greatly loved and respected by me and all the acts on

FINAL BOW FOR LEW DEWITT: 1938-1990



Eight years ago, The Statler Brothers' tenor vocalist, Lew DeWitt, was forced to leave the group due to ill health. His struggle with Regional Enteritis, an incurable intestinal illness also known as Chron's Disease, made it impossible for him to continue working the road. His retirement was well-publicized at the time, as were his attempts to make a comeback as a solo artist. But DeWitt's intestinal problems, which at one point caused him to lose nearly 100 pounds, grew worse. He died August 15 at his home in Waynesboro, Virginia. He was 52.

DeWitt, Harold Reid and Phil Balsley first began singing together informally in the mid-1950's at the Lynhurst Methodist Church in Staunton, Virginia. DeWitt was there five years later when they formed the semi-professional gospel quartet, The Kingsmen, adding Harold's brother, Don. As everyone knows, the Statler name, taken from a tissue box, came later.

It was Lew who wrote the Grammy-winning 1965 hit, "Flowers on the Wall," that ode to loneliness that became the foursome's first hit—and a crossover smash as well. When Johnny Cash dominated the country music scene in the early 1970's, The Statlers took the stage as his opening act and appeared on his ABC television show. After leaving Cash, their careers truly took off. Lew was there through it all, from the Ole Roadhog to the CMA Awards and the numerous Gold and platinum albums.

His decision to leave the group was not an easy one, and after Jimmy Fortune replaced him, Lew seemed distant, even estranged, from his old partners. When The Statlers placed their handprints in Nashville's Star Walk for Grammy winners, DeWitt, the composer of "Flowers," wasn't even present. He made a few recordings for the now-defunct Compleat label and performed regionally with a group called The Star City Band. Last November he gave up even that activity. It's hard to imagine him gone.

—RICH KIENZLE

RCA. People like Alabama and Baillie and The Boys call him by his first name, and I, well, I just wish I was plenty years younger. That boy could not run fast enough to outrun me. Bless you, dear Aunt Jean. Keep braggin' on Randy and keep your music country.

WITH A FACE FRESH AS MORNING DEW

My pal, **Tony Brown**, got me in his office (hoooo) one day and played me a video of **Kelly Willis**. His dark, good-looking face broke into a smile when I nodded approval upon viewing the young lady. Since then there's been no looking back for MCA or Kelly. Her career is zooming. I was out at *Nashville Now* a few nights back when Kelly was on the show. The 21-year-old looks younger than her years, but when she opens her mouth, whooo. That chick has got some set of lungs. The Virginia-born lass is spending her time in Texas these days when she isn't on the road gigging. And she is gonna steal the hearts of all of us with her heartfelt songs and face fresh as morning dew.

10 YEARS

10 Years of Greatest Hits on Columbia by **Vern Gosdin** is so hot it might burn up my cassette player. I never tire of Vern's singing. These songs are better than they were the first time because my pal, **Bob Montgomery**, went in and re-recorded all of them. Songs like "If You're Gonna Do Me Wrong (Do It Right)" and "Slow Burning Memory"—need I say more? Just get you one, get alone and listen.

RVS THREE FOR THREE



For the shooting of the video of his third single, "I Meant Every Word He Said," from his album, *RVS III*, **Ricky Van Shelton** went to three locations in Nashville—first the Hermitage Hotel, then a pool hall on Franklin Road, then an old house in Nashville. Pictured during the shoot are the cast and crew of the video.

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People

PATTY, CLINT AND ALLEN SELL OUT

The Patty Loveless, Clint Black, Alan Jackson show at the Beacon Theatre sold out in a New York hour. Sometimes them yankees just go whole-hog and do something really right. It's wrong but sounds right-on to learn that scalpers were asking and getting a hundred and a half for Beacon tickets.

THE DRIVER IS CONWAY

Conway Twitty drives the cutest white Mercedes convertible with a blue top, and he drives us mature ladies crazy. So it takes more than a car to drive me crazy. It takes Conway.

GARTH BROOKS

I cannot say enough about Garth Brooks. He's a great singer/songwriter, but he is an even greater human being. Stardom has not altered Garth's personality. He's the same nice guy who left Oklahoma for the bright lights and big hats. When you meet him, you'd think you were talking to a regular guy, not a star. That's what I call stardom.

WHOO OH DUO

Producer extraordinaire Kyle Lehning, Randy Travis, Dan Seals and Baillie and The Boys gave me a "private hearing" of the long-awaited Travis duo

record. By the time you read this, the George Jones/Randy Travis single, "A Few Old Country Boys," will have raced up the charts and into your hearts as it chilled and thrilled. There's others just as good, or you ain't heard nothing yet. This record will probably sell zillions. No doubt it could be the record of the year. By the way, songwriter Troy Seals penned the little darling done by Travis and Jones.

WRONG IS RIGHT FOR WAYLON

We told you about Waylon Jennings's chart-climbing single and video, "Wrong," last issue. Well, the native of Littlefield, Texas, was recently honored in his home town with a street named in

JOSEPH EDWARD CASEY: *Linking radio and records*

Anybody who knows me, knows there is nobody I love more than Joe Casey. And, yes, I am prejudiced, but you will be too. Read on. Born in Atlanta, Joe attended the Southern College of Pharmacy; the only prescriptions he's written, however, have been for the wonderful world of country music radio. Joseph Edward Casey is the National Vice President/Country Radio/CBS and affiliated labels. Joe is a friend to radio, and he is a friend of mine. He is the man who gets your favorite star on your local station. Considering all the legendary stars Joe has worked with over the past 24 years he has been employed by CBS, I thought the fans would love to know, in his own words, the most rewarding experiences of his career. The following is what Joe Casey shared with me for you all to know.

"Early on, working day one with Tammy Wynette, having personally felt she'd be a giant. Watching her struggle and then explode beyond belief. Watching her run. Having the opportunity to work with Marty Robbins. I'd loved his music since high school...songs like 'El Paso'. Being a part of Ricky Skaggs' career. Hearing Ricky's first album, a wonderful piece of music. I remember once Ricky wanted to release a song as a single, and I didn't agree with him. Ricky went along with my choice, 'Crying My Heart Out Over You,' which turned out to be his first Number One record. Believing in Rodney Crowell. His first album was



not exciting, and we had a talk. His next album, *Diamonds & Dirt*, was exciting and was certified Gold, selling 500,000 copies.

"The opportunity to work with a legend like Lefty Frizzell," Joe continued. "Or a legend the caliber of Willie Nelson—such a professional and a gentleman. My god, the man can walk on anybody's stage and sing four hours worth of hits and all of them be his hits. Being in on the ground floor and believing in Ricky Van Shelton. Seeing the outcome. Being some part of the emergence of Mary Chapin Carpenter and Vern Gosdin. Watching them grow. Seeing Vern's album turn Gold. Promoting 'Behind Closed Doors' for Charlie Rich. What a

record." Joe's eyes would almost cloud over from time to time as he recalled all the memories. His forehead would wrinkle, he'd light a smoke, gesture, smile and close his eyes as he focused on yet another great CBS act that he helped to create.

"Johnny Cash. A song like 'A Boy Named Sue.' Unbelievable," Joe went on. "The album, *Folsom Prison Blues*. Do you know, Hazel, at one time, Johnny Cash accounted for 27% of all monies for all of CBS. Not just Nashville, for all the company." Joe paused. "I transferred from Atlanta to Nashville in 1975, from being Regional Promoter of Sales responsible for seven states to National Promoter of Sales and Promotion for the entire country. It was staggering and scary. There were so many great acts back then. People like Carl & Pearl Butler and Carl Smith. And now today, Doug Stone, who is going like gangbusters. It will be real interesting to see what tomorrow will bring for Doug."

Joe allowed as how he desires to be the best there is at what he does. His reputation is second to none in this Hillbilly Town. He's 100% company. CBS doesn't ever have to worry about Joe Casey's loyalty. His company, according to Joe, has a tremendous investment in trying to maintain a human approach to a fun business that happens to be a very serious business. Company decisions are not always popular with artists or employees. However, no one can deny

People

his honor. Waylon also wowed 'em in the Big Apple. Who is surprised? Not I, said the little red hen. I knew that rooster could out-crow anyone around this hillbilly town. Watch him spread his wings and fly. His brand new Epic album is titled *The Eagle*. Course you know that only a 747 flies higher than an eagle. Look for it.

EYE SAW

That handsome and talented **Steve Wariner**, that's who Eye saw dining at my favorite Japanese eatery, **Goten**. Course, I was dining with **Bill Johnson**, the mighty talented art director at CBS/Epic who does those wonderful record covers on your faves like

Rosanne Cash, Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton and George Jones.

Eye also saw **K.T. Oslin**, the 80's Ladies Lady at the Music Mill recording with two of my favorite people producing, **Jim Cotton** and **Joe Scaife**.

And Eye saw **Ricky Skaggs** at the Country Music Hall of Fame, where he donated his Fan Fair booth depicting a "Decade of Country Music" to the organization for the fans to view forever more. Ricky brought his trusty guitar along and sang a couple of tunes for the friends and neighbors who dropped by.

Furthermore, guess who Eye saw driving his jeep with the top down? The Hillbilly Rocker, **Marty Stuart**, that's who. He told me he loved me, but he always tells me that.

NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND PLAYING IN CEMENT

Isn't it just like little boys to play in cement? Let your neighbors pour a new driveway and see who puts their initials right in the cement. These boys put their hands in cement. Not to worry. This time it was at Starwalk in Fountain Square in downtown Nashville in honor of the two Grammys they won for *Will the Circle Be Unbroken II*. The Dirt Band's handprints join handprints and footprints of stars like **Dolly Parton, The Oak Ridge Boys, Alabama, Conway Twitty, Ricky Skaggs, Randy Travis, The Judds** and a whole passel of others so honored at this locale.

Joe's theory, which is if the company is successful, the artists are successful and vice versa. Success breeds success. Joe adds, "It's a fun business, but it's not a game." Joe is also loyal to his peers. His loyalty to Roy Wunsch is legendary. Joe speaks of Roy with the utmost respect always. Joe states, "Roy conducts present team business by allowing people to do their job, but is very supportive. Therefore, I look around and I see the best team in the music business. Hard-working, dedicated people. Bob Montgomery has made a tremendous contribution to A&R. Quality and production have increased ten-fold. He's made some outstanding signings (signing new artists such as Doug Stone). There's Mary Chapin Carpenter's cutting edge, Doug Stone's emergence. The entire A&R Department pitches in to get the job done. There's Kay Smith, who wanted to be in A&R for years, and she had done a great job...worked her rear end off. You see a guy like Roy Wunsch, who is the team captain, so to speak. Roy has the ability to pull or instill the best from someone. He's the kind of person you want to do your best for. He's so fair. Roy's smooth. I'm a bull in a china shop. So there is a balance between the two of us that works real good."

Joe smiled, "The fatality rate in National Promotion is extremely high. When a record doesn't happen, promotion is to blame. When it does happen, sometimes there is a thanks from the artist. It's like warfare. I don't sleep well. Success makes me feel good." I knew for a fact that another record label had offered Joe

four times his salary to come to work for them, and that he had refused the offer. I asked him about it. Joe didn't want to talk about the incident, but I insisted. Joe's reaction was, "The foundation of a successful company is predicated on hard work and loyalty. CBS has been good to me. And I, in turn, have been good to CBS. I've earned good money. I couldn't think of my life without CBS."

We hear all these stories about how someone was somewhere at the right time and that's why Randy Travis's or Ricky Van Shelton's career may have escalated faster than some other artist's. Is it talent, timing or luck? I wondered. "All three," Joe answered without flinching. He added, "I'd rather be lucky than good. Each component is as important as the other, but more important than all three, in my opinion, is the song. There's first the song, the talent, hard work, a certain amount of luck and the timing—which is very important." Joe doesn't admit to being tough, but he admits being a fighter. He does like to be respected, which he is. He would not talk about his taking care of his 81-year-old widowed mother, who resides in Atlanta. But I know that he does look after her. Not only does Joe talk with her daily and see that she has a car to drive, he also drives to Atlanta to visit with her every other weekend. He'll probably kill me for telling you that he purchased new hymn books for his mother's church. Once a local competitor in national promotion threatened early on in the year to kick Joe's sitting down place with Number Ones. That was not the cor-

rect thing to say to Mr. Casey. On December 31, Casey made a phone call to the person in question and simply said, "Seventeen for me, 12 for you," and hung up the phone. Yep, he's a fighter, but he's still got the best heart on Music Row.

Radio is ever changing. In the early days there weren't nearly as many stations as there are today. There was a more hands-on, personal touch. A man like Joe could build a solid relationship, like a two-way street, that would last for years. Today, with all the comings and goings of radio stations and their personnel, it's difficult to achieve the stability and maintain the support that once was possible. But Joe knows how to do it.

Update: When I originally wrote this piece on my friend, Joe Casey, every word was correct. Last issue the article wasn't published because of "lack of space." Now major changes have occurred at the CBS Nashville headquarters on Music Square East. Columbia and Epic have become separate entities. Mr. Casey is now National Radio Promotion Vice President for Columbia. His former compadre, Mr. Jack Lameier, is National Radio Promotion Vice President for Epic. Cindy Cunningham Selby is Epic's secondary person, and Nancy Richmond is Columbia's. Anyway, friends, it wasn't my fault that the article took so long to run. Besides, I know that all of you were disappointed that they left so much of me out of the magazine. If you were, just complain to the editors.—H.S.



Bobby Randall

Joe Smyth

Mark Miller

Jim Scholter

Gregg Hubbard

20 Questions with SAWYER BROWN

by Michael Bane

We first started paying attention to Sawyer Brown—Mark Miller, Gregg Hubbard, Bobby Randall, Jim Scholten and Joe Smyth—when they recorded one of our favorite songs, “Betty’s Bein’ Bad,” written by the inimitable Marshall Chapman. With lyrics like “Her boyfriend thought she was talkin’ jive! Til Betty came out with a .45/A .45’s quicker than 4-0-9/And Betty cleaned the

house for the very last time,” you just know this band is hot. After ten years together, Sawyer Brown is not only releasing their first Greatest Hits package. They’ve also become one of the top concert draws in the country, just behind Alabama, Hank Jr. and Reba McEntire. We caught up with band leader Mark Miller during a rare stop at home in Nashville, where we roused him from

bed and convinced him to answer 20 Questions.

1

Where are you guys right now?

Right now, we’re home in Nashville. We like to take a couple of days off a year, what the heck. But we’re used to it. We’ve done the road forever, man. The first year we were together, we did 293 dates. It hasn’t changed much, either.

2

Do you have a personal life at all?

I think so. I *hope* so, since I just got married in January. I call home a lot, and she works in L.A. So, thank God for the telephone.

3

Since you’re married now, that must mean a lot of disheartened female fans.

Oh, I don't know. I don't think it even fazes them.

4

You've got quite a reputation as a dancer on stage. Who do you think the best dancer in popular music is? Michael Jackson by far. Michael's just classic. I've been a Jackson Five fan since I was a little kid.

5

Did you always move around so much on stage?

Not really, although music has always made me want to move. The first week the band was together, I didn't move at all. I was afraid I was going to forget my words—forget moving! It was a pretty intense week. I just loosened up, got into the music. I'd flinch, and the audience would scream—I kinda got a kick out of it.

6

When did you learn to dance?

I don't really dance; it's just spastic movement, like Joe Cocker. At least, that's what the rest of the group keeps telling me. We just have a good time. We spend so much time on the road, on stage is when we've got to have our fun. Performing is the best part of 22 hours of agony—truck stop food, all-night driving, things like that.

7

Do you ever imagine a time when you're not on the road?

I think there'll come a time when we cut back, sure. Or maybe we'll be like The Grateful Dead, out there hammering every night. Really, I could see cutting back to 175 or 150 shows a year. I mean, that's what we do, perform. If people don't want to perform, then they should think of something else to do. Like, there was this time when we did a killing trip. In three days we got three or four hours of sleep, and we're griping and stuff. Then we drive by this place

that, I swear, looks like the place where the Joker got chemicalized, and there are guys coming out of there, off-shift. So we thought, we think we got it rough. Those guys working a 40-hour week got it rough.

8

Did you ever imagine Sawyer Brown would last ten years?

No. Never. In fact, we never thought about things like that. We never even thought about the *Greatest Hits* package until we had it in our hands. And we suddenly realized that it had an "s" after the "t." *Hits*, as in more than one. It's like, when you first sign a record deal, you just want to do a record. You don't even care if it's round. We were so excited about that first record. Then we were so excited about our first road tour, which was, by the way, to Corinth, Mississippi. This year, we're excited because we're going to Alaska on Thanksgiving. It's a place we've never been.

9

You still get excited over new places?

Heck, yes. We do a lot of sightseeing. In fact, we travel all night so we can make a day of wherever we are.

10

So what are your favorite places?

Missoula, Montana, is right up there at number one. Our favorite place. Salt Lake City. Any of the beaches.

11

Your fans actually bring signs to your concerts with the number of times they've seen Sawyer Brown. How did that get started?

Well, we started seeing all these same faces, show after show. I was amazed. I don't see how they can afford to do it. They sort of talk to you at a distance, or they'll just watch you, like they're doing research on musicians. Watch you walk, watch you eat.

Really respectful. So we were signing autographs after a show—we always sign autographs—and I saw a face I recognized. So I asked how many Sawyer Brown shows this fan had been to. She said, "Sixty."

12

Were you surprised?

Shocked is more like it! I immediately thought, "I hope I haven't worn the same clothes!" I mean, people bring up pictures, and I always hope I'm not wearing the same clothes. Now I throw my performing outfits away. I can't deal with the fear.

13

Tell me about how you hooked up with Marshall Chapman.

I met her the first week I was in town. Marshall came over when I was doing my first production deal. Here I was just a kid from Florida, and I was stunned. I'd never met a woman like that. Whoa!

14

She can also knock you over with her music.

She sure can. But that's what I liked about her music. It was unusual, and we're unusual. As soon as the beat starts, we want people to know that it's Sawyer Brown music. It took us a while to get to that point.

15

You took some hits before you felt like you were in control?

The business is the worst part of the business. You don't understand, and you know your public doesn't understand it. And when you complain about the business, it sounds like whining. The public thinks you're hired as an artist and the record company sells your records. They don't realize that you sign on as an artist, and then the record company tells you what to do. The company is just waiting for the first time your records don't sell quite

as many and then they're going to "help" you. Thanks.

16

Do you ever think that you're probably the most successful underground group in country music?

Every day. We kind of thrive off it. It used to bother us, you know, but not anymore. In fact, we prosper a lot better than people think we do. People come over to our houses and go, "Man." We just say, "Hey, we're hot in China."

17

If you're not careful, you're going to break out of the underground.

When tickets to our most recent show went on sale in Salt Lake City, we did 5,000 tickets in the first hour. We know guys with strings of Number One hits who'd love to open for us.

18

Have any of your albums really captured the energy of your stage shows?

The Boys are Back is close. "When Love Comes Calling" is a good representation on record of what we do on stage. We went to Muscle Shoals and demoed the cut—I hope no record company executive reads this—then we went in the studio to record for the album. We couldn't top the demo. We used every machine in town to clean up that track for the album!

19

How about the new record?

Yep. Out in January and called *Buick*. We had these two songs, "Superman's Daughter" and "My Baby Drives a Buick," that the fans have wanted on record for a long time.

20

You've been around ten years, and this is your first appearance in *Country Music*.

I'm sure it's strictly an oversight, man. The computer must have kept tossing our name out. ■





REBA McENTIRE

Comes Of Age

Reba's made a lot of changes in the past few years—in her personal life, her business and her music. Our writer finds the former rodeo rider with a new sound, a new look and a new life.

Remember Reba McEntire? Remember that spunky, fresh-faced, ex-barrel rider from rural Oklahoma who used to wear blue jeans and leather skirts? Who used to call herself "just plain old Reba" and belt out those old-fashioned Western swing or honky tonk tunes, tinged with fiddle and steel? The Reba who, for a while there, was one of the heroes of the country neo-traditionalist movement and a spokesperson for it?

These days, one can't help wondering where *that* Reba has gone. The 1990's seem to have ushered in a brand-new version, a woman who still goes by the first name of Reba and the last name of McEntire, but who, in almost every other respect, has been transformed. Musically and personally, Reba has come of age.

Some big changes ushered in this new Reba. Several years ago, she stepped out from under the wing of her now ex-hubby Charlie Battles, the rodeo champion who played such a major role in the early stages of her career. Since she and Battles parted, she has relocated from Oklahoma to Nashville, remarried and had a son. The lucky father and new "Mr." Reba McEntire is a pleasant, soft-spoken ex-sideman named Narvel Blackstock. The two first met when he joined her band a decade ago as a steel guitarist. Eventually—as Reba jokingly likes to tell it—she promoted him to bandleader, then road manager, then manager, before finally "demoting" him to husband.

Along the way, McEntire began flexing her muscles in other arenas as well, becoming not only her own co-producer but also co-chairman (along with Blackstock) of her own 45-employee-plus corporation and a pop singer to boot. Significantly, the rural rodeo image of old—the big, shiny "REBA" belt buckle, the sunburnt Oklahoma squint, the leather cowgirl skirts and the twin fiddle/steel guitar sound—is gone, most likely never to return. The "new" Reba (at least on stage) favors sequins, flowing gowns, big hair, carefully choreographed stage moves, flashy costume changes, blue lights and synthesizers. This girl has definitely moved uptown—and joined the jet set, too.

These days, in order to streamline her schedule, she and hubby Narvel commute back and forth between Nashville and her live shows in their own seven-seater, one-bathroom, Sabre Liner jet. That way they can be home in time to change **BY BOB ALLEN** Shelby's diapers when he wakes up in the

middle of the night and be in the office bright and early for ten o'clock meetings with lawyers and accountants.

"Now we can leave for a show like at 5:15 to 6:00 in the evening," Reba explains breezily, as if to suggest *everyone* ought to try it. "Then we go in and meet all the folks we need to meet, then do the show, then meet with the local fan club members. Then we fly back home. The latest we ever got back into Nashville was 4 A.M., and that was from Portland, Oregon."

Nowhere is McEntire's bold transition from Western swing queen to latter-day, pop-country songstress and contemporary businesswoman more apparent than on her new album, *Rumor Has It*. Mind you, *Rumor*—for which McEntire enlisted a new co-producer, Tony Brown—is a solid piece of work. But it's also a full-blown, unabashed pop album. Synthesizers and snazzy background vocals abound, and there's nary a fiddle or steel guitar to be heard. Even the soft-focus cover photo of a very chi-chi-looking Reba in an exotic hat and flowing scarf suggests she just stepped off a film set on the Riviera bound for Vegas or Hollywood. It's a long, long way indeed from the old dustbowl rodeo days.

In keeping with her busy schedule and the release of *Rumor Has It*, McEntire and her corporate entourage have set aside a "media" day during which she will make the rounds of *Crook & Chase* and the other country music "chat" TV shows and hold forth for various print journalists on her new look, her new sound and the new state of her life.

Outside, on Nashville's mean streets, it's a smoggy, foggy afternoon. But inside McEntire's extensive, modern, two-story corporate complex, situated in a West Nashville industrial neighborhood a couple of miles from Music Row, the air conditioning is delightfully cool. The chairperson of the board herself, who's been overseeing business matters all morning, settles restlessly into a chair in her own surprisingly modest office on the second floor.

In person, McEntire still seems to be "just plain old Reba." She is informal, candid and exceedingly down-to-earth—though she keeps one eye trained carefully on the clock and the stack of unreturned phone messages on her desk. The lead interview question is the obvious one: McEntire looks, and sounds, like a new person. Is she?

"Yeah, I pretty much am," she concedes. She reflects silently for a beat or two, glancing around the walls full of awards and Gold records. "Yeah, I think I have *emerged*," she laughs softly. "I'm

happier, more confident—though as you can see I still dress in jeans and denim. But, yeah, I think I've grown up. I'm not so dead set on making everyone else happy and pleased. I don't listen to anybody's input as much as I listen to my own gut feeling."

McEntire has done more than just grow up; she's undergone a profound change. In fact, these days, when I see her on stage or listen to her discuss her new life, I flash on images of a snake shedding its skin or a locust crawling out of its shell. Reba herself refers to the bad old/good old days back in Oklahoma when she was still married to Bat-



"I think I've grown up. I'm not so dead set on making everyone happy. I don't listen to anybody's input as much as I listen to my own gut feeling."

ties and commuting to Nashville as "my past life"—almost as if she has shed her past right along with the leather skirts and belt buckle.

Still reluctant to discuss her parting with Battles or her abrupt departure from her home state in any detail, she nevertheless seems to have come to terms with it. The residual anger so obvious in interviews a couple of years back is gone, replaced by calm resolution. "It wasn't easy, being in a divorce situation," she shrugs. "It sure wasn't one of those situations where you have time to itemize everything and put it in a box with a label on it. I had to pack everything in one day and leave. It was totally starting over."

She pauses for a moment and laughs softly. "I even had to go out and buy a bed when I got to Nashville. Everything...but it was a good start, and it's grown tremendously since then. At the time I left Oklahoma, we had 2100 people in my fan club. Now, we have almost 18,000."

Along the way, McEntire seized control of practically every aspect of her

career—everything from long-term career management to nightly T-shirt sales is now handled in-house, under her own corporate umbrella. "When I first bought this building in 1988, it was like a big warehouse," she says, glancing proudly around the sprawling complex. "We could park all three of our tour buses inside. Now you can barely park a car in it. It's all been converted to office space and songwriting rooms. We even have our own recording studio for doing our publishing company's demo records.

"Now we handle everything ourselves," she expands, confidently. "Management, booking, publishing, promotion, publicity, accounting, hard ticket sales....It's meant more expenses and a bigger payroll and having to work more dates to pay these people. But it's also made my career a whole lot more thought out."

Thus far, McEntire's aggressive, hands-on approach to both her life and her music has been paying big dividends. It may have been her masterly, rootsy brand of traditional country heard on albums like *My Kind of Country* (1984) and *Have I Got a Deal for You* (1985) that won her the 1986 Country Music Association Entertainer of the Year Award and four consecutive CMA Female Vocalist of the Year trophies in 1984-87. Lest we forget, in those days Reba used to lament as to how *real* country music seemed to be slipping away. But it has been her gradual movement toward "Yuppie country"—the pop-flavored mainstream—beginning with *Whoever's in New England* in 1986 and continuing through her recent releases—that has broadened her commercial base. In contrast to the nine albums which preceded it, *Whoever's in New England* shot past the Gold half-million sales mark. And the six albums since have done as well or better.

McEntire makes no apologies for her new sound. Quite the contrary. "I wanta do what sells," she shrugs, as if to say she is only pointing out the obvious, doing what the market demographic research demands. "I want to do what the majority of the public likes to hear.

"The funny thing of it is," she frowns with slight puzzlement, speaking about her fans, "they all say they want me to go back to traditional country. But the majority of people obviously don't want to hear me sing traditional, even though I love to sing it and could probably sit and do it all my life.

"*My Kind of Country* was my mother's favorite album," she smiles. "Because it had those old songs on it. Eight or ten of the songs on there had been cut before. That was my rebellious stage—I wanted to get away from contemporary and go back to traditional.

"But the *My Kind of Country* album

didn't sell very well. Then I found *Whoever's in New England*, and that LP just took off like a shot and went Gold. That's evidently what they want to hear. Then I did 'Cathy's Clown,' and it did real well. Then I decided I was gonna do this real traditional song called 'Till Love Comes Again.' I loved it. I figured it was gonna be the kind of big hit, the kind of 'career' song I'd been looking for—am still looking for. But as it turned out, a lot of radio stations wouldn't play it. They just didn't want to hear me playing traditional music."

She shrugs and pauses again. "They just don't wanta hear fiddles on my songs. So I went back to 'You Lie' and that kind of stuff, and it's doing great," she explains, referring to the single, "You Lie," from the *Rumor* album.

Considering all that's come her way career-wise in the past five years or so, who can really fault McEntire for trusting so wholeheartedly in her own (and presumably husband/manager Blackstock's) commercial instincts? A few traditionalists may have taken offense or been put off by her bold covers of songs like Aretha Franklin's "Respect." But the greater American record-buying public has taken the new Reba to its heart—at least for the time being. In a 1989 poll in *People Magazine*, she emerged as America's second most popular female vocalist, behind Barbra Streisand but ahead of contenders like Madonna, Cher and Whitney Houston. In *Playboy's* 1990 Reader's Poll she was cited as the nation's favorite country songstress. Since the mid-1980's and the release of *Whoever's in New England*, she's won several Academy of Country Music awards and a Grammy. She's sold out New York City's Carnegie Hall and been profiled in all the right women's magazines—*McCall's*, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Redbook*—not to mention other impressive publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek* and *Rolling Stone*. Her *Greatest Hits* album, released in 1987, soared past the million sales mark. She even found time to make a laudable film debut, playing a supporting role in *Tremors*, a monster movie spoof starring Kevin Bacon, in which she and co-star Michael Gross (of *Family Ties* fame) blow away a couple of giant, man-eating slugs with an arsenal of weapons.

But McEntire concedes that just as important—if not more important—than all these other sometimes controversial career strides is her baby son, Shelby. He, she says, has been the source of her real transformation. All in all, she would not change a thing.

"The point I'm at in my life right now is wonderful," she smiles warmly. "Shelby is great! He's totally entertaining. Sometimes I'll get up at 4 A.M. just



Reba in the spotlight—on video in "Cathy's Clown," on Hollywood billboards and national magazine covers and at an industry event with husband, Narvel Blackstock.

to be there when he wakes up and to be alone with him. I hate having to leave him to go to a show or even to come into the office for a few hours. If Narvel and I stay overnight on the road, we take him with us."

She laughs softly and pauses for a moment when reminded that in an interview in this magazine in 1986, she insisted that having children was something she had zero interest in. "My mom used to always tell me, 'Now, you think all this—the awards, success, etc.—is nice, just wait till you have a baby,' she giggles. "She'd say that because I was the only one of her four kids who hadn't had children. I'd tell her, 'Well, I don't think I'll ever have a baby.' Because it just wouldn't have worked out in my past life...which is what I call it: my past life.

"And then the divorce came, and me and Narvel got involved, and it just all worked out. He wanted to have another child, and I wanted one too. And it's sure nice when two people are in agreement that they want to have a child and love it forever and ever."

Reba laughingly dispels the notion that she and Narvel fell in love at first sight. "Ha!" she shakes her head and grins. "No way! Narvel has three children, and he'd been married a long time, since he was sixteen. It was just one of those deals where, just one day, it was like, 'Wow!'"

"I mean, when he started working for me back in 1980, I had *no* idea," she roars with laughter again. "And even when we did start dating, it was like, 'Boy, I'd of never chose *you*!'... 'Well, I'd of never chose *you* either!'... 'Then why did this happen?'... 'Well, I don't have the faintest idea...'"

"The key to it, I suppose," she muses, "is that Narvel and I are both very hard workers, very goal-oriented, and we respect each other for that. I mean, even on vacation, all we talk about is business."

As far as Reba is concerned, there will be more children. She even jokes that she'd like to have three or four more—crank them out like clockwork, once a year, in March, so that they don't interfere with the busy spring-summer

The many faces of Reba—as cowgirl in her video, “You Lie,” as recording artist and co-producer in the studio with Tony Brown and as actress in *Tremors* with co-star, Michael Gross. Reba says she’s at a wonderful point in her life right now, and her public agrees. She wouldn’t change a thing.



“Cathy’s Clown,” various selections from her new album and a brisk medley of her older, more countrified hits for a crowd of five or six thousand at the Starwood Amphitheater near Nashville.

The show is glitzy, hip, hi-tech and flashily new age. And—like Reba’s new record—it’s conspicuously free of fiddles and steel. There are elaborate stage sets, a precise but slushily anonymous-sounding back-up band in matching black-and-gray suits and gyrating back-up singers in slinky costumes. Even though it’s Reba’s, the show smacks of Las Vegas, intricately choreographed, thoroughly rehearsed and utterly lacking in warmth or spontaneity. It’s as if, sad to say, Reba has gone corporate with her music.

Maybe it’s just me, I think. Maybe I’m just getting too old and too grouchy for all this blatantly crowd-pleasing raz-mah-taz. But the next day, the reviews in both Nashville’s morning and afternoon papers—by writers Bob Oermann and Jay Orr, respectively, both known for their impeccable musical knowledge and taste—are lukewarm at best and full of damnation disguised as faint praise. They seem to reflect my own gut feeling that, musically speaking, *more* is not necessarily better. *The Tennessean* called Reba’s show “show biz glitz and utter hokum,” while conceding that the crowd absolutely ate it up. The *Banner* headline declared simply: “Merely A Wisp Of Country In Reba’s Fancy Show.”

There’s something vaguely unsettling in all this. One thinks back to Dolly Parton and Barbara Mandrell who, like McEntire, took giant steps beyond country music with their records and stage shows when their quest for new commercial fields to conquer outgrew the admittedly narrow limits of the country field. In the process, both Parton and Mandrell temporarily gained a new market share but ultimately lost their sense of musical direction—at least in the eyes of some. Both women’s recording careers eventually crashed and burned, and both have now returned to the fold.

Will Reba make this quantum leap where others have stumbled and fallen? Will she become preoccupied with riding in her private jet, being her own board chairman and keeping tabs on ticket and T-shirt cash flows? Will she attain new creative high-water marks as she did with two very different breakthrough albums, *My Kind of Country* and *Whoever’s in New England*? Or will she settle for demographics and market research and define herself musically as nothing more than the sum total of her audience’s expectations?

Only time will tell. ■



touring season. “Uhm, yeah,” she asserts. “I’d love to have four or five more. But I don’t know if it’s probable or possible—financially or healthwise. I’m 35 years old. Sure, I’d have one every year if I could. But the old body don’t hold up to that kind of stuff anymore. I love children. Narvel’s three kids are 11, 13 and 16, and we always have a blast when they come to see us.”

Interestingly enough, McEntire explains that it was complications with her pregnancy with Shelby last winter that weighed heavily in the making of her new album, *Rumor Has It*. “Last December 4th, the day my touring ended for the year, I went to my doctor, and he said my cervix was thinning, and that’s what was holding Shelby in there,” she recalls. “He told me I was going to have to stay flat on my back for a couple of weeks, which I did. Then I went back to Oklahoma to see my family over Christmas. And when I came back, he put me in the hospital and put me on some kind of asthma medicine, because I was having contractions early. So, I was either in the hospital or home in bed for a long while, and I had to postpone

sessions for the album from January until April, since I could barely stand up. That gave me several more months to look for more songs—I listened to hundreds of them—and to change producers.

“While I was pregnant, I was also listening to tapes of artists like Michael Bolton, Phil Collins, Steve Winwood and Don Henley. And they’ve all got this *energy*.” She squints and frowns sheepishly. “Some of my songs are kind of sweet and kind of wimpy. But I think this time I sing different,” she says of *Rumor Has It*. “I think I put more raw energy into it.”

My allotted one-hour interview slot with Reba seems over much too soon. But the corporate wheels crank onward, and she whisks away to tape a guest spot on *Crook & Chase*. When I see her next, a few evenings later, it’s no longer one-on-one. She’s thirty rows away, and she’s no longer “just plain old Reba.” She’s larger than life now: etched in the spotlight, she’s dressed in a flowing, sequined stage outfit as she vamps and prances around, belting out “Respect,”

CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1990—EDITOR, HELEN BARNARD

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Membership in the CMSA

Over the years since Russ Barnard first started the CMSA in 1984, the Society and its *Newsletter* have turned out to be very popular with *Country Music Magazine* subscribers. Membership stands at about 175,000 out of the total *Country Music Magazine* subscriber roll of over 475,000. We are so proud of the *Newsletter* itself, almost entirely member-written, that we include it in newsstand copies of *Country Music Magazine* wherever it is sold.

The activities of the Society have always been based on collaboration between Russ Barnard and you members. Members' suggestions and tastes influence all aspects of our business. Now it's time to listen to you again.

We have received several complaints about people misusing the Information, Please and Pen Pals sections of the Collections page. In addition, we are simply swamped with material in these two columns and suspect that they have become so popular partly through being discovered by readers who are not Society members. We are delighted to be so popular and realize that we are providing a much-needed service. At the same time, it is not fair to members who have paid for the privilege of belonging to allow others to participate for free. Therefore, we are taking the following steps:

1) We have closed the Collections page until further notice and have returned the backlog of material to the senders. This will allow us to catch up on current material and keep our files clear for future input from CMSA members.

2) When the Collections page does re-open, we will require all requests to be accompanied by your magazine label. Items received without a label will not be processed. This way, only CMSA members will be able to take advantage of the Collections page's benefits. Prisoners continue to be welcome participants in all CMSA activities provided they are members.

There's one problem solved, now let's tackle another: One or two of you have written to us recently saying you ordered something from someone in Information, Please, sent the money and never received the item. What to do? It is natural in mail order to pay in advance. One or two bad debts over a period of time may not be too bad odds, especially considering the value of the opportunity afforded by the column to meet people, find things and correspond. You decide. We've received—and published—a lot of happy thank you notes over the years.

Enough said on these issues. Let's turn to the contents of this *Newsletter*. We're presenting an interesting mix here. A "legends" theme runs through most of our features, including notes on Rose Maddox, Patsy Montana and The Highwaymen. We also put the spotlight on New England, where we present an overview of the local country music scene. Plus, Don Gibson is featured in Legends, and we publish one more issue's worth of Collections.

We'll let you know when to send requests for Collections again. In the meantime, the door is always open on Reviews & Features, Readers Create and letters and suggestions.

Still Going Strong

Two of our long-time correspondents update us on two of country music's legendary ladies who are still out there entertaining the crowds. Johnny Bond gives us an update on Rose Maddox, while Dennis Devine shares his photo essay on Patsy Montana. Our own George Fletcher also saw Patsy Montana at the Legends show at the Grand Ole Opry during Fan Fair this year.

ROSE MADDOX

I went to see Rose Maddox in June, and I had a great time. She was performing at the California Bluegrass Festival in Grass Valley, California. Rose was accompanied by The Bluegrass Patriots from Colorado, along with her grandson, Donnie Maddox, on bass and Tim Howard on lead guitar. They did a fine job backing Rose and singing harmony with her. Rose performed two consecutive evenings, and she tore 'em up! She received a standing ovation at each performance. To see her stage show, you'd

never guess that she was seriously ill with heart trouble just two years ago.

Rose sounded just as good as she did 20 years ago, and with Tim and Donnie clowning around behind her, it reminded a lot of people of when she worked with her brothers. Rose spent a lot of time visiting with the fans, posing for pictures and signing autographs.

A lot of people might not know it, but Rose also has her own five-piece band called The Foggy Notion Band. They are fantastic! If Rose is in your area, be sure to see her. She and her boys put on a great show. They've been in the studio recording a new album, and they were preparing for

Rose Maddox at California's Bluegrass Festival. Rose is still going strong.



an overseas tour in September.

It's too bad many of the older artists are overlooked. They are still out there performing and putting on a fantastic show. They are the legends, the pioneers of this business, and they just get shoved aside by the industry. But the fans never forget. We know how great these legends like Rose really are.

**Johnny Bond
Cudahy, Wisconsin**

In This Issue

- **Legendary Performers**
- **New England Country Music**
- **Don Gibson Recalled**
- **Collections**

PATSY MONTANA

Patsy Montana appeared at Omaha, Nebraska's Red Opry Barn last May and packed the place with a crowd of 350 people. She put on a great show featuring many of the songs she has sung for years, including "I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart." By the time she was through, she became everyone's sweetheart!

Patsy takes the time to talk with the audience. She spoke about Gene Autry and reminisced about being in a movie with him. Her show is very down-home, and when it's over, you know Patsy. She sings traditional Western music and dresses the part. Not many people sing the songs that she does anymore. May she keep singing for many years and keep Western music alive!

Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa

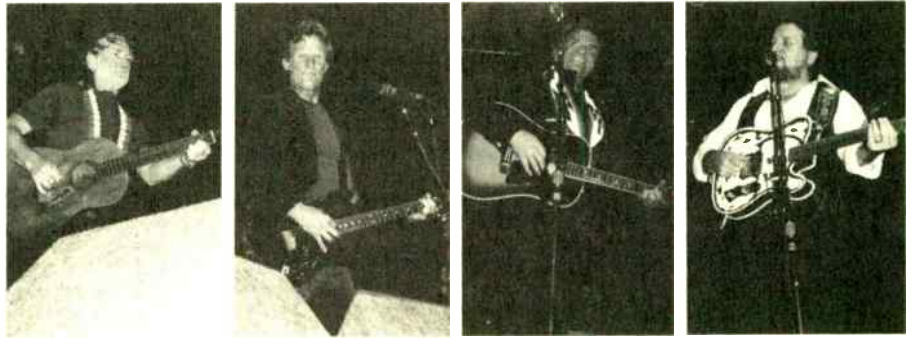


Patsy Montana, with Dennis Devine above, played the Red Barn Opry in May, and the Grand Ole Opry with Tom Swatzell, below, in June. CMM's George Fletcher caught the Opry show.

Country Music's "Mount Rushmore"—The Highwaymen

Here's feature number two from Dennis Devine, this time covering The Highwaymen—Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson—in concert at the Hilton Coliseum in Ames, Iowa.

We arrived at the Ames Holiday Inn early in order to visit with other members of Johnny Cash's Fan Club. When we pulled up at 1:30 P.M., The Highwaymen's buses were all there—what a sight! As we walked into the



The Highwaymen—Willie, Kris, Johnny and Waylon—together in concert in Iowa.

lobby. Kris Kristofferson was on his way out for a jog. An hour and a half later, finished with his run, Kris took time to visit with us for autographs and pictures. What a great guy!

A little while later, as we waited by the elevator, Johnny Cash stepped out, and his first words were, "Hello, Dennis!" What a thrill that was! Both Johnny and June looked great, and they were happy to sign a birthday card for my mother. We sat and talked until it was time for them to leave for the show. Next we ran into Waylon, but there was no time for an autograph then. We never did catch up with Willie.

At showtime, we took our seats with nearly 11,400 other fans. No other country music quartet could pack as much star power as The Highwaymen. The four superstars teamed up for 34 songs in a two-hour-plus set. They had songs from both *Highwayman* albums and plenty of their individual hits, which they often did in duos or trios. What a night!

For a real country music fan, this show was a steal! And the night was not over yet. We ran out of the Coliseum, rushed back to our car and beat the buses back to the Holiday Inn. The first to come in was Waylon, and he too signed the card for my mom. Johnny and June pulled in next and out came the Man in Black. I have known John

for 30 years. He and his family are great people.

We said our goodbyes to Johnny and June and went to get Willie's signature on my mother's card. Willie's bus driver said that Willie was asleep. We waited in the rain for a while, but he never came out of his bus before it was time to start home.

Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Notes of Thanks

Back in the March/April issue, Frank Sands shared his recollections of serving in Alabama's road crew. Now he sends his thanks to us and all who wrote him.

Just wanted to write and let you know that I got the CMSA Newsletter and was so pleased to see my article printed. I could spend another 46 years and not feel as good as I did when I saw it. I never knew I could put anything together as good as what you printed. I was always told to keep quiet when I had a suggestion for a line in a song Alabama was writing. Now I know I wasn't so dumb after all.

Thanks for all you did for me. I have received many letters from fans, and I feel much better knowing I was somebody after all.

Frank Sands
Aberdeen, North Carolina

SEPTEMBER 1990 PCLL Album and Single of the Month

Clint Black *Killin' Time*
George Strait "Love Without End, Amen" *Killin' Time*
Clint Black is booming along—for the fifth month in a row, he's tops in albums, with, once again, *Killin' Time*. George Strait's in second place with *Livin' It Up*, and Alan Jackson of last issue centerfold fame's in third with *Here in the Real World*. In singles, Strait's the winner with "Love Without End, Amen." Ricky Van Shelton follows up with "I Meant Every Word He Said." Garth Brooks is third with "The Dance" and Alan Jackson a hot contender in fourth—his tune's titled "Wanted."

Curly Ray Martin and the rest of his Country Bound Band thanked us for including them in our prison bands feature in the July/August issue. They say they'll never give up. Some of the band has moved on, but those present sent their signatures along with Curly Ray.

David J. Evans
David E. Roberts
Ran Fleener
Fred Phoenix (new member)

REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: A SPECIAL SERIES

The CMSA has always been interested in regional country music associations. Here's a first-in-a-series look at several in New England. For those in other regions, please stay tuned. If you have a country music association in your area, please let us know. We covered Leo and Betty Haas and the Florida CMA back in Novem-

ber/December 1989. Thanks to George Fletcher for assembling this one. He also took the photos below. There is a national umbrella organization called the Country Music Associations of America. It hopes to unite all state CMA's. Some states belong. Some don't. The CMAA also confers awards.



Clockwise from bottom left, Rick Plant and Dianne Cannon of Angel Train, End of the Line with their awards, Robin Right on stage and with her band and Yankee Jack and Marie.

New England Country Music

When one thinks of "big country music territory," New England might not immediately come to mind, but there is an active and organized local country music scene in the region. What follows is an overview of some of the performers and organizations that promote and support country music in a region of the United States that, at the shortest distance, is nearly 1000 miles from Nashville.

Every New England state has a country music association, although Vermont's appears to be inactive right now. Maine boasts two country music organizations. Connecticut holds the distinction of having the oldest organization—its Connecticut Country Music Association was founded some 22 years ago. These groups have a lot in common. They all have the same goals—to promote and support country music. All operate as non-profit organizations, and each has some method of honoring local talent.

Several New England artists are gaining national prominence. Massachusetts singer Robin Right scored two chart singles from her independent label album, *Right the First Time*, released in the summer of 1989. One

of these singles, "Rose Cafe," went to Number One on the *Indie Bullet Magazine* charts. Robin has won numerous awards from the MCMMA, including three consecutive terms as Entertainer of the Year. She then requested to be dropped from that category so that others could win. Angel Train, a band with members from Maine and Massachusetts, was the national winner in the 1989 Marlboro Country Talent Search. In June, the band began recording in Nashville with well-known producer, Barry Beckett. Angel Train has opened for many national artists at New England shows. End of the Line, a band that represented New Hampshire at the Country Music Associations of America Awards Show in May, came away with the national Band of the Year title and will be playing at several California nightclubs. Another national CMAA award-winning band from New England is Yankee Jack, Marie & Company. Since 1984, this popular husband-and-wife team from Massachusetts, along with the rest of their band, have won more than 20 regional and national awards and countless state awards from the MCMMA. This year, Marie took home the CMAA's national

Song of the Year for her single, "Multiple Choice." The couple have three albums out on their own label. These artists have all been involved with their respective state CMA's.

The primary ingredient necessary for the success of a state CMA is cooperation. The organizations, musicians, club owners, radio stations and other media must all work together for the good of country music. New England seems to be on the right track!

—George Fletcher

MASSACHUSETTS COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS ASSOCIATION

The MCMMA is a chartered, non-profit organization that traces its beginnings back to April 1979, an outgrowth of an idea first considered by local country musician, Luke Wetherfield. The organization's mission is to promote country music through the media and live performance, to encourage local talent and to make fans aware of "who's who and who's where" in country music throughout the state. The MCMMA is run by a volunteer Board of Directors, along with an Advisory Committee made up of representatives drawn from musicians,

Information, Please

Write to these members if you have the information or items they need. Enclose SASE if you must correspond.

- Wanted: any articles, photos, VHS copies of *Strait from the Heart of Texas* and any other music videos of George Strait. Will pay postage and price of tape within reason. Also need address of the Everly Brothers Fan Club. Sheri Basham, Rt. 1, Box 223, Tenah, TX 75974.
- Wanted: anything on Anne Murray. Looking for old photos, concert photos, VHS tapes, cassettes, albums. Will answer all letters and pay almost anything. Thanks, Dawn Cowan, 734 W. Grand River, Okemos, MI 48864.
- If anybody has any photos, negatives or posters of Clint Black, please send me your price list. Wendi N. Wikson, 900 Annapolis, Independence, MO 64056.
- Wanted: names and addresses of country music publishers and any artists that need a good song. Tapes sent on request. Also want back issues of *Country Music Magazine*. John W. Wise, 9629 N. Memorial Dr., Owasso, OK 75055.
- Looking for anything on Sawyer Brown. I would especially like to get VHS tapes, videos, interviews and concert pictures. Will pay reasonable amount for items or will trade for info and pictures of your favorite country singer or soap opera star. Lynelle Jones, 20 Palinview Dr., Danville, IN 46122.
- Looking for anything on Reba McEntire. Need Reba's songbook, some of her early LP's and sheet music. Please help. Send list and price. Tammy Clark, 623 E. Main, Paragould, AR 72450.
- I'm looking for the February 1989 issue of *The Colorado Country Connection*. It features a cover story on Rob Quist and Great Northern. Anyone interested in selling this issue please write: Millie Williams, 3130 Moulton, Butte, MT 59701.
- Please help me. Looking for anything of Reba: concert photos, pictures, posters, etc. Will pay top dollar for video cassettes on TNN, *Austin City Limits*, awards shows, etc. Also looking for tapes of George Strait on those shows. Mike Halstead, RR 1 Box 125L, Kimball, NE 69145.
- Wanted: anything and everything on Johnny Cash—videos, albums, clippings, pictures. Please let me hear from you. Ms. Jeri Beth Salisbury, Rt. 1, Box 69, Meeker, OK 74855.
- Wanted: Sammi Smith's first album, *He's Everything*. Will pay for copy. Bob Soper, 8 Hall Ave., Jamestown, NY 14701.
- Wanted: any old magazines, tapes or books on Dolly Parton. I would really like the *Country Music Magazine* picture of her holding the torch and the *Playboy* issue featuring her. Send to: Maria Creighton, 12643 Catalina Dr., Lusby, MD 20657.
- Wanted: info on tape or record of Carl Smith, *The Best Years of Your Life*. Please let me hear from you. Mary Feger, 2324 Washington Rd. C-4, Washington, IL 61571.
- Fans of The Bailes Brothers who want any information, photos, tapes, autographs, etc., can contact me. The Bailes

Brothers worked with all the major acts in the 40's and 50's and were a part of the Grand Ole Opry. Richard Apperson, Rt. 1 Box 498A, Kellem Crook Rd., Sevierville, TN 37862.

- Candid off-stage photos, in color, of most musicians (some country stars), taken as I met them in NY since 1981. Some on-stage photos also available. Also live concert recordings of shows (60's-90's). List favorites and send SASE. Glen Frohman, P.O. Box 2817, New York, NY 10185.
- Looking for VCR tapes of the television series *Young Riders*, copies of Sawyer Brown on *Star Search*, *Nashville Now* with Sawyer Brown and The Jordanaires as the back up singers for "My Baby's Gone" and Grand Ole Opry with Sawyer Brown. Christine McKenna, 3609 Goan Dr. Apt. 1, Waterloo, IA 50702.
- Looking for sheet music to "Don't Be Angry," "Charlie's Shoes," "Once a Day," "From a Jack to a King" and "Starlight Schottische." Please write to me. Ms. Maxine Martzall, R.R. 1 Box 55G, St. Marius, ID 83861.

Wanted: negatives of Clint Black, Randy Travis and George Strait in concert, at Fan Fair or wherever. Any contribution will be greatly appreciated. Mamie Trivette, 303 Crest Dr., Boone, NC 28607.

- I am looking for pictures, 45's, records, newspaper clippings on Randy Travis (real name Randy Traywick). Sissy Roberts, Rt. 1, Box 236, New Macedonia Rd., Philadelphia, TN 37846.
- In the 40's I heard a song about a deck of cards being a "Soldiers Bible." It explained the significance of each card. I would like to know the name of the song and who sang it. Dorothy A. Triplett, P.O. Box 181802, Casselberry, FL 32718-1802.
- On 3/6/87 PBS station KOCE broadcast *Country Music Legends*, tributes to various artists. I goofed up my recording. Does anyone still have a copy? Wanted: a whole bunch of Elvis LP's and Phil Everly's "The Last Thing on My Mind"—LP or 45. R.W. Reed, 1115 Green Lawn Ave., Culver City, CA 90230.
- Searching for a cassette copy of Reba McEntire's *Heart to Heart*. Will pay for tape and postage. Wilma Hawk, P.O. Box 3036, LaGrande, OR 97850.
- 45's wanted: "Amanda" by Waylon Jennings, "Ashes by Now" by Rodney Crowell and "The Seeker" by Dolly Parton. Tom Pochodzay, P.O. Box 1685, Marion, IN 46952.
- Looking for Reba McEntire's album or cassette *Heart to Heart*. Will pay reasonable price for either, or will send a blank cassette tape and pay for a copy. Interested in swapping? Have all Reba but above and many other country female vocalists. Let me hear from you! Thanks. Robert Wetherell, 906 N. Ontario, Storm Lake, IA 50588.
- Articles on all the stars from past *Music City News* and *Country Music USA* magazines for sale or trade for photos or other material on George Strait. Send SASE for lists. Ellen Owens, 2305 Stonebridge Rd., Dothan, AL 36301.
- Want to buy 8x10 pictures, buttons, or anything else in country music. Lou Ann Lawrence, 1 Krieg St., Apt. A, New-

ark, OH 43055.

- Any Hank Williams Jr. LP's, 45's, cassettes, 8-tracks and CD's from 60's to 1977. Also want any magazines or newspapers with Hank in them and photos before his mountain fall. Tom Agee, 330 Archer Dr., Apt. 928, Sherman, TX 75090.
- Looking for 1979 album by George Jones on Epic Records. It's titled *George Jones and Friends* (Waylon is on it). Price is no object. Thank you. Stanley Wegielewski, P.O. Box 1615, Scranton, PA 18501-1615.
- Wanted: George Jones and Tammy Wynette memorabilia, early photos, newspaper clippings, fan club newsletters, live audio tapes, videos, records, etc. Exchange information with other collectors, trade or buy. Jim Marchant, 3711 Tacon St., Tampa, FL 33629.
- Wanted: Reba McEntire's *Heart to Heart*, released in 1981 on the Mercury label. Will pay reasonable price for good quality cassette. Teresa Slown, 219 Polk St., Pontiac, IL 61764.
- Wanted: Lee Greenwood's 1986 album, *Love Will Find Its Way to You*. Will pay any reasonable price. Thank you. Christine Ketterer, 1105B East McCarty, Jefferson City, MO 65101.
- Want photos, magazines and concert programs of Lorrie Morgan and Tanya Tucker. Mike Easter, 4405 Churchman Ave. Apt. 9, Louisville, KY 40215.

Caution, Please

To avoid disappointment, members may wish to wait until they've received the information or items they've asked for before sending payment.

- Wanted: articles, pictures, posters, etc. of Dwight Yoakam and Clint Black. Also would like a video tape of the 1989 and 1990 awards shows. If you have any of these, please send price list. Will pay for tapes and postage. Jody Murray, Rt. 2 Box 364, Savage, MT 59262.
- Looking for cassette of Rosie Flores's album, *Rosie Flores*, and tape or LP of *Too Stuffed to Jump* by Amazing Rhythm Aces. Robert Jones, P.O. Box 8337, Corpus Cristi, TX 78468.
- Wanted: sheet music to song, "Storms Never Last." It was recorded by Waylon Jennings and Jessi Colter. Thank you, Joyce Bennett, 274 Chelsea St., Everett, MA 02519.
- Wanted: books, brochures, etc. from guitar manufacturers, especially during the 1950's. Will pay reasonable price. Thank you. Harry Anderson Jr., 19750 Crestwick Dr., La Mirada, CA 90638.
- I am looking for a song by Gene Autry called "A Chocolate Ice Cream Cone." It might be on an old LP. If there is anyone out there who can help me, I would appreciate it. Maybe you could tape the song for me, and I will pay for the tape. Thank you. Betty Sinchak, 38 Scott Lane, Girard, OH 44420.
- For Sale: song books. One has the words to over 50 songs by Ronnie Milsap. The other is Elvis, *Aloha from Hawaii*. If interested, send SASE for price list. Wanda Barefoot, Rt. 2 Box 291, Benson, NC 27504.

- Would like any information on Narvel Felts and Cal Smith. Would like to buy any of their records (in good condition). Susan Davidson Andrus, 26510 Border St., Spring, TX 77373.
- For sale: early 40's electric Gibson guitar with amplifier, microphone and stand. Almost like new. You have to see it, you wouldn't believe it. It's 50 years old this year. Want \$2000. V. Katherine Neff, 13204 Bristaw Rd., Nokesville, VA 22123.
- I have the VHS and cassette tape of Alabama's "Hugo" concert in Columbia, South Carolina. I am willing to trade for other Alabama tapes. Looking for copy of Eddy Raven's *Eyes and Cajun Country* tapes. Will pay reasonable price. Pat Fitzgerald, 308 Perkins St., Havelock, NC 28532.
- Wanted: pictures, articles, concert photos and taped appearances of George Strait and Clint Black. Send list of prices and descriptions. Also want George Strait tape, *Greatest Hits, Volume 1*. Concert photos of George Strait, Clint Black, Reba McEntire, Billy Joe Royal and Bailie and The Boys for sale. Send SASE for prices. Tia M. Arnn, P.O. Box 1196, Dublin, VA 24084.
- Is there anyone out there who was able to tape the Academy of Country Music Awards Show this year and is willing to sell it to a poor soul who had to miss it? If so, please contact as soon as possible! Thanks! Jennifer Sanchez, 921 W. Pecan St., Crowley, TX 76036.
- If anyone has Hank Williams Sr.'s *Greatest Hits* and is able to tape it for me or tell me where I can buy it, please let me know. If someone will tape it for me, I will replace the cassette. Mrs. Rusty Keisinger, Rt. 2 Box 402A, Aitkin, MN 56431.
- Wanted: anything on Suzy Bogguss—photos, clippings, road items, videos of her TV appearances. Please write D. Robinson, 30 Knob Hill Rd., S. Meridan, CT 06450.
- I am looking for VHS videos of Barbara Mandrell, especially 1970's and early 1980's appearances and the 1984 CMA Awards Show. I would love to correspond with anyone willing to sell me Barbara concert photos for a reasonable price, or work out a trade. Tammy Atkinson, 1006 Highland Dr., St. Albans, WV 25177.
- Hungry for a VHS copy of the 1984 CMA Awards Show and the 1985 ACM and CMA Awards shows. Willing to pay reasonable price. A.F. Limbaugh, 7116A Divison Ave., Birmingham, AL 35206.
- Hi. I'm looking for some records: Stonewall Jackson, *Greatest Hits*; Johnny Cash, *Bitter Tears*; also Hank Williams Sr., *Early Country live, Vol 3* and *Hot Country Hits Vol. 2*. Bernadette Loe, Gen-Del, Fort Liard, NWT, Canada, XOG OAO.
- I'm looking for good quality VHS copies of '89 CMA Awards and '90 ACM Awards. Also, I'm looking for my song, "Shelly's Winter Love," by Merle Haggard. Please help! Shelly J. Creson, 401 Melody Lane Apt. 2, Marshalltown, IA 50158.
- I am trying to find a song that was popular in the late 70's and early 80's. I don't know the name of it or the singer,



CLINT BLACK

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1990

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF THE MONTH

CLINT BLACK

Facts of Life

Personal Data

Birthdate: February 4, 1962
Birthplace: Long Branch, New Jersey.
Lived there six months.
Hometown: Houston, Texas
Family: Mother, Ann; father, G.A.;
brothers, Mark, Brian, Kevin.
Famous for: His smile

Vital Statistics

Height: 5'9"
Weight: 155 pounds
Color eyes: Green
Color hair: Brown

Recording Career

Record Label: RCA Records, 1 Music
Circle North, Nashville, TN 37203.

Albums	Release Date
<i>Killin' Time</i>	1989**
<i>Put Yourself in My Shoes</i>	1990

*Gold album, over 500,000 sold.
**Platinum album, over 1,000,000 sold.

Number One Singles
"A Better Man"
"Killin' Time"
"Nobody's Home"
"Walkin' Away"
"Nothing's News"

According to *Radio and Records Magazine*, Clint's the first artist in any field, including pop, to have five Number One singles off a debut album.

Videos
"A Better Man"
"Killin' Time"
"Walking Away"
"Put Yourself in My Shoes"

"A Better Man" appears on *RCA Greatest Video Hits Vol. I*/"Killin' Time" is on *RCA Greatest Video Hits Vol. II*.



LEPRELINA

Tour Highlights

Sell-out performances
New York's Carnegie Hall with K.T. Oslin, 1989
Houston Live Stock Show, 1990
New York's Beacon Theatre, 1990

Appearances with other stars
Clint's 1989 extended tour included appearances with Alabama, Reba McEntire, Lorrie Morgan, K.T. Oslin and Randy Travis.

Quotable Quotes

"I grew up with horses and farms and pastures and bayous, but I don't pretend to be a cowboy. I just like singing to cowgirls."

"I've done some ballads, but I'm not strictly a balladeer. I've done a Western swing song, but I'm not a Western swing artist. I explore all styles of country music, especially keeping in mind the different dance styles, because that's very important in Texas."

Fan Club

Clint Black Fan Club membership includes bi-monthly newsletter (itinerary enclosed), membership card, color photo and merchandise brochure.

How to Join

To join the Clint Black Fan Club and get all the items listed above for \$10, send check or money order payable to Country Music Reader Service to: *Country Music Magazine*, Reader Service Dept. 11290, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880. Add \$1.95 postage and handling.

Television Highlights

The Tonight Show
The Today Show
Entertainment Tonight
The Oprah Winfrey Show
The Bob Hope Special
Macy's Thanksgiving Parade
Crook & Chase

Major Awards

1989 CMA Horizon Award
1990 *American Music Awards* New Artist/ACM Album of the Year *Killin' Time*, Single of the Year "A Better Man," Top Male Vocalist, Top New Male Vocalist/*TNN/Music City News Awards* Star of Tomorrow, Album of the Year, *Killin' Time*/nominated for CMA Entertainer of the Year, Single of the Year, "Killin' Time," Song of the Year, "Killin' Time," won Male Vocalist of the Year.

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— Johnny Cash

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Sears, Roebuck and Co. 1990

but some of the words are "Give respect to your mother, advice to your brother, your clothes to your sister, give your soul to Jesus, but save your heart for me." Any info will be appreciated. **Virgil G. Carter, 111 Detroit Ave., Houghton Lake, MI 48629.**

• For sale: *Country Music Magazine* from 1985 to present, *Music City News* 6/88 to present, 70 Johnny Cash LPs, also Fan Fair photos. Send want list and SASE to **Linda Weyandt, RD 1, Greenfields Apt. C-3, Claysburg, PA 16625.**

• I am selling some of my record collection. Send a SASE for a list and prices. **Pat Rath, 204 Main, Mt. Carroll, IL 61053.**

Pen Pals

Make some new friends by mail.

• Hi, my name is Betty. I am 50 years old and love country music. I would like to hear from single males, 40-60 years of age. Please send photo, if possible. I will answer all. Thanks. **Betty Hogestyn, 12 Hamlet Ct. #4, Rochester, NY 14624.**

• Hi there! My name is Darla, and I'm 27 years old. Some of my favorites are Alabama, Clint Black, George Strait and Restless Heart. I enjoy writing letters, cross stitch and auto racing. I'd love to hear from guys or girls, all ages, who truly appreciate country music. I'll answer all and will send a picture if you do. **Darla Miller, 1503 Tamarack Dr., Allison Park, PA 15101.**

• I'm interested in pen pals, anyone between the ages of 30-40. I am 38, married, and have two children. I like all country music and do a little singing myself, so come on, you all, let's hear from you. **Beverly Burton, Rt. 1, Box 1B, Gentry, MO 64453.**

• Hi, I'm a 45-year-old divorced male who owns his own farm and publishing company. I love all of country music, past, present and future. Please send address and photo with reply. Will answer all. **Edward H. King, P.O. Box 125, Belmont, NY 14813.**

• Hi! My name is Donna Bogguss. I am 32 years old, and I would like hearing from fans who like Johnny Rodriguez, Clint Black and George Strait. My hobbies include walking, swimming, laying in the sun. I'll answer all letters. Please write—send photo if possible. **Donna Jo Bogguss, General Del., Burton, WV 26562.**

• Hi! I'm a 21-year-old from northern Ohio. My all time favorite is Hank Jr. I also like Clint Black, The Judds, Dwight Yoakam and just about everybody else. Please write! **Lori Stewart, 8064C Hackney Ct., Mentor, OH 44060.**

• Hi! My name is Rebecca. I am 19 years old. My country favorites are George Strait, Randy Travis, Elvis, Reba McEntire, Keith Whitley and many others. I would like to hear from anyone who loves country music. Please send picture. I will answer all! Hope to hear from you soon!! **Rebecca Brown, Rt. 2, Box 87AA, Waynesboro, GA 30830.**

• Hi! I am a 15-year-old female who is dedicated to Dwight Yoakam, Shenandoah, John Schneider, and many more. I'd like to hear from those real cowboys and cowgirls out there, and all country

lovers. Age does not matter. **Chanel Gaede, Rt. 1, Box 260, Sparta, WI 54656.**

• Hi! I am a 26-year-old, single, city girl looking to correspond with real life farmers and cowboys (includes enlisted men). Would like to hear more about country life! I am a big fan of The Judds, Alabama and Reba. Will try to answer all letters. Please no inmates! **Teresa Bradley, 3257 Halverson Ave, Bremerton, WA 88310.**

• I am a 24-year-old fan of country music. Favorites include George Strait, Clint Black, Garth Brooks and more. Would like to hear from a good of country boy 24-30 for friendship. **Lori Peterson, 7751 N. Mtn. View Rd., Lake Point, UT 84074.**

• Hello! I am a 32-year-old country boy paying a debt to society. Sure, I made a mistake, but I am letting my mistakes teach me to be a better person. I am an avid country music fan and love old southern rockabilly. I am surrounded by people, yet I am so very lonely in need of lasting friendships. I love to fish, camp, walk on the beach, full moon and kids. If there are any lonely country girls out there willing to write a sincere lonely southern boy. Please write and bring some sunshine into my life. **Richard Morgan 142267, P.O. Box 5107, Union Springs, AL 36089.**

• Hello, I'm a 29-year-old male, looking for pen pals to make time go by while sitting in the Montana State prison. I have 14 more months and I want to meet friends through letters. Thank you. **Alan Colvin, 700 Conley Lake Rd., Deer Lodge, MT 59722.**

• Hi, I'm a single male, 28 years old going on 20, so some people say. I love country music. Some of my favorites are Alabama, Sawyer Brown, Randy Travis, Kenny Rogers, Reba McEntire and Lorrie Morgan. Would like to hear from cowgirls between the ages of ages of 20-35. Males can write too. I also enjoy cars, snowmobiling and bowling. Send picture if possible. **Brain Guettler, 240 S. Lincoln Rd., Bay City, MI 48708.**

• Howdy! I'm 21 years old and a huge fan of country music. Some of my favorites are Clint Black, Alabama, Kathy Mattea, Garth Brooks, Ricky Van Shelton, k.d. lang, Lorrie Morgan and George Strait. If you are a fun-loving male or female 18 and up, and want a pen pal who is then please write today. If you have any information on, or pictures of Clint Black, send those too! If you can, please send your picture. Thanks! **Andrew F. Grimshaw, 263 North Broadway Apt. 4, Lexington, KY 40507-1058.**

• Hi, My name is Randy, I'm 28 years old and I love the Judds, Reba, Dolly, Conway Twitty, George Jones and more. I'm in prison with no family to write. Will answer all letters. Please send photo. **Randal Hart 80597, 3001 West Hwy. 146, LaGrange, KY 40032.**

Just a country gal of 58, widow, lover of George Strait, Alan Jackson and all other country stars. Would like a pen pal that is real country for a friend. Thank you. **Ladeen Peterson, 7751 N. Mt. View Rd., Lake Point, UT 84074.**

• Hi! My name is Susan. I am 29 years old and a devoted country music fan. I would like to write to country music

males age of 27 to 35. Some of my favorites are Clint Black, Lorrie Morgan, Steve Wariner, Restless Heart, Kathy Mattea and Patty Loveless. Pictures optional. It would be nice to hear from you guys! **Susan Moreland, 24912 Roland Cutoff Road, Roland, AR 72135.**

• Hi! I'm a 47-year-old female country music lover. My favorites are Vern Gosdin, Conway Twitty, and Ricky Van Shelton, but like all country music. I am interested in writing males and females, any age, who are lonely, like country music and like to write. **Joyce Sumrall, P.O. Box 84, Morton, MS 39117.**

Stop

Due to tremendous backlog, Collections page is closed until further notice. Don't write, don't phone, we'll let you know when to start again. When Collections page reopens, magazine label will be required on all submissions.

• Howdy! I'm a 38-year-old country music lover, especially the ladies! My favorite is Wanda Jackson. Also, Brenda Lee, Lorrie Morgan, Suzy Bogguss, Emmylou Harris, Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton, Patty Loveless, Skeeter Davis, Jackie DeShannon, Tanya, Sweethearts, Becky Hobbs, Jann Browne, Judds and Rosanne Cash. I'd like to hear from country and western fans especially females. Please write and send photo. Thanks. **Don Lechner, 3940 Ruth Lane, Cincinnati, OH 45211.**

• Hi, I am an 18-year-old woman. My hobbies are hunting, fishing and swimming. I love to go out dancing, and listening to country music. My favorite country singers are Randy Travis, Holly Dunn and Ricky Van Shelton. I will answer every letter I receive. I am looking forward to hearing from you. **Dawn Sanborn, P.O. Box 300, Charleston, NH 03603.**

• Independent, sensitive and loving single mom seeking male companionship age, 30 to 45. I love music, dancing, painting, good books and interesting conversation. Will answer all. No inmates, please. **Sharon Smith, 202 N. Baker St. #B2, Chewelah, WA 89109.**

• Hi! My name is Camille. I'm 19 years old and looking for some new friends. Some of my favorite singers are Randy Travis, Don Williams, Willie Nelson and Patsy Cline. Lots more but too many to list. Would love to hear from you. Promise to answer all letters. **Camille Clark, 685 Patterson Lake Rd., Pinckney, MI 48169.**

• Howdy! I'm 21 years old, and I love country music. Some of my favorites are John Schneider, Randy Travis, Rodney Crowell, Clint Black, Becky Hobbs, George Strait and Alan Jackson. I would love to hear from guys and gals of all ages. Will answer all letters. Hope to hear from you soon. **Kim Fetters, 611 Kate St., Osceola Mills, PA 16666.**

• I am a 15-year-old who would love to hear from Sawyer Brown, Ricky Van Shelton, George Strait, Restless Heart and Clint Black fans. I will write to anyone. I would really love to hear from someone. **Angela Gill, P.O. Box 188, Dekalb, TX 75559.**

Hi! My name is Wendy Wilson and I'm 22 years old. My favorite country stars are Clint Black, George Strait, Reba McEntire, Patty Loveless, Garth Brooks, Lorrie Morgan, Keith Whitley, Steve Wariner, Alabama and Kathy Mattea. My hobbies are reading, watching TV, traveling, writing letters, dancing, shopping, going to the movies, and animals. I would love to hear from females or males age 20-25. Send picture if you would like and I promise you'll get a letter back! **Wendi Wilson, 900 Arapaho, Independence, MO 64056.**

• Hi, will write to anyone who will take time to write me. I am in my 40's and like all country music. I have a lot of the old ones and a lot of the new ones. Please send picture with first letter. I don't get out much and I like to write. **Iva May Muffo, Box 234, Standish, MI 48658.**

• Hi, I'm a 23-year-old female who loves country and gospel music. My favorite groups are Alabama, The Statlers and Exile. Will answer all letters. Would mostly like to hear from males. Send photo if possible. **Ann Myers, 4409 S. Jones St., Lock Haven, PA 17745.**

• Hi, my favorite singers are Dwight Yoakam and Clint Black. I'm 16 and would like to hear from guys 16 and up. My hobbies are camping and having fun. I will answer all. Please send photo. **JoAnn Hatfield, Rt. 1, Box 377, LaFarge, WI 54639.**

• I am a 42-year-old, single male looking for lady or ladies to write to. I like a lot of the country singers, but my all-time favorite is Becky Hobbs. I like Ethel and The Shameless Hussies, Karen Jones, Wild Rose, Tanya Tucker and others. Would like to hear from fans of Becky Hobbs. Please send photo will answer all letters. **Jimmy D. Spencer, 1710 King Avenue, P.O. Box 147, Kings Mills, OH 45034-0147.**

• I would like to be penpals with a certain 27-year-old Texan that has been in the "Road Mode" for quite a long while. I promise you won't be "Killin' Time." You'll come out of it a "Better Man," and you'll find out that the "Lights Are On, and Somebody's Home." **Stephanie Hester, Crane-Snead, 4914 Fitzhugh Ave., Ste. 203, Richmond, VA 23230.**

• Howdy! My name is Mark. I am a single male, age 32. Would love to hear from you ladies of any age. Will answer all letters. I love country music, western swing and bluegrass. I love to go honky-tonkin' and dancing. **Mark Cole, Rt. 1, Box 337 A-1, Blacksburg, VA 24060.**

• Hi. I'm 17 years old and love country music and country girls. I listen to High 99, a country station in Terre Haute, Indiana. I like George Strait, Garth Brooks, Clint Black, Highway 101, Randy Travis and many more! I'm in my tenth year in 4-H and would like to hear from anyone who likes the same. Will answer all. Send picture and I'll send one back! **Mark Fritts, Rt. 2, Box 143, Rockville, IN 47872.**

• Hi. I have many favorite stars such as Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers, Charley Pride, I'm 70 years old and I don't get around much anymore. Good luck to all. **Onetta Blassingame, Rt. 4, Box 7, Apt. 21A, Lexington, MS 39095.**

COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION



Don Gibson

As a songwriter and a singer, Don Gibson reached the top of his form.

by Rich Kienzle

If you've heard The Kentucky Headhunters' version of Don Gibson's "Oh, Lonesome Me," you probably agree that you're hearing a 32-year-old number that's lost none of its punch. From Gibson himself, who first recorded it in 1958, through Neil Young to Saskia and Serge (whoever they were) to 1950's pop singer, Kay Starr, the song's been the

route—it's been recorded over 700 times and long ago became a standard among country crossover tunes.

Had Donald Eugene Gibson never sung a note, he would still qualify as a legend for his songs: "Sweet Dreams," "I Can't Stop Loving You," "Blue, Blue Day," "Sea of Heartbreak," "Look Who's Blue" and "A Legend in My Time," to name a few. But

Gibson was also a highly successful recording artist. Joel Whitburn's book, *Top Country Singles: 1944-1988*, taken from the *Billboard* charts, shows Gibson ranked number 28 out of the top 200 record-sellers in country music. From 1956 to 1976 he had 82 records on the charts. Nineteen were Top Ten (not counting two hit duets with Dottie West).

Gibson also symbolized the best the late 1950's "Nashville Sound" had to offer. This neutered, pop-flavored music, stripped of fiddles and steel, was Music City's attempt to broaden its audience in the wake of Elvis. The style succeeded and in so doing kept Nashville music commercially viable at a time when standard country record sales dipped. But, in some cases at least, the solution drifted too far from its country roots; strings and voices began to erase the rawer edges of the music as hard country artists were forced to conform. In the end, the Nashville Sound wound up more a negative than a positive term in the minds of many.

Strange to say, amid all the schlock that era also produced the best work of Patsy Cline, Marty Robbins, Bill Anderson, Johnny Cash—and Don Gibson. Gibson's expressive, muscular vocal style, propelled by his own brilliant songs and the super-charged, guitar-driven backing assembled by his producer, Chet Atkins, wears well today.

Gibson was born April 3, 1932, in the western North Carolina town of Shelby. Though his family wasn't musical, he himself started playing guitar as a teenager. He hadn't been playing long before he and another local youth assembled a group. Known as the Sons of the Soil, they played around Shelby and eventually landed their own local radio show.

They weren't professional musicians yet, but their regional reputation earned them a Mercury recording contract in 1949. In those days a local following could land an artist a major label contract. They cut four songs for Mercury, two featuring Don on vocals. None of the records sold, and Don decided to go solo, fronting a band with a tongue-twisting name, The King Cotton Kinfolks.

This time Don's popularity attracted the attention of RCA Victor. In 1950, RCA producer Steve Sholes recorded Gibson and The Kinfolks in Charlotte, North Carolina. Again, no success. Don broke up the band and moved to WNOX Radio in Knoxville, Tennessee. Their programs, *Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round* and *Tennessee Barn Dance*, had already nurtured talents like Chet Atkins, Archie Campbell and Homer & Jethro.

WNOX didn't help Don's recording situation, however. He did one more RCA ses-

sion in Nashville in 1951. After more poor sales, he was dropped by the label, only to be picked up by Columbia from 1952-54. No luck there, either. When he signed with MGM in 1955, he finally managed a breakthrough—with a ballad he'd written titled "Sweet Dreams." MGM released it in 1956, and when Faron Young recorded it for Capitol, it reached Number Two. That fall, Don's original went to Number Nine on the charts, his first charted hit.

The success of "Sweet Dreams" gave him confidence in his writing, and he briefly abandoned performing to compose. According to Charles Wolfe, who's interviewed Gibson extensively, one afternoon, sitting in the Shilom Trailer Park near Knoxville, Gibson wrote two songs and sang them into his tape recorder: "I Can't Stop Loving You" and "Oh, Lonesome Me."

Meanwhile, guitarist Chet Atkins had replaced Steve Sholes as head of RCA's country recording operations. He admired Don and wanted him back on the label. Don's first session, produced by Chet in February 1957, used conventional honky tonk instrumentation featuring fiddle and steel. The four songs, released on two singles, didn't sell. It was, after all, a time when rock 'n' roll was forcing hard country recordings out of favor.

Atkins decided to try again in June with-out the fiddles and steel, adding on instead a heavier, rock-flavored backbeat. This approach yielded the excellent "Blue, Blue Day." Then, according to Wolfe, that fall, before the release of "Day," Gibson gave Chet a demo tape of "I Can't Stop Loving You" and "Oh, Lonesome Me." Atkins immediately heard the potential of both songs and scheduled a session. Each occupied one side of Don's next RCA single. By early 1958, "Lonesome" was Number One on the country charts, where it remained for eight weeks, and Number Seven on the pop charts. "Loving You" was a Number Seven country hit. The single, RCA 7133, remained on the charts 34 weeks all told. "Blue, Blue Day" was finally released that spring, and it, too, hit Number One for two weeks and made it into the pop Top 20. Gibson won acclaim throughout the industry.

Those three songs established Don Gibson forever, not only as a writer, but as an artist capable of producing intense, dynamically arranged performances on record. He followed up with the superb, two-sided hit, "Give Myself a Party" and "Look Who's Blue," which featured a searing vocal. The two songs hit Number Five and Number Eight, respectively, at virtually the same time.

By then Gibson and Atkins had created an incredibly durable "sound" for Don's records, with Don's own rhythm guitar

COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION



Don Gibson at work in RCA's famed Studio B in Nashville in the early 1960's, with one of The Jordanaires in the background.

driving the band. The hot and sharp lead guitar licks came from Chet Atkins or Hank Garland. With just guitars, bass, piano, drums and a vocal group consisting of either The Anita Kerr Singers or The Jordanaires, they achieved a streamlined sound.

"Who Cares," which came out in 1959, Don's sixth Top Ten for RCA, reflected the Gibson style, as did "Don't Tell Me Your Troubles" and his 1960 hits, "Just One Time" (Number Two) and a remake of "Sweet Dreams" (Number Six). He achieved another substantial crossover in 1961 with "Sea of Heartbreak"—Number Two country, Number 29 pop. Right behind it came "Lonesome Number One," another Number Two hit on the country charts, followed by Don's Number Five recording of "I Can Mend Your Broken Heart."

Throughout this period, Don toured and saw others hit with his songs as well. In 1962 Ray Charles's version of "I Can't Stop Loving You" from his pioneering album, *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, spent five weeks as the Number One pop song in America. Patsy Cline recorded "Sweet Dreams" at the final session before her death in March, 1963. That summer, several months after she died, it went to Number Five. Louisiana "swamp pop" singer, Tommy McLain, made it a Top 20 pop hit in 1966.

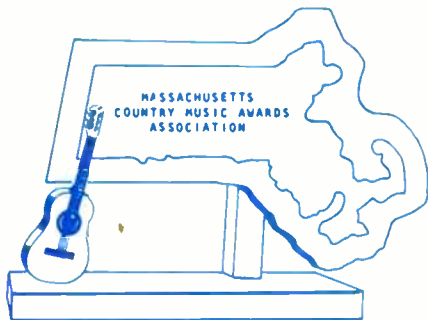
Gibson, however, was nearly consumed by an unfortunate habit: drugs. A legitimate use of diet pills for weight control mushroomed into a vice that nearly killed him. The problem contributed to his 1963 dismissal from the Opry and dogged him on the road. More than once, he was too wiped out to perform, but did so anyway, and embarrassed both himself and the audience. Eventually, to his credit, he conquered this demon.

In 1966 he managed two Top Tens in a row: "(Yes) I'm Hurting" and his version of Mickey Newbury's "Funny, Familiar, Forgotten Feelings." Both reached Number Six that year. In 1969 he came up with two hit duets with Dottie West: "Rings of Gold" (Number Two) and "There's a Story (Goin' Round)" (Number Seven). In 1969 he finally left RCA—for Hickory Records, the label owned by his song publisher, Acuff-Rose. He had five Top Tens with Hickory: "Country Green" (Number Five in 1971), "Woman (Sensuous Woman)" (Number One in 1972), "Touch the Morning" (Number Six in 1973), "One Day at a Time" (the first hit version of this number—Number Eight in 1974) and "Bring Back Your Love to Me" (Number Nine in 1974). Among his other Hickory releases, quite a few reached the charts but only in the lower ranges.

In the course of his nine years with Hickory, Don also tried recording country versions of pop songs, to no avail. His duets with Sue Thompson stiffed. During the early 80's, several of his singles for MCA/Hickory and two for Warners charted, but only marginally. He and Chet Atkins tried recording together again in 1985 independently, but nothing came of it.

Don doesn't perform much these days. He's had heart problems and largely remains at home. Still, his songs and his best music are pure quality and have stood the test of time. Already a member of the Songwriters' Hall of Fame, it's hard to believe he won't someday have a plaque in the Country Music Hall of Fame as well. The Headhunters' hit is just one more example of the timelessness of Don Gibson's songs.

Albums Available
See For CMSA Members Only page.



Hall of Famers and club owners. With nearly 1,200 members, the MCMAA is one of the largest state CMA's.

Jamborees are held each month at various nightclubs. These shows are the MCMAA's primary fund-raisers. In addition, they make fans and club owners aware of new talent, bring in new members and, since the shows are held on Sunday afternoons, allow the entire family to join in the fun.

The MCMAA publishes a monthly newsletter that includes listings of country music events in Massachusetts, articles about performers, news from the nightclubs and radio stations and association business.

The biggest event is the annual Awards Show. Each September, the MCMAA honors local country talent with awards in more than 25 categories and inducts long-time performers into the Hall of Fame. This year, the show was scheduled to be cablecast throughout much of southeastern Massachusetts. The MCMAA's awards balloting differs from that of many other CMA's in that it is done by a vote of the members. Most associations give their awards in a "battle of the bands" situation, with judges rating the performance.

For further information on any of New England's country music organizations, write to the addresses below.

- Massachusetts Country Music Awards Association, P.O. Box 2066, Abington, MA 02351
- Down East Country Music Association, 10 Water St., Oakland, ME 04963
- Maine Country Music Association, P.O. Box 786, Westbrook, ME 04092
- Connecticut Country Music Association, P.O. Box 18196, East Hartford, CT 06108
- Country Music Association of Rhode Island, P.O. Box 8610, Warwick, RI 02888-8610
- New Hampshire Country Music Association, P.O. Box 670 - Lot 87, Somersworth, NH 03878
- New England Country Music Historical Society, P.O. Box 575, Watertown, MA 02272-0575

The MCMAA is based in Abington, Massachusetts. About 50% of its members reside in the southeastern part of the state, but the organization is working to expand its coverage.

Jackie Chiarelli
MCMAA Vice-President and
Newsletter Editor
Quincy, Massachusetts

DOWN EAST COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

The Down East Country Music Association was formed in May of 1981 to promote country, bluegrass and folk music throughout Maine. Membership is approximately 500 and includes fans, musicians and businesses. A volunteer Board of Directors, with representatives from the five local regions, runs the organization. DECMA publishes a monthly newsletter and holds an annual membership meeting.



DECMA's annual Awards Show begins with competitions on a regional level. Throughout the fall, auditions are held in each region. Regional winners are then eligible for the state-wide competition. Winners at all levels are chosen by a panel of judges. Audience response is not a factor. In addition to the performance awards, a Pioneer (Hall of Fame) award is given each year, as are awards for best nightclub and most supportive fan. DECMA itself is a charter member of the Country Music Association of America, an organization set up to coordinate the efforts of the individual state CMA's. This affiliation allows DECMA members to compete in the CMAA's regional and national competitions.

Ruth E. Dennett
DECMA President
Oakland, Maine

DECMA is the more prominent of Maine's two country music organizations. For the Maine Country Music Association's address, see box below. -Ed.

NEW ENGLAND COUNTRY MUSIC
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
"PROMOTING THE FUTURE BY
PRESERVING THE PAST"

The NECMHS is a new venture, chartered as a non-profit organization by the Com-

NECM HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Yodelin' Slim Clark



Elton Britt



Kenny Roberts

monwealth of Massachusetts in 1989. NECMHS's goal is to develop a New England Country Music Hall of Fame museum and library. Through charter member Larry Martel's generous donation, the museum has a "starter" home: a 50-foot trailer will house some of the artifacts pertaining to New England's country history. In the meantime, we are setting up traveling displays at public libraries, jamborees and concerts.

At present, there are 92 Hall of Famers in four of the six New England states. Only Connecticut and Vermont have yet to establish Halls of Fame. Some of these New England Hall of Famers have national stature, like Kenny Roberts, Elton Britt, Dick Curless and Slim Clark. Most simply did not opt for a life on the road and instead played and promoted country music close to home. It is our intent to preserve the contributions these pioneers have made.

We are in the process of collecting photographs, recordings and any other artifacts relating to New England's country music heritage. As we uncover more than 65 years of country music history, some interesting facts are being learned. For instance, the Grandpa Jones character was actually "born" in Massachusetts. It was in 1935, while Louis Marshall Jones and Bradley Kincaid were working in radio on Boston's WBZ/AM, that Jones developed "Grandpa."

NECMHS publishes a quarterly newsletter that highlights Hall of Famers and updates members on our research progress. We also hold monthly meetings and fund-raising jamborees. Anyone who is interested is welcome to write us!

Gordon Brown
NECMHS President and Founder
Cambridge, Massachusetts

YOU CAN MAKE UP TO

\$9,800 in 24 Hours!

Dear Friend,

I made \$9,800 in 24 hours. You may do better!

My name is John Wright. Not too long ago I was flat broke. I was \$31,000 in debt. The bank repossessed my car because I couldn't keep up with the payments. And one day the landlord gave me an eviction notice because I hadn't paid the rent for three months. So we had to move out. My family and I stayed at my cousin's place for the rest of that month before I could manage to get another apartment. That was very embarrassing.

Things have changed now. I own four homes in Southern California. The one I'm living in now in Beverly Hills is worth more than one million dollars. I own several cars, among them a brand new Mercedes and a brand new Cadillac. Right now, I have a million dollar line of credit with the banks and have certificates of deposit at \$100,000 each in my bank in Beverly Hills.

Best of all, I have time to have fun. To be me. To do what I want. I work about 4 hours a day, the rest of the day, I do things that please me. Some days I go swimming and sailing — shopping. Other days, I play racquetball or tennis. Sometimes, frankly, I just lie out under the sun with a good book. I love to take long vacations. I just got back from a two week vacation from — Maui, Hawaii.

I'm not really trying to impress you with my wealth. All I'm trying to do here is to prove to you that if it wasn't because of that money secret I was lucky enough to find that day, I still would have been poor or may be even bankrupt. It was only through this amazing money secret that I could pull myself out of debt and become wealthy. Who knows what would have happened to my family and me.

Knowing about this secret changed my life completely. It brought me wealth, happiness, and most important of all — peace of mind. This secret will change your life, too! It will give you everything you need and will solve all your money problems. Of course you don't have to take my word for it. You can try it for yourself. To see that you try this secret, I'm willing to give you \$20.00 in cash. (I'm giving my address at the bottom of this page.) I figure, if I spend \$20.00, I get your attention. And you will prove it to yourself this amazing money secret will work for you, too!

Why, you may ask, am I willing to share this secret with you? To make money? Hardly. First, I already have all the money and possessions I'll ever need. Second, my secret does not involve any sort of competition whatsoever. Third, nothing is more satisfying to me than sharing my secret only with those who realize a golden opportunity and get on it quickly.

This secret is incredibly simple. Anyone can use it. You can get started with practically no money at all and the risk is almost zero. You don't need special training or even a high school education. It doesn't matter how young or old you are and it will work for you at home or even while you are on vacation.

Let me tell you more about this fascinating money making secret:

With this secret the money can roll in fast. In some cases you may be able to cash in literally overnight. If you can follow simple instructions you can get started in a single afternoon and it is possible to have spendable money in your hands the very next morning. In fact, this just might be the fastest legal way to make money that has ever been invented!

This is a very safe way to get extra cash. It is practically risk free. It is not a dangerous gamble. Everything you do has already been tested and you can get started for less money than most people spend for a night on the town.

One of the nicest things about this whole idea is that you can do it at home in your spare time. You don't need equipment or an office. It doesn't matter where you live either. You can use this secret to make money if you live in a big city or on a farm or anywhere in between. A husband and wife team from New York used my secret, worked at home in their spare time, and made \$45,000 in one year.

This secret is simple. It would be hard to make a mistake if you tried. You don't need a college degree or even a high school education. All you need is a little common sense and the ability to follow simple, easy, step-by-step instructions. I personally know a man from New England who used this secret and made \$2 million in just 3 years.

You can use this secret to make money no matter how old or how young you may be. There is no physical labor involved and everything is so easy it can be done

Here's what newspapers and magazines are saying about this incredible secret:

The Washington Times:

The Royal Road to Riches is paved with golden tips.

National Examiner:

John Wright has an excellent guide for achieving wealth in your spare time.

Income Opportunities:

The Royal Road to Riches is an invaluable guide for finding success in your own back yard.

News Tribune:

Wright's material is a MUST for anyone who contemplates making it as an independent entrepreneur.

Success!

John Wright believes in success, pure and simple.

Money Making Opportunities:

John Wright has a rare gift for helping people with no experience make lots of money. He's made many people wealthy.

California Political Week:

... The politics of high finance made easy.

The Toluca:

You'll love ... *The Royal Road to Riches*. It's filled with valuable information ... only wish I'd known about it years ago!

Hollywood Citizen News:

He does more than give general ideas. He gives people a detailed A to Z plan to make big money.

The Desert Sun:

Wright's *Royal Road to Riches* lives up to its title in offering an uncomplicated path to financial success.

whether you're a teenager or 90 years old. I know one woman who is over 65 and is *making all the money she needs* with this secret.

When you use this secret to make money you never have to try to convince anybody of anything. This has nothing to do with door-to-door selling, telephone solicitation, real estate or anything else that involves personal contact.

Everything about this idea is perfectly legal and honest. You will be proud of what you are doing and you will be providing a very valuable service.

It will only take you two hours to learn how to use this secret. After that everything is almost automatic. After you get started you can probably do everything that is necessary in three hours per week.

PROOF

I know you are skeptical. That simply shows your good business sense. Well, here is proof from people who have put this amazing secret into use and have gotten all the money they ever desired. Their initials have been used in order to protect their privacy, but I have full information and the actual proof of their success in my files.

'More Money Than I Ever Dreamed'

"All I can say — your plan is *great!* In just 8 weeks, I took in over \$100,000. More money than I ever dreamed of making. At this rate, I honestly believe, I can make over a million dollars per year." A. F., Providence, R.I.

'\$9,800 In 24 Hours!'

"I didn't believe it when you said the secret could produce money the *next morning*. Boy, was I wrong, and you were right! I purchased your *Royal Road to Riches*. On the basis of your advice, \$9,800 poured in, in less than 24 hours! John, your secret is incredible!" J. K., Laguna Hills, CA

'Made \$15,000 In 2 Months At 22'

"I was able to earn over \$15,000 with your plan — in just the past two months. As a 22 year old girl, I never thought that I'd ever be able to make as much money, as fast as I've been able to do. I really do wish to thank you, with all of my heart." Ms. E. L., Los Angeles, CA

'Made \$126,000 In 3 Months'

"For years, I passed up all the plans that promised to make me rich. Probably I am lucky I did — but I am even more lucky that I took the time to send for your

material. It changed my whole life. Thanks to you, I made \$126,000 in 3 months."

S. W., Plainfield, IN

'Made \$203,000 In 8 Months'

"I never believed those success stories... never believed I would be one of them... using your techniques, in just 8 months, I made over \$203,000... made over \$20,000 more in the last 22 days! Not just well prepared, but simple, easy, fast... John, thank you for your *Royal Road to Riches!*"

C. M., Los Angeles, CA

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Mark Davis

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Nashville Catches On To

The Kentucky HeadHunters

No one is more surprised by the current success of The Kentucky HeadHunters than the band itself. Its members say that musically they aren't doing anything different from what they've been doing for more than twenty years.

by Bob Allen

It's hitting hard on 2 A.M., and The Kentucky HeadHunters' tour bus, which still sports the famous "T.C.B." insignia of its former owner, Elvis Presley, is idling in the vast field of asphalt around the Capitol Center, outside Washington, D.C.

Hours earlier, as the opening act for Hank Williams Jr., The "Heads"—as their label reps affectionately call them—won over a crowd of 8,500 with their hard-rocking, super-charged, down-home music and scruffy, acrobatic stage presence. In their live shows, The HeadHunters pay homage to their rock 'n' roll background, delving into their vast repertoire of rock oldies like Chuck Berry's "Little Queenie" and Robert Johnson's "Crossroads Blues," which they do in a bluesy, Eric Clapton-inspired version. But the meat of their performance turns out to be the songs from their debut album. *Pickin' on Nashville* came out of nowhere last fall to become the fastest-selling debut album by a group in the history of country music.

As new to the scene as The HeadHunters are, the rowdy audience that Hank Jr. pulled to Maryland's Capitol Center (which seemed on the verge of a riot when a ten o'clock curfew was imposed on the beer concessions) still knew the words to recent hits like "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine," "Dumas Walker" and "Oh, Lonesome Me" well enough to stand up and sing along. Their awareness was especially surprising in light

of the fact that Washington's biggest country station had yet to play a single HeadHunters' tune on the air. The HeadHunters' guitar-bashing sound was a little too rough around the edges for them.

"Because of that, we went out there tonight thinkin' that nobody would know about us and this would be one of the worst shows of the tour," explains the paunchy, blond, bespectacled rhythm guitarist, Richard Young, who is the closest thing this good-natured group has to an official spokesman. "But it turned out to be one of our best."

But now, as the bandmembers lounge around the bus, the last wailing guitar chords and cymbal crashes have faded away, and the crowd, save for a few die-hard autograph hounds, is long gone. Though they had little sleep the night before and still have a 12-to-14-hour drive ahead of them, The HeadHunters can't yet hit the road. There is T-shirt concession money to be counted and unsold T-shirts to be put away.

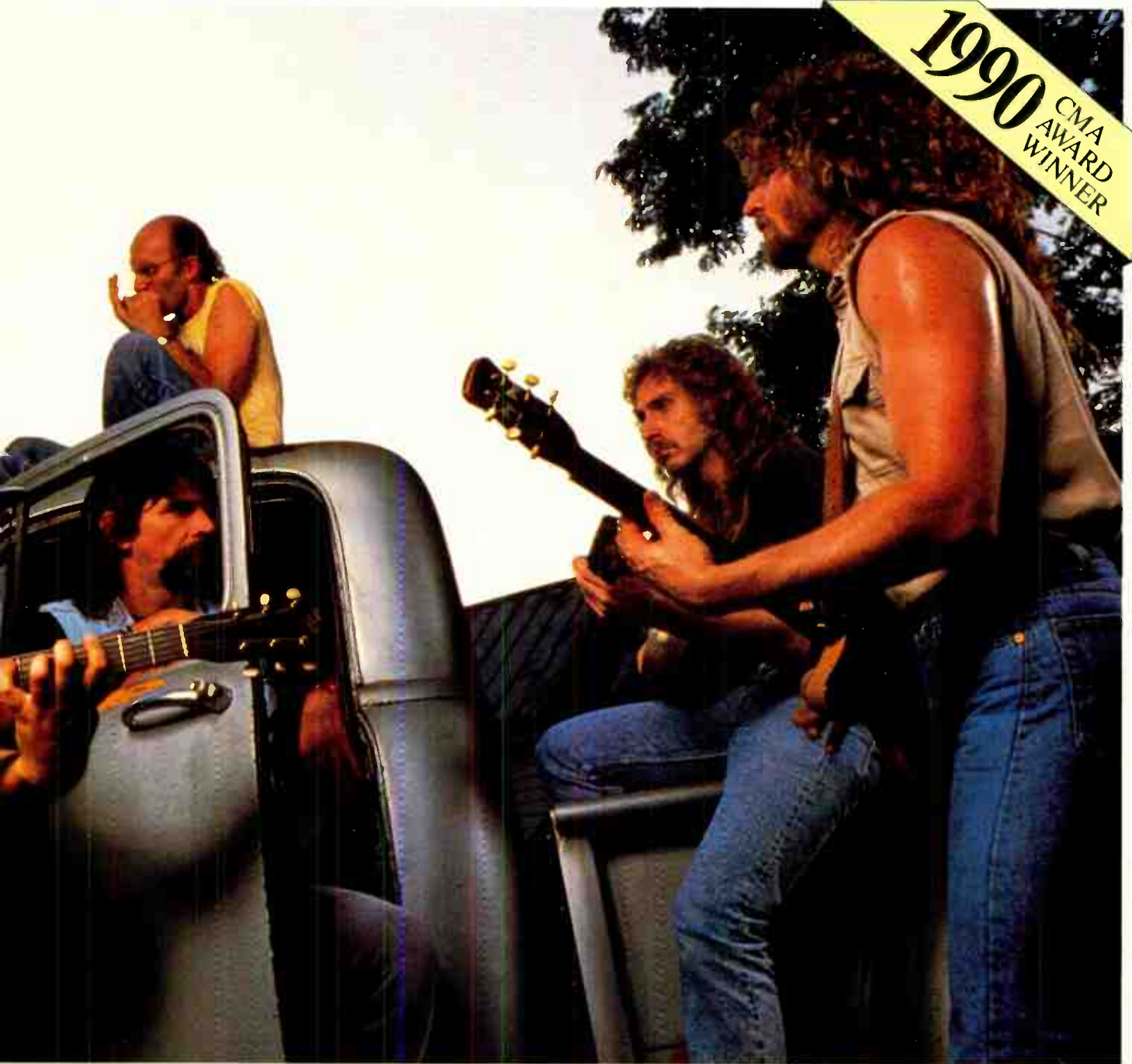
"All we really are is background music for T-shirt sales," sighs lead guitarist Greg Martin as he pops a Mary Chapin Carpenter tape into the bus's sound system and wearily settles back with a beer.

After more than 20 years of music-making (brothers Doug and Richard Young and cousin Greg Martin have been playing together since they were in the sixth or seventh grade), The HeadHunters have gone over the top.



Let's take their near-million-selling debut album: The boys recorded, produced, mixed and mastered eight cuts on it themselves in a marathon three-day Nashville studio session, using \$4500 in borrowed money. From it have come three hit singles. The first of these, "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine," has become the band's anthem; it's a hard-hitting, power-chord-driven update of an old Bill Monroe bluegrass standard, featuring some excellent growling vocals from Ricky Lee Phelps and some blistering guitar licks from both Greg Martin and Richard Young. The HeadHunters did similarly well in the charts with their revved-up version of the old Don Gibson standard, "Oh,

1990
CMA
AWARD
WINNER



Lonesome Me,” and with a solid original (one of six on the album) called “Dumas Walker.”

“Dumas Walker is a real guy, and we’ve known him since we were kids,” explains Greg Martin. “He really was the national marble champion for 35 years. Everything we sing or do, there is no lie to it.” Adds lead singer, Ricky Lee Phelps, “We *couldn’t* make up shit like that if we had to.”

Thanks to the success of their records and their incredible appeal as live performers, they have, in less than a year, graduated from playing 200-300 seat clubs like Picasso’s and Mr. C’s, in Bowling Green, Kentucky, to opening for crowds of 15,000 or 20,000 on Hank Jr.’s

1990 Lone Wolf tour. What is most refreshing about all this is that The Headhunters admit they’re not doing anything all that new or all that different from what they’ve been doing for the last 20 years. Both musically and in terms of image, these grassroots, country rock ‘n’ rollers, with their ample, unkempt hair, rumpled Levi’s and K-Mart tennis shoes, are a throwback to the rowdy, Southern rock era when ragtag, rebellious, hard-charging outfits like Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Marshall Tucker Band and Black Oak Arkansas reigned supreme—that wonderful, post-hippy, pre-yuppie, back-to-the-basics era of the mid-70’s when a lot of us moved out to the country, grew our hair

past our shoulders, bought flannel shirts and pick-up trucks, smoked a little pot, drank a little beer, shot up a few cans with our pistols and turned our stereos up loud enough to wake up the cows in the pasture on Saturday night.

Onstage, The Heads look like they just stepped off some latter-day hippy commune and held up a second-hand musical instrument store on the way to the show. Fred Young’s drum kit is built around the same bass drum he used in his high school marching band; Richard Young plays on the same beat-up, old, “crunchy-soundin’” Telecaster guitar he got in a trade from Steve Wariner’s brother years ago. As they strut, dance,

bound and leap acrobatically around the stage, like wrestlers bouncing off the ropes, Ricky Lee may juggle ten pins or talk on a play telephone to Elvis, inquiring about the slow transmission leak in the "T.C.B." bus. His brother, Doug, the bass player/vocalist, leaps off the drum kit as he finesses out his pounding bass lines, and Fred beats the drums into submission in a lengthy solo, sometimes wearing little more than his coonskin cap, a headband and his BVD's. At the finale, they all toss play money, guitar picks, glasses of water and occasionally even their sweat-soaked shirts into the audience. Their playful bravado recalls a long-gone TV wrestling tag team, The Stump Jumpers—only The Heads do their rowdy, adrenalized, muscular number on the crowd with musical instruments instead of headlocks.

The autocratic Hank Jr., who personally picked The HeadHunters as the opening act for the Lone Wolf tour, seems to have taken a special liking to the boys from Kentucky—though they're not all from Kentucky: the Phelps brothers, the band's newest members, are actually Arkansas-born preacher's sons who now reside in Nashville. Towards the end of his own set, Hank regularly sends his Bama Band off

stage for coffee and lets The Heads roll out and take over, backing him on "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming over Tonight." The burly Bocephus has been known to pick Fred Young up and twirl his 130 pounds around like a baton.

"Hey, Fred," the gregarious Richard Young asks his laconic brother, who speaks with an almost indecipherable Appalachian drawl, "what's-a matter with Hank Jr.? He didn't pick you up and play with ya tonight like he usually does?"

"Naw," Fred replies nonchalantly in his south-central Kentucky sing-song, as he hangs his sweat-soaked Davy Crockett hat on a rack over the table. "I guess he done got tarred a doin' that."

With their "psycho-billy" sound and their unkempt amiability, The Heads have turned out to be a dirty breath of fresh air on the currently clean-cut, white-hatted, hunk-driven country scene. "I think that the reason we broke through," muses the ever-philosophical Richard Young, "was that the people in Nashville saw us and thought, 'Well, these ol' boys is ugly, they's scruffy lookin', they ain't got no durned fancy stage clothes, they ain't got nothin' but

tennis shoes, but they got teamwork. They got brotherhood. And fellowship.'" "You gotta understand," an exhausted Richard Young, 35, explains as he kicks off his cowboy boots, sprawls on a bunk and massages a quarter-sized corn on his toe, "that you're lookin' at a bunch of men in their 30's who've been kicking around for years and had more or less come to face the fact that, musically, nothing was ever going to happen for them. We'd all sorta come to terms with that and were starting to settle into our lives and enjoy them. And then, *man!* This all just come outa the *blue*...."

Just about every conversation you have with The HeadHunters about their sudden, new-found fame comes around to the admission that no one is as surprised by it all as they are. The bandmembers—in their individual and collective musical past lives—had gotten so used to being turned down by the record business that they'd become numb to the prospect of ever getting a record on the charts.

"I can remember how, before we got our present label deal, we'd been passing tapes around Nashville, and this friend of ours down there called us in Kentucky and said, 'Y'all need ta come down here and do a live showcase, because you're stirrin' up some real dust,'" recalls Richard Young. "Well, as soon as he said that, I just cringed," he continues. "I could just feel that old familiar feelin' of failure again, and I just didn't wanta feel it anymore."

The Young brothers, the sons of a Kentucky schoolteacher, and their first cousin, Greg Martin, began playing music together in the late 1960's, when they were barely out of grade school. "It's all we've ever done, all we've ever known," Martin insists.

From 1968 until 1971, the Young brothers, Greg Martin, and another cousin, Anthony Kenney, had a locally acclaimed Southern rock band called The Itchy Brothers, which had a couple of close brushes with the big time. The Itchy Brothers almost landed a deal with Swan Song Records, a label owned by the now-defunct rock supergroup, Led Zeppelin. Another time, they were all set to audition for a management firm that handled another set of rock superstars, Blind Faith. But, as fate and luck would have it, several bandmembers came down with food poisoning the night of the show.

By the early 1980's, The Itchy Brothers had disbanded and its members had gone their separate ways, several of them gravitating toward Nashville. Greg Martin went to work as lead guitarist in Ronnie McDowell's band. Fred Young drummed for Sylvia and landed a bit part in the film, *Sweet Dreams*, playing Patsy Cline's drum-



BOB ALLEN

Brothers-in-arms on the road—Doug Phelps, Greg Martin, Ricky Lee Phelps, Richard and Fred Young with Elvis's T.C.B. bus, and Ricky Lee and Hank Jr. on stage. The band's high jinks have won them new fans nationwide.



DENISE FARRELL

mer. Richard Young commuted from the Glasgow, Kentucky, area to Nashville several times a week where he wrote songs for Acuff-Rose Publishing Company. "It was a livin', but wasn't none of us very happy," Richard recalls. "We wanted to be doin' our own music. I know I couldn't ever stand ta live in Nashville or any big city; country life is all I've ever known."

Doug, Fred and Greg got a hankering to put The Itchy Brothers back together again. "Just as kind of a steam valve, for us to escape Nashville, which was where we were making our living," one of them explains. Only by this time, their cousin, Kenney, had gotten married and could not be coaxed back. In 1985, fate took a significant turn when Greg Martin met bassplayer/vocalist Doug Phelps. Phelps auditioned for Ronnie McDowell's band. Martin coaxed him into coming up to Kentucky and auditioning for *his* band, too. Phelps joined up. All that was missing now was a lead singer and a certain mysterious spark. "We auditioned a buncha singers, and they were all good, but somethin' was missing," Martin recalls. "It just wasn't a family like it was before. Doug was the odd man out. It was still like he was fillin' in for the one family member who wasn't there. But Doug kept talkin' about his brother, who was a singer but had gotten burned out on the music business and was workin' in a museum."

It took a while, but Doug Phelps finally managed to drag his brother, Ricky Lee, up to Kentucky to sit in with the band. "Ricky sat in with us on this song, and man, five minutes into it, the room just went *neon!*" Richard Young marvels. "You could feel this... this...*thang*. We all just stopped and looked at each other and thought, *all right!* We just went to bein' five brothers real fast."

It wasn't long before they could sense something magical beginning to build. The band's reputation in central Kentucky began to take hold. When they played small clubs in Louisville, several hundred people would have to be turned away.

Their once-a-week, live radio show on WLOC/FM, a 3,000-watt station in Munfordville, Kentucky, with a listening area that encompassed most of the central Kentucky region between Louisville and Bowling Green, added fuel to the fire. "It got to the point where it wouldn't be nothin' for us to have a hundred kids up there."

Eventually, The HeadHunters decided to borrow \$4500 and go to Nashville and make their own record. "When we finished it, we didn't even give tapes of it to people at the major record labels," says Young. "We just cir-



At the Gold record party in honor of Pickin' on Nashville, The Heads were surprised by Ricky Skaggs, Ralph Stanley and Bill Monroe. A Monroe tune appears on the album. Also on hand were Polygram execs, Paul Lucks and Harold Shedd, and Heads' manager Mitchell Fox, lower left, center rear and top left in lower photo.

culated them with some of our buddies, who were sort of what I call the Nashville 'Underground'—the publishers and writers and business people on the ground level of the business that nobody ever hears about much."

The tapes generated some word-of-mouth interest in Nashville, so The Heads summoned up the wherewithal to come and do a live showcase. They arrived at the club, Douglas Corner, only to discover that the owner had booked in another band ahead of them, and that they wouldn't even have a chance to do a pre-show sound check. Worse yet, Doug Phelps and Greg Martin were working the road in Louisiana with Ronnie McDowell and only made it back to Nashville minutes before time to go on.

"It was a nightmare," Ricky Phelps recalls. "Everybody was twitchin', so dang nervous. We were all scared to death. It must-a been awful, the worst show we ever did. Afterwards, all the record label people sorta shook our hands on the way out the door and said, 'Too damn bad you guys ain't in New York or L.A., we'd sign ya in a flash.' And we're all just standin' there, watchin' our lives fall apart on us again."

Fortunately, the only record label head who did express an interest in the band that night was the one who counted: Harold Shedd, the discoverer and former producer of the supergroup, Alabama, and present head of Mercury/Polygram's country division. Ironically, Shedd hadn't even been invited to the showcase. But when he asked The Heads for a tape, they gave it to him. Within a few months, The Kentucky HeadHunters found themselves on a major label.

"We was lucky to get hooked up with Polygram Records," says Richard. "Because, in a way, they needed us as much as we needed them. And they've never once tried to mess with us or our music. They've stayed outa our hair. The whole time we was putting the finishing touches on the album, Harold only dropped by the studio once and just asked us if everything was alright, and then left. Other than that, nobody's ever tried to tell us what to do."

"And that's a good thing," Young adds, "because we ain't gonna change. People may stop likin' us, and if so, we'll just go on back home to Kentucky. But we sure ain't gonna change to make 'em like us." ■

Still Conway After All These Years

When you talk to Conway Twitty, one thing is abundantly clear. After more than a quarter century in the music industry, the man knows a thing or two about how to reach his fans.

by Bob Allen

So, herrrrreeeeee's Conway! It's an unseasonably chilly, gray, late weekday afternoon at Twitty City. It's near twilight, and already the "Twitty Bird" and Conway Twitty tunes are chiming over the public address system at Twitty's down-home theme park near Nashville, Tennessee, which—at least for the time being—also happens to be Twitty's business headquarters and home. A battalion of rent-a-cops are on hand, waiting patiently for the nightly onslaught of park patrons. Down at the gift shop, which was struck by lightning in the wee hours of the night last January and is now operating out of the pavilion, they're already doing a brisk business selling Conway Twitty matchbooks (50 cents), Conway Twitty family tree souvenir albums (\$49) and Conway Twitty key chains (\$2 and up). The guard in the guardhouse outside Twitty's office complex is sipping coffee and gazing complacently out the window. Already a line is starting to form at the nearby ticket booth.

Inside the nondescript office building, up a flight of stairs and through several soundproof doors, Conway

Twitty is quietly laboring away, oblivious to the hullabaloo outside—which, after all, is business as usual at Twitty City. Most of the staff has gone home. Now it's just down to Conway, his attractive wife/co-producer/chief executive assistant, Dee Henry, a couple of other key associates and a stray accountant or two. Twitty's day—like most of his days off the road—has been jam-packed with conferences related to his business investments.

But the day's meetings have run behind schedule, and there's a pile of unreturned phone calls and unfinished paper work stacked up on the desks in Twitty's and Dee Henry's adjoining offices. A little juggling is done: a scheduled magazine interview moved back another half hour and a late-afternoon appointment with an accountant rerouted to an early evening dinner. Meanwhile, Twitty's tour bus stands in a nearby garage, being gassed and tuned. By this time tomorrow he'll be out on the interstate again, heading for the next show.

The term "longevity" has been applied to the careers of many artists, but it seems to be Conway Twitty's mid-





dle name! The guy is proof positive that time flies when you're having fun (and sometimes even when you're not)! It's been 32 years now since he shook up early rock 'n' roll with a ballad called "It's Only Make Believe." It's been 20 years since he first stepped up to a microphone and purred "Hello Darlin'" to an adoring country audience.

Now it's the 1990's: 25 years have flown since Twitty made his successful transition from rock to country and went on to rack up more than 50 Number One country singles (and still counting, Conway hopes), along with countless Top Five hits. At age 56, he's been a while between Number One singles, but he's still holding his own in the country Top Ten, an arena increasingly dominated by men 20 or 30 years his junior.

Yes, indeed, old "Cornway"—as even his own fans sometimes playfully call him—has managed to hang in there. As other celebrated veterans of his generation such as Haggard, Jones and even Willie Nelson have slowed down, lost their "bullets" and begun the inexorable slide down the charts, old "C.T." has kept right on coming. Like Pete Rose with his base hits, he seems to have his game down to some kind of science. Hardly a year passed in the last decade without at least one Conway hit single.

Admittedly, the hits Twitty served up may have been a bit calculated. For a while there it looked like he was going to make a whole new career out of recycling time-worn rock and pop hits for the country crowd. "The Rose," "Three Times a Lady" and "Slow Hand" are three of this ilk that come to mind. But Twitty's always bounced back, reaffirming his rock-solid country roots with growling, dewy-eyed, good-naturedly salacious jukebox hits—"I Am the Dreamer," "Tight Fittin' Jeans," "Lying There With Linda on My Mind," "Don't Call Him a Cowboy," "Saturday Night Special" and "That's My Job"—songs which are his true stock in trade.

So be it. Twitty has kept his nose to the grindstone, watched his p's and q's and taken care of business—at times, he insists, to a fault. That, he'll assure you, is the reason he's still around. He's never cultivated the image of the haunted legend (Jones) or the tortured genius (Haggard). He's never been a renegade like Willie or Waylon. There *is* something slightly calculated, machine-like and determinedly crowd-pleasing about his whole approach. As for the personal department, there have been four marriages, including two to his double-ex-wife Mickey. The first of these—according to his terse "as-told-

to” biography, *The Conway Twitty Story* (which, in truth, tells little)—lasted 14 years, and the second even longer.

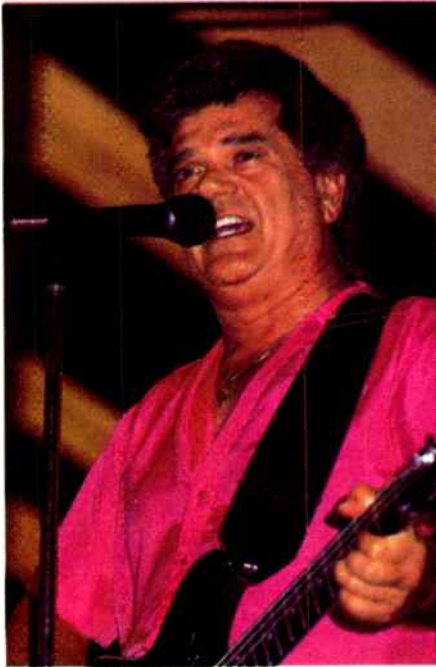
All this may come with the territory in the life of a man who works 90-hour weeks, is gone most of the time, lives and *breathes* his career and would never ever do anything for mere controversy’s sake.

To his legions of loyal fans, Conway Twitty is an offbeat combination of aging sex symbol and bedrock-solid hero figure—the good ol’ boy next door, a down-home entrepreneur who rose above the herd and made good. The middle-aged housewives who adore him know he might growl, tease and titillate them a little, and maybe even give them a furtive little eyebrow-fluttering wink accompanied by semi-suggestive songs like “Hello Darlin’,” “I’d Love to Lay You Down,” “I Know You’ve Never Been This Far Before” or “Don’t Call Him a Cowboy.” But they also know he’ll always keep it within the bounds of good taste and propriety.

“Oh, god!” Twitty roars and actually blushes a little when the country sex symbol suggestion is proffered. “That’s something I *never* think about! I mean, I *never* try to go out there on stage and be sexy! Never in my life!

“But I’ll tell you this,” he adds with a look of piercing frankness, making it clear that he himself has put in long hours reflecting on this issue of longevity and is utterly confident in the conclusions he’s reached. “I feel like I can go on for another 20, 25 years. I really do.

JOHN LEE



“As long as you stay within certain boundaries and don’t violate that trust, country fans will stay with you.”

Because what I do is a little like being a doctor.

“You know, people tend to be a little afraid of young doctors,” he elaborates. “But the longer a doctor has been around, the more comfortable people are around him and the more they’ll trust him to deal with things that they wouldn’t let anybody else deal with.

“And it’s the same with country music. You’re dealing with feelings and emotions that are way down deep inside of people. They have to trust you enough to really let you get into their ear close enough to really whisper, ‘*Hellllloooooo Darlin’....*’ And they won’t let just anybody do that.

“And, as long as you stay within certain boundaries and don’t violate that trust, country fans will stay with you from now on. Because—it’s kinda like that doctor again—the older you get, the better you get. The more you know what you’re singing about, and the more careful you’re going to be about the songs you deal with.”

On this particular early evening, Twitty—dressed in a navy blue blazer, a light blue turtleneck, well-pressed gray dress slacks, a “Conway Twitty” hat and a little “C.T.” emblem on a neck pendant—looks careful and conservative indeed. He’s in his executive mode, and he looks like he means business and knows *exactly* what he’s talking about.

Twitty wears his 56 years well (a combination of diet, a moderate exercise program and a no-tobacco, no-alcohol lifestyle, he later explains). Even so, there’s a slightly weary, end-of-a-long-grinding-day look about him. His eyes are glazed with fatigue, as if he’s pored over one too many computerized balance sheets, met with one too many accountants and listened to one too many mediocre demo tapes in the last nine or ten hours.

Finally, around 7 P.M., as it’s growing dark outside, he sets the last balance sheet down on his desk, glances fitfully at his watch and relocates to an easy chair in Dee Henry’s poshly carpeted office adjacent to his own. “Whew!” He whistles, yawns lightly and leans back into the cushions, “there just aren’t enough hours in the day!”

Besides looking tired, Conway also seems distracted. I catch him sneaking more peeks at his wristwatch. Even as he sits quietly and answers questions, his mind seems to be racing ahead to the next meeting, the next recording session, the next accountant, the next demo tape, the next property closing. Those inner wheels of his grind on relentlessly as if he has a hidden agenda of tasks yet undone, songs yet unlistened to, deals yet unclosed. He wears an implacable expression—like a steely, determined bulldozer operator who is



Twitty City is the current base of Conway’s operations. It is now on the selling block. Conway wants to cut down on business and concentrate more on music.

resolved—come hell or high water—to move another mountain before he calls it a day.

“On the one hand, this has been the best year I’ve ever had,” Twitty smiles matter of factly. He’s given to making sweeping, optimistic statements. “But it’s also been the roughest. A lot of traveling, a lot of concerts this year, along with everything else we’re into. It’s really been a busy one.”

He’s been home off the road (in other words, back to business at Twitty City) exactly four days out of the last four months. His recent schedule has included a lengthy tour that took him as far west as Montana, as far south as Texas. He did ease up a little back at Christmas, when he departed on his annual two-week work/pleasure outing in the Caribbean called “Cruising With Conway.” The cruise took him and a boatload of devout fans to a hotel on Grand Cayman Island which he owns a piece of. Then he was back home for a couple of weeks to begin a new album, then off on the road for another several-month-long jaunt. It’s more or less the same nonstop, living-out-of-a-suitcase routine he’s been following for the last 30 years.

Our man makes it clear he has no intention of easing up or slowing down. He’s not about to trade in his guitar for a fishing rod or a tennis racket. So perhaps he’s entitled to look a little weary and bleary-eyed or even show his age a little—his hair has gone gray and thinned out a bit, and he’s carrying a little more “table muscle” around the middle than he did a few years ago.

“I’ve been involved in various diets,” he chuckles. “I lost 20 pounds here a while back. But then you get back out on the road, and you can’t find all the right foods out there, and the one thing you look forward to is stopping the bus and getting off and having a meal somewhere. But often you’re in a hurry, and you end up eating fast food or whatever’s nearest to the interstate exit....”

Mind you, he’s not complaining. Twitty wouldn’t want—couldn’t *stand*—to live any other way. In fact, the only apparent concession he’s made to the passing years or to the life of leisurely opulence he could be living *if* he chose has been to “retire” the old General Motors Pacer station wagon that he drove until the fenders nearly fell off and “it wouldn’t go anymore.” That done, he opted for a vintage four-door Jaguar and the ’69 Mercedes convertible he bought overseas.

After all, this guy’s idea of hell is a week off at the beach with absolutely *nothing* to do. In his mind, what he does is not just a job, not just a profession, it’s



Conway and Ralph Emery on Grand Cayman Island, and left, celebrating 25 years in country music with MCA VP’s Walt Wilson and Sheila Shipley, President Bruce Hinton, Dee Henry—his wife/manager—and Tony Brown, Executive VP and head of A&R.

his life. It’s an *obsession!* I mean, *listen* to this guy!

“I went 15 years in this business before I ever took a week’s vacation. And I still feel that way.” He laughs and shakes his head. “I’ve told this story over and over, but it’s true: when I was a kid, my dad always said, ‘When there’s cotton out there, you gotta get it; when it’s gone you can rest.’”

Twitty pauses and the look on his face grows intense again, as if he’s about to preach the gospel of Conway Twitty according to the real man, Harold Jenkins—Twitty’s real name is Harold Jenkins: “I’ve always applied that to everything I do. I feel like if I’m fortunate enough to have had the career that I’ve had—and am still having—and the cotton’s still out there, it would almost be...I don’t know what...a *sin*...a *travesty*...a *mockery*...to just turn my back on it and go fishing! I just wouldn’t be doin’ right if I didn’t go out there and *do* it!

“I mean, the best way to explain it,” he adds, the urgency mounting in his normally subdued, well modulated

voice, “is that you’re looking at a guy who doesn’t know what a weekend is!” He shrugs and looks bewildered. “I’ve always thought weekends were a good time to work. It’s always a seven-day-a-week thing for Dee and me, except for the couple of weeks we take off at the end of the year. If we’re not out on the road, we’re here in the office. Seven days a week! And when we aren’t here we call in several times a day to take care of business.

“I’d probably be stressed out if I didn’t operate like that!” he laughs. “I went to Hawaii once to see my younger son, Jimmy, play baseball for Vanderbilt University. After all the games were over, I had a *horrible* time adjusting to nothing to do! Three or four *days* with *nothing to do!*” he laments with a look of horror and disbelief—as if recalling an experience akin to Chinese water torture. “I like to went out of my mind!”

Though Conway “The Man in Motion” Twitty won’t be easing up or his velocity, he does intend to trim the sails and change his heading in the coming years. His current plan is to divest himself of

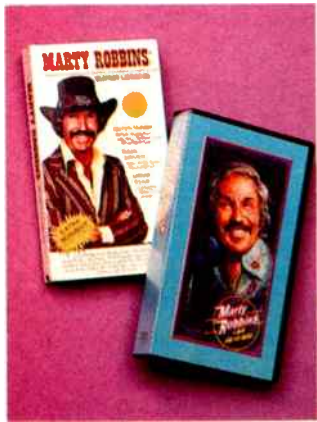
Nashville Warehouse

MARTY ROBBINS VIDEOS

If you like Marty Robbins, you'll love these videos: *Super Legend* and *A Man and His Music*. The two-hour video, *Super Legend*, features 18 performances and includes Marty's Grammy-winning song, "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife." Additionally, you see interviews with Marty's family and individuals who played a major role in his career, from Little Jimmy Dickens to Roy Acuff. The tape also includes exciting clips from his racing career and rare appearances from early television shows and the big screen. This is our number-one selling video. It is hot! Other performances include: "El Paso," "White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Ribbon of Darkness," "Singing the Blues," "I Couldn't Keep From Crying," "Don't Worry 'Bout Me," "This Time You Gave Me a Mountain" and more.

Now for a *Man and His Music*. Marty Robbins always made it his business to be different and to do things in his

own way. This often baffled the industry "big wigs," but it never failed to please his fans. When Marty did step in front of his audience, he knew how to make everyone have a good time—just "funnin' around," as he put it. And that is exactly what has been captured for you on this 55-minute video, *A Man and His Music*, taped during a concert at the Grand Ole Opry. You'll hear such favorites as "Ribbon of Darkness," "A White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Big Iron," "Don't Worry," "That's Alright Mama," "Among My Souvenirs," "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife" and "El Paso." This video is one of the top sellers in *Country Music Magazine*, and it shouldn't be missed. Rich Kienzle reviewed both of these Marty Robbins videos in *Essential Collector* (July/August 1990 issue, *Country Music*) and raved about them. Ronnie Robbins, Marty's son, is ecstatic over the continued support his father's fans have shown as demonstrated by the tremendous sales of these videos. You definitely get great entertainment and collector's items when you order these classics. *Super Legend*, #G2A and *A Man and His Music*, #G1G, for only \$39.95 each.



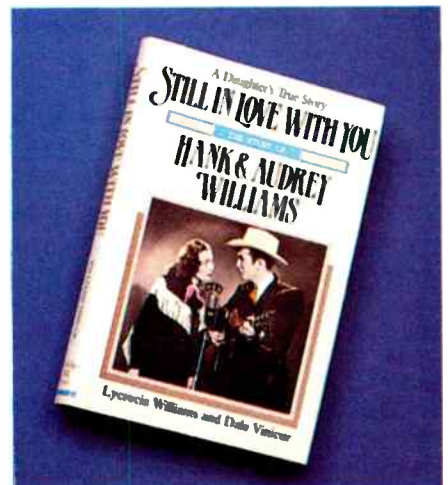
HANK SNOW: THE SINGING RANGER RIDES AGAIN

Here it is, folks! 105 of Hank Snow's legendary recordings, brought together in a four-compact-disc boxed set, covering his career from 1949-1953. You can enjoy nearly six hours of this legend's great music, his most popular songs, including "I'm Movin' On," "Spanish Fire Ball," "The Rhumba Boogie," "The Golden Rocket," "Just Keep A' Movin'" and much more. When Rich Kienzle reviewed this great collection in *Buried Treasures* (March/April 1990 issue, *Country Music*), he said, "Readers must agree...they've been snapping them up like hotcakes." This valuable boxed set is expensive, but the overall cost of the package breaks down to only 80 cents per song, and includes a booklet with plenty of photos covering the personal history and recording career of Hank Snow. This is definitely a CD-set everyone should have in their collection. I keep one on my shelf! You get the four-compact-disc set and history booklet for \$85.98, #BCD15426. Sorry, no LP's or cassettes...CD's only.

HANK AND AUDREY: STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU

Lycracia Williams tells a true story about her parents, Hank and Audrey, in this touching biography, *Still in Love With You*. For the first time, someone who knew both of them intimately has opened up a window on their lives, so that the real Hank and Audrey can be seen. Lycracia recounts the previously untold truth of their lives, interprets it in light of what is known today about alcoholism and co-dependency, and with tenderness and humor shares the love that Hank and Audrey had for each other. Containing stories that have never before appeared in print, the book re-introduces Hank and Audrey as they were, with all their flaws and beauty. Rich Kienzle reviewed *Still in Love With You* in *Essential Collector* (May/June 1990 issue, *Country Music*), where he described it as a "well-done narrative." You've read other stories on

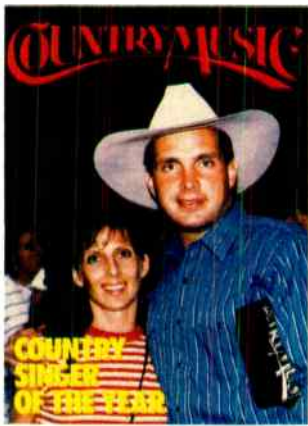
Hank and Audrey. Now get the whole truth in this 199-page, hardcover book for \$16.95, #B4F.



WANT TO BE ON COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE'S COVER!

You've had the opportunity to see many of your favorite stars on the cover of *Country Music Magazine*. Now you can be standing in their shoes and see yourself, your friend or relative on the cover. That's right! Now you can be seen on our magazine with your favorite star, or even by yourself. The sample here shows me, Robin, arm-in-arm with one of my favorite country artists, Garth Brooks. What better way to show off my picture with Garth than to have it printed on the cover of *Country Music Magazine* and hang it in my home. You

can do it, too! You even get to choose from one of two captions to be printed on the cover: "Country Singer of the Year" or "Country Fan of the Year." This full color print is 10 7/8" x 8 1/8", mounted in a lucite frame with stand included. All you need to do is send a



clear, color photo, at least 3" x 5" (no negatives or slides), to: *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, CT 06880, Attn: Fotozines. The cost is only \$24.95 plus \$3.00 postage and handling. #G4A. Please do not use the order form at the end of this ad for this special order. Mail to the above address only. And don't forget to indicate "Country Singer of the Year" or "Country Fan of the Year."

GENUINE GOLD CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS

Look at these rich ornaments layered in genuine 24-karat gold! What a sight to see at Christmas time, sparkling on your proud evergreen. The publisher of *Country Music* has these ornaments hanging on his tree at Christmas, and he has some tree! Four of the six ornaments are three-dimensional, displaying beautiful stars and snowflakes. The remaining two ornaments are dazzling gold snowflakes. These ornaments measure about three inches across and are unbreakable—no need to worry about the cat knock-



HAGGARD: LAND OF MANY CHURCHES

Land of Many Churches is a two-record, country-gospel collection that was recorded live at various church services. These recordings feature Merle, The Strangers and guests (Bonnie Owens, The Carter Family and Johnny Gimble on fiddle) performing at a Tennessee country church, a Nashville Rescue Mission, San Quentin Penitentiary's Garden Chapel and a rural California Assembly of God church.

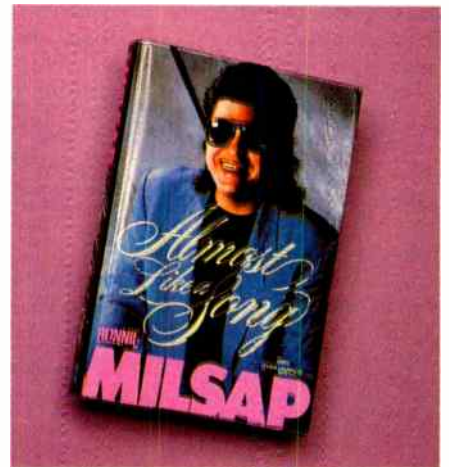
If you happened to be present at any of these services, you got to see a portion of this great entertainment first hand, and if you weren't, you must listen to these Hag recordings for yourself. His gospel song selections range from "Turn Your Radio On" and "Amazing Grace" to "I Saw the Light" and "Family



Bible." We advertised this double-record set in *Buried Treasures* (July/August 1989 issue, *Country Music*), and it sold like hot-cakes. So don't miss out on these double-record, rare recordings for only \$21.00, #HAT 3097/8. Available in LP and cassette only. Specify which format when ordering.

MILSAP: ALMOST LIKE A SONG

Ronnie Milsap's life is a classic rags-to-riches tale. Today he is one of the hottest country "crossover" singers in the nation, with six Grammy awards, 20 million records sold and 35 Number One hits (more than any other RCA recording star, including Elvis Presley). But Milsap's early life was a different story. Born nearly blind and raised in poverty by his mother who soon rejected him as a curse, Milsap was sent to a school for the blind where the students were beaten to instill discipline. However, at that same school he was also taught



music and how to play the piano. In the 1970's Milsap began an uncertain career singing in honky tonk nightclubs, where he came to the attention of Elvis Presley. By 1976 he was headlining his own show and touring the world's concert halls. Reviewing this book in *Essential Collector* (September/October 1990 issue, *Country Music*), Rich Kienzle says, "Ronnie's autobiography, *Almost Like a Song*, will shock those unfamiliar with his life." Rich also notes how Ronnie's sensitivity shows through, which makes this a "compelling book." And, as Wynonna and Naomi Judd put it, "We came to love Ronnie because he was so genuinely kind to us. He is an entertainer's entertainer." You must not miss this 272-page, heartfelt, hardcover book, for only \$19.95, #B5D.

Record Reviews

Merle Haggard *Blue Jungle* Curb D4-77313

The pendulum swings in quality evident on Haggard albums in recent years haven't been too encouraging. *New Yorker* profiles notwithstanding, there were astonishing highs and appalling lows on his past few Epic albums. Hag's direction seems to change with his record company, so with his move to Curb, it's no surprise we get a very different type of record: his best, most consistent album since *Chill Factor*.

Overall, *Blue Jungle* has the loose feel of his best Capitol albums of the 1960's and early 70's. One of the album's strengths is its rough edges. Most numbers sound like no-frills demo recordings. Those who, like me, hate over-production, can take comfort in this approach. As on Merle's old Capitol albums, there's even a cover of a Jimmie Rodgers song—"Never No Mo' Blues."

This is also his most "Bakersfield" album in a long time. That particular spirit comes through on the honky tonker, "Blue Jungle," and on "A Bar in Bakersfield," both Hag-Freddie Powers numbers. The latter celebrates the unsung barroom musicians left behind when people like Buck and Merle hit the big time. There's even "Lucky Old Colorado," written by veteran Bakersfield songwriter-singer, Red "I'm a Truck" Simpson. Plus, Hag's unpolished voice makes for some excellent singing throughout. Check out the brilliant Hag ballad, "Driftwood." His vocal on "When It Rains It

Pours" is equally fine, marred only by annoying thunderstorm sound effects.

There is also a return to the social conscience that marked his best work of the 60's and early 70's, and he scores with two out of three in this area. Much of the publicity for this album revolves around Merle's social commentary and the song, "Me and Crippled Soldiers." Bar none, it's the weakest song here. Now, before you start writing angry letters, read on. A song criticizing flag-burners or praising disabled veterans is fine. We've come to expect them from Hag, going back to "Fightin' Side of Me."

But social commentary has to ring true and speak for many. "Fightin' Side" did. "Me and Crippled Soldiers" doesn't. It's too disjointed and just plain wrong. To state, as this song does, that *no one* cares about flag-burning *except* Haggard and disabled veterans is hogwash.

Millions (even some who oppose an anti-flag-burning constitutional amendment) also hate flag-burning. Haggard ruined the song and unintentionally insulted his audience by leaving them out in the cold. True, this song will strike a chord with many, especially now, but its flaws outweigh its virtues. He could have handled the subject better.

Compare "Me and Crippled Soldiers" to "My Home Is in the Street" and "Under the Bridge," both Haggard/T.T. Lane compositions that deal brilliantly with the plight of the homeless with the same insight and compassion that earlier classics like "Mama Tried" directed toward prisoners. They capture the vivid images, the fear and uncertainty that the homeless surely feel, and are easily among the best songs he's written in years.

Everyone's been waiting for Haggard to recover the consistency that was one of

his trademarks 20 years ago. I think he's found it by returning to his musical roots with Curb. The best parts of this album show that the brilliance that has always lain within Merle still shines. He's a bit the worse for wear, perhaps, but *Blue Jungle* serves as a reminder of how one man set a standard and returned to it. That's something a lot of younger singers can only hope to achieve after they accumulate this much mileage. —RICH KIENZLE

Reba McEntire *Rumor Has It* MCA-6444

An artist in Reba McEntire's shoes sometimes finds herself faced with a dilemma. Having already made landmark albums like *Whoever's in New England* (1986) and *My Kind of Country* (1984), having already won the Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year award once (1986) and its Female Vocalist of the Year award four times, she may be asking herself "Have I peaked?" and "Where do I go from here?"

For McEntire, who has been co-producing her own albums and pretty much charting her own musical course for the past five or six years, part of the answer has been a gradual shift into more uptown musical territory. While the two mid-1980's albums were out-and-out celebrations of the Oklahoma songstress's Western swing and honky tonk roots, the four studio albums since *New England* have been marked by bold excursions into pop and even soul and white rhythm-and-blues.



*Latest albums from Merle Haggard, George Jones,
Reba McEntire, Rosanne Cash, Garth Brooks,
Skip Ewing, Suzy Bogguss, Shelby Lynne,
Texas Tornados and more.*

This trend continues on *Rumor Has It*, McEntire's latest, which is also her first on which star producer Tony Brown replaces veteran Jimmy Bowen as her co-producer. Once again, Reba downplays her thick, rural Oklahoma inflections; and there's nary a Western swing, honky tonk or rodeo song in the bunch. Instead, the album's loaded with contemporary pop-with-a-subtle-twang, state-of-the-heart songs with evocative melodies, clever lyric hooks and snappy vocal and instrumental arrangements. While I don't hear any instant classics like "Whoever's in New England" on here, I do hear at least a half-dozen potential hit singles.

Many of these songs give Reba an opportunity to trot out the most formidable weapon in her arsenal: her frightfully precise and supple high-range vocal power (which should someday earn her a spot in a Memorex commercial!). On "You Lie," written by Bobby Fischer, Charlie Black and Austin Roberts, she breaks into a sustained falsetto cry in the chorus that nearly makes your hair stand on end.

By contrast, she growls her way through "Waitin' For the Deal To Go Down"—defiance oozes from every note on this sour lament of romance gone wrong, also written by Fischer, Black and Roberts. On "That's All She Wrote," by Joe Schemay and John Hobbs, she belts out the I-told-you-so lyrics with a vengeance.

There are a couple of noteworthy surprises on *Rumor Has It*. Reba turns in a moving and subtle rendition of Jesse Winchester's "You Remember Me," an introspective, emotionally ambiva-



lent reverie—heartbreak recollected from a safe but regretful distance. It's the kind of performance we might once have expected from Anne Murray or Helen Reddy. Reba does it with more fervor and finesse than either of them ever could.

Most delightful is Reba's sassy revival of Bobbie Gentry's "Fancy," which Gentry, a gifted country star of the 1960's, turned into a minor hit in 1969. (She also wrote the song.) It's a dark, moving tale of a fallen lady who continues to find her own peculiar way in the world.

Rumor Has It may not be a landmark album like *Whoever's in New England* or *My Kind of Country*. It is, however, a satisfying—if occasionally predictable—and extremely well-executed song collection from a singer who, after 17 albums and a half a dozen CMA awards, still leaves most of the competition in the dust.

—BOB ALLEN

Gary Stewart
Battleground
HighTone HC 8023

Among all the singers who've emerged in country music in the last twenty years, including all those in white hats, there's not one who can touch Gary Stewart. For those of you who've forgotten, Stewart is a Kentucky-born, Florida-raised country rocker who blew on to the country scene in the early 70's with fantastic hits like "Out Of Hand," "Drinkin' Thing," "Your Place or Mine" and "She's Actin' Single (I'm Drinkin' Doubles)." At the time he was hailed by the national press as the potential missing link between rock and country.

As his music then and now attests, Stewart has always had one foot in Southern rock. A longtime Allman Brothers devotee, he has

occasionally recorded and written with Gregg Allman and Dickie Betts; and off-stage, he used to hang out with the troubled Allman in a dangerous imitation of the deaf leading the blind.

After a severe fade-out in the early 1980's due to the usual array of personal problems (suffice to say Stewart has lived out the Hank Williams myth with as much enthusiasm and imagination as anyone who's still around to tell about it), he re-emerged in 1988 with *Brand New*, a modestly successful but encouragingly strong album issued by the West Coast independent HighTone label. Maybe the maniacal brilliance and intensity of his early 70's hits had faded a trifle, but *Brand New* proved that Stewart, for all his years on the skids, could still resurrect some of the old fire when he'd a mind to.

Battleground, Stewart's newest album and his second for HighTone, is an even stronger effort. There are a few cuts on here—a teeth-grashing version of bluesman Robert Cray's "Nothin' But a Woman," driven by Allman Brother Warren Haynes' nasty, sizzling electric slide guitar, and Stewart's own rollicking cruising song, "Hey Leona"—where he comes frighteningly close to matching his 70's intensity. (If you can stay in your seat while these two songs are booming through the speakers, then you've got more self-control than I do.)

When Stewart is really on a roll, he instinctively oozes Jerry Lee Lewis influences as naturally as sweat from his pores. He belts, wails, growls, mumbles, snarls and shouts out lyrics in that unforgettable, wailing, qua-

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ROY ACUFF

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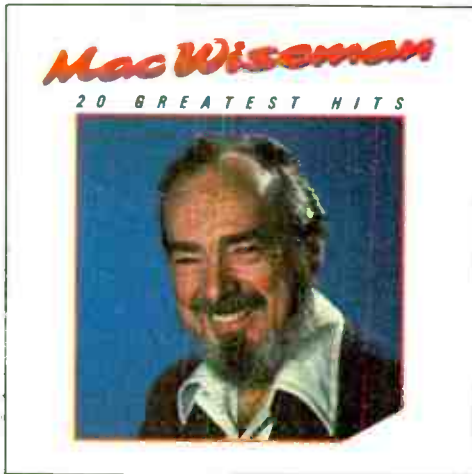
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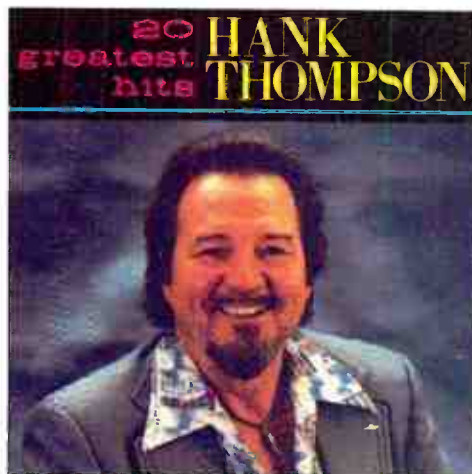
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Record Reviews

vering vibrato of his that echoes with fear, lust, rage and frenzied immediacy.

Battleground was produced by Nashville veteran Roy Dea, who produced all of Stewart's 70's classics as well. True to Stewart's and his own instincts, Dea has kept the production delightfully raw, gritty and 60's-sounding and lets the country rock. There's lots of loud electric guitars, wailing steel and crashing drums.

Of course, a Gary Stewart album would not be a Gary Stewart album without a couple of "get down" hillbilly tearjerkers. Here, we have "Woman in Demand" by A.L. "Doodle" Owens, Gene Vowell and S. Hall and "Ol' Hank's Lovesick Blues" by Bill Emerson, J. Emerson and D. Moore. The latter is a sad lament in which the singer comes up with being raised on Hank's tragic old jukebox vignettes as the only imaginable explanation for the way he and his friends so routinely mess up their own lives. Stewart even takes an oldie by the late Bobby Darin, "You're the Reason I'm Living," and turns it into a wailing, Jerry Lee Lewis-style, devotional rave-up.

It's simply great—down-right inspirational—to hear Gary Stewart hitting on all six cylinders again. I'd like to think that this is the start of a whole new career for him.

But, please, Gary, on a personal note: I know you're a middle-aged man now, a grandfather to boot, and not the same kid who recorded "Whiskey Trip" and "Your Place or Mine" so many years ago. But please, don't trade in your leather-fringed motorcycle jacket and lizard-skin boots. You just wouldn't look good in a white hat.

—BOB ALLEN

Suzy Bogguss *Moment of Truth* Capitol 92653

It's hard to avoid overreacting to the disappointment of Suzy Bogguss's second album. Her first, *Somewhere Between*, was so great—so original, joyful, wise, fresh and intelligent—that the tired old licks and major-metropolitan-country conventions which comprise *Moment of Truth* seem almost unreal. They invite something stronger than disappointment, and they demand an explanation.

You won't get that explanation here: just a few possibilities, all or none of which might be true.

The first possibility is that Suzy was suffering from Second Album Syndrome when she made *Moment of Truth*. That is, she was so busy working her new career that she didn't spend enough time

picking the right songs and feeling her way into them.

Second, there's the possibility that too many cooks spoiled this broth. When an artist makes a successful first album, all sorts of advisers appear and strenuously counsel creative conservatism. Maybe Suzy listened and accepted the proposition offered or forced upon her: that she should quit sounding so different from everyone else.

Third, there's the producer question. Here at least we have some hard facts: *Somewhere Between* was produced by Wendy Waldman, a very smart, independent soul who is herself an impressive singer/songwriter, while *Moment of Truth* was produced by Suzy and her new boss at Capitol Records, Jimmy Bowen. It is not at all unlikely that Mr. Bowen's influence was greater than Suzy's, since he belongs to the old school of Nashville producer/executives and runs his shop accordingly. He's the man in charge, and what he's in charge of is a high-tech machine which churns out smooth, clean, exceptionally major-metropolitan-country radio-programmable records at a steady clip. It's relevant to note that production volume at Capitol has increased dramatically since he took over, and so has product uniformity. Bowen, in fact, has

accomplished the heretofore unthinkable, causing (for instance) a John Anderson record to sound very much like a Gail Davies record. Or a Suzy Bogguss record.

Those are the whys of *Moment of Truth*. The whats are harder, because this album is distinguished only by the qualities it lacks: variety, energy, lyrical substance and originality. There are some nice enough songs—"All Things Made New Again" by Dan Seals and Rafe Van Hoy, "Friend of Mine" by Suzy, Wendy Waldman and Frannie Gold—but the lyrics of even these songs offer nothing out of the ordinary, and the arrangements are so utterly predictable, so stone cold dead between the ears, that you wonder how real live musicians could stand to play them. The money helps, I guess. Overall, this album is so thoroughly unremarkable that if her name weren't printed on its jacket, I really doubt that I'd know it was Suzy Bogguss singing.

I've listened to *Moment of Truth* over and over, hoping to hear something that matches or surpasses the beauty of *Somewhere Between*'s best moments, or even a better-than-average song. I don't hear anything like that. All I hear is the sound of Bowen's machine, and a great singer going to waste. —PATRICK CARR



Skip Ewing *A Healin' Fire* MCAC-42344

One thing you can't take away from Skip Ewing: He's a master of the catchy melody and the clever phrase—generally without emotional impact, but catchy and clever and radio-active as all get out. Ewing has applied his considerable grasp of commercial formulas to produce a largely L.A.-style, lite-rock outing here. It's a first-rate production,

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using some of the greatest session players in Nashville, but with few exceptions the individual songs simply shimmer in the air for a few minutes, like soap bubbles, then leave you realizing they were a lovely illusion.

Ewing's clipped enunciation shapes a voice that shares many good qualities with international Hispanic pop-jazz singer, Jose Feliciano. His voice is an impressive instrument, though there is little indication of personality behind those perfect tones.

But I guess it's the songs that really bother me, and since Ewing again wrote or co-wrote everything on the album, he bears the blame. Of five stickered on the cover as likely singles, only "Rebecca Lynn" represents anything more than a finely-crafted working of the various common clichés of country-pop. And even it seems to have a forced folk-quirkiness, self-consciously aimed at matching the Nanci Griffith/Kathy Mattea hit, "Love at the Five and Dime." The one song where Ewing hits a nerve, connecting performance and content with some genuine human emotion, is "It Never Would Have Worked Out," which he co-wrote with Red Lane. It should be the only single from this album. They should release it twice. It's impressive. Needless to say, it is not noted on the cover sticker.

I've wondered through the past two Ewing records how someone could have so much apparent talent in the craft and yet come up essentially bland and vacu-formed every time. I think I've figured it out. While Ewing sings a line about eating simmering barbecue in the pleasingly uptempo "Dancin' to the Radio," he thanks no less than three Nashville sushi restaurants in his credits. Sushi bar country, for cryin' out loud. No wonder it's so bloodless.

—BOB MILLARD



SKIP EWING

A Healin' Fire

Rosanne Cash *Interiors* CBS CK 46079

As much as I love her records, appreciate her honesty and respect her pedigree, I don't think I'd like to be Rosanne Cash. Judging from her music, she lives too close to life's razor's edge too much of the time and peers too deeply too often beneath the surface of everyday existence. She seems painfully susceptible to the jarring little blackboard scrapes and frayed nerve endings that life and love (or the lack thereof) constantly inflict upon our emotional immune systems.

Never has all this been so evident as it is on *Interiors*, Cash's latest album. The ten songs, all written or co-written by Cash, wrestle for emotional release amidst the anguish and uncertainty of personal relationships. To say that *Interiors* is autobiographical is a huge understatement. Cash's long-term relationship with her husband, singer-songwriter Rodney Crowell, is explored in searching songs like "Real Woman" (co-written and co-produced by Crowell) and "On the Inside" (also co-produced by her husband). In the latter song, you can feel the anguish over the lost years

and Cash's cautious sense of triumph and coming-of-age as she sings: *We watched it unravel/we heard it unwind/Imprisoned by anger/embittered by time/No one could tell me/we'd be standing here today/Steeled by the fire/sealed by the pain.*

Songs like "Paralyzed" and "I Want a Cure" are like soft, primal protests against the difficulties and uncertainties of estrangement and separation. The singer quietly but desperately pleads for some refuge—any refuge—from the chronic confusion: *I want a cure/A mental, geographical cure/A physical, chemical cure/Sugar or shopping/Drinking or dropping/The emotional highs/Of my life in disguise....*

Interiors marks Cash's first outing as a producer (save for the two cuts co-produced with Crowell). The instrumental arrangements are minimal—occasionally to a fault. Cash's haunting, subdued vocal on "Paralyzed," for instance, is accompanied by John Jarvis's rudimentary piano figures, Edgar Meyer's Arco bass and Mark O'Connor's violin only. The uneasy lyrics of "Dance With the Tiger" are underscored by Richard Bennett and Stewart Smith's interlacing acoustic guitars. (Smith is the ace guitarist with Crowell's band.) Impeccable backup vocals are heard throughout

from Crowell, Maura O'Connell and others.

Unlike its predecessor, *King's Record Shop*, *Interiors* is almost determinedly uncommercial. Its spare arrangements, its subjective, hook-free lyrics and its atmosphere of smoldering introspection almost compel the listener to meet Cash and her musical preoccupations on her own terms or not at all.

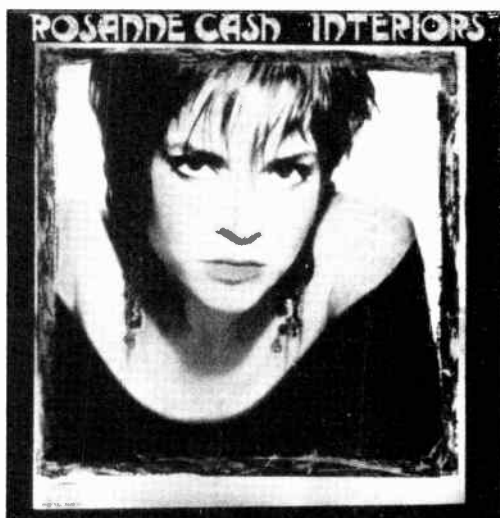
Its confessional honesty and utter lack of pretense make *Interiors* a frightfully courageous work. It's a powerful statement on those shadowy, sometimes treacherous emotional shoals that lurk beneath the surface of everyday politeness, ritual and pretending.

By the way, don't tell Rosanne Cash to have a nice day. I'm sure she'll have whatever kind of day she damned well pleases.

—BOB ALLEN

Texas Tornados *Texas Tornados* WB 9 26251-2

Shout "ar'ba!" and polka till you drop. This could be Tex-Mex heaven for fans of that lively, regional accordion genre. Doug Sahn and Augie Meyers, partners in the Sir Douglas Quintet, are joined by international accordion star, Flaco Jimenez, and



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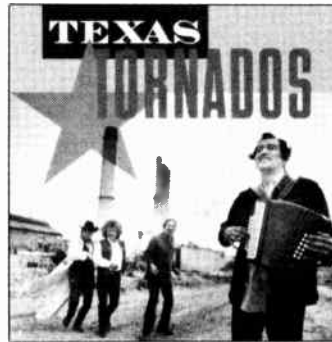
Produced by Keith Stegall and Scott Hendricks

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Record Reviews



threadbare Tex-Mex country singer, Freddy Fender, for what is generally a fun set of tracks with a decidedly "live" feel of a barrio house party.

Spare production is a plus here as the four friends come together for what appears to be a passing confederation. Radio has not been kind to Tex-Mex as raw and vital as this is in the past, and there's little reason to expect radio to change just because this record is 80 percent great—meaning eight of 10 songs are 100 percent wonderful and two stink. Mexican polkas, waltz and conjunto are mixed with a little rhythm-and-blues and four-square rock 'n' roll. Sahm revives two Sir Douglas Quintet favorites, "Who Were You Thinking of (When We Were Making Love)" and "Hey Baby, Que Paso," to good effect. He also sells the heck out of the poignant bolero waltz, "She Never Spoke to Me in Spanish." Meyers's cheesy organ and accordion are classic elements of the Tex-Mex sound, and Jimenez comes through with bopping squeeze box to lend a wild polka flavor.

The only drag here is Freddy Fender. His quavering 50's-style rhythm-and-blues strolls are just as boring as anything this one-note stylist has ever done. "Wasted Days and Wasted Lives," wasn't it? That and "Before the Next Beer Gut Falls," as I recall. His membership in this one-off band makes the name slightly misleading. It should have been Three Texas TORNADOS and a Stale Wind. —BOB MILLARD

George Jones
You Oughta Be Here With Me
Epic ET 46028

Hell, yeah, I don't mind saying that the first time I heard "Hell Stays Open (All Night Long)," I nearly drove my car off the road, which is what happens when you have but two hands to deal simultaneously with a steering wheel, a gear shift and a radio dial. This is the best George Jones song George Jones has had in, oh, I guess about a decade, probably since "He Stopped Loving Her Today," and I thrill just to hear him go to work on the words "all night" in the title line.

The rest of this album is the usual George Jones selection, nothing real special, but no sore thumbs either, maybe just a little more mellow than usual. The title song is as bluesy as "Hell Stays Open," though the concept is nowhere near as memorable. "I Sleep Just Like a Baby" and "A Cold Day in December" are a pair of those tailored-to-George tunes that pile irony on irony and are built around a clever play on words. "Someone That You Used to Know" invokes the memory of "Just Someone I Used to Know" without measuring up to the expectations created by the similar title. "Somebody Always Paints the Wall" (which starts out sounding like an off-kilter novelty tune and then turns

Record Reviews



unmistakably serious) and the thumping, bluesy "O! Red" just don't sustain interest very long no matter how much George puts into them.

You get the sense that he can keep cranking out a very professional job like this every few months for as long as he wants, and that's no small feat. George Jones is George Jones, after all, and there's still experience, soul and daring technique in much of what he does. But I sure wish his producer and writers could come up with a couple more cuts as strong as "Hell Stays Open (All Night Long)" to keep things a little more interesting.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Shelby Lynne *Tough All Over* Epic EK 46066

When Billy Sherrill produced Shelby Lynne's debut album last year, it was clear he had no idea what to do with her musically, so he experimented with nearly every possible sound-image he knew. It didn't work, but the young girl with the tough but vulnerable good looks who stared out of that album cover was obviously a talent to be reckoned with. With *Tough All Over*, the day of reckoning has arrived.

This time out, with producer Bob Montgomery at the helm, Lynne delivers a 10-song palette of smoky country blues, rhythm-and-blues ballads and thoroughly memorable tunes—old and new—

with an edge of the unusual about them that showcases and defines Lynne's amazing vocal strengths. The choice of oldies alone reflects confidence; Charlie Rich's "Lonely Weekends," Johnny Cash's signature song, "I Walk the Line," and Duke Ellington's classic big band blues, "Don't Get Around Much Anymore." Lynne gives the first two a hard-edged, rocking update. The Ellington tune, one classy piece of music, gives a clear field to all the power and nuance that this Alabama natural possesses.

This is a solid 10-song collection: not a filler in the pack. The new tunes include Wayne "You Were Always on My Mind" Carson's challenging ballad, "Dog Day Afternoon." Here Lynne's performance demonstrates her wide dynamic range and register on a number that could have been handled by few singers shy of current rhythm-and-blues romantic ballad queen, Anita Baker.

"Baby's Gone Blue" is another fine off-center melody, again framing this excellent new voice with high-quality, unusual material. There are hints of Wynonna Judd in the performance from time to time, but none of the songs would fit the Judd mold—too much raw heart, not enough manipulative nostalgia—so there is no fear of imitation.

So, while Lynne emerges with several strong influences still apparent, this time she presents a sound so undeniably appealing, in turn pliable and emphatic, and with such a flawless sensibility about when to use which of those characteristics, that this should be considered her true debut. *Tough All Over* heralds Lynne as a major new vocal talent for the 90's. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if she didn't wind up having a gift that transcends country without leaving it—as was the case eventually with Patsy Cline.

—BOB MILLARD

TOP 25 ALBUMS

1. **Clint Black** *Killin' Time*
2. **Vince Gill** *When I Call Your Name*
3. **Garth Brooks** *Garth Brooks*
4. **Alabama** *Pass It On Down*
5. **Keith Whitley** *Greatest Hits*
6. **Kentucky HeadHunters** *Pickin' on Nashville*
7. **George Strait** *Livin' It Up*
8. **Alan Jackson** *Here in the Real World*
9. **Ricky Van Shelton** *RVS III*
10. **Travis Tritt** *Country Club*
11. **Kathy Mattea** *A Collection of Hits*
12. **Lorrie Morgan** *Leave the Light On*
13. **Waylon Jennings** *The Eagle*
14. **Randy Travis** *No Holdin' Back*
15. **Garth Brooks** *No Fences*
16. **Shenandoah** *Extra Mile*
17. **Reba McEntire** *Rumor Has It*
18. **Doug Stone** *Doug Stone*
19. **Hank Williams Jr.** *Lone Wolf*
20. **Patty Loveless** *On Down the Line*
21. **Charlie Daniels Band** *Simple Man*
22. **Marty Stuart** *Hillbilly Rock*
23. **Kathy Mattea** *Willow in the Wind*
24. **Randy Travis** *Always & Forever*
25. **Tanya Tucker** *Tennessee Woman*

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Record Reviews

Barry & Holly Tashian

Trust in Me

Northeastern NR 5001

It's against my policy to review records myself. The policy is to assign reviews to our senior writers, let them say whatever they want and give them space in the magazine to publish the results. There are lots of good reasons for this policy, which has been in effect for 18 years, but that's another story.

On rare occasions, an album comes along that I want to tell everyone about. So...instead of calling everyone I know and telling them about it one at a time, I just write the review. Barry and Holly Tashian's album, *Trust in Me*, is one of those rare examples. It is a contemporary tribute to a great country tradition: duet harmony. In the notes to this album Emmylou Harris writes, "There are many things I love about country music, but I guess the main event will always be the Duet. It was the singing of George with Tammy (and Melba), Joe with Rose Lee, and Stoney with Wilma Lee that hooked me and has held me ever since." To that list I would add The Delmore Brothers, The Stanley Brothers, The Louvin Brothers, The Everly Brothers, Lulu Belle and Scotty, Carl Butler and Pearl, Bill Monroe and anyone Bill would permit to stand next to him and, of course, the magnificent Miss Emmy herself and anyone she would be willing to stand next to (like Dolly, Ricky Skaggs, Linda Ronstadt, Buck Owens, George Jones and others).

Barry and Holly Tashian never picked cotton or worked in the mills. They are not related to any coal miners. In fact, they grew up in the affluent environment of Westport, Connecticut. But they have listened to, learned from and

obviously fallen in love with the music of those people I've listed. They *have been* toiling in the Nashville mines as songwriters, backup singers and musicians.

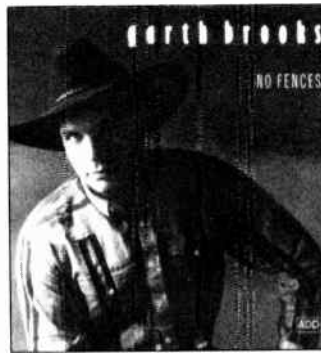
Their loving fidelity to the duet tradition stands clear whether their harmonies are caressing other writers' songs—like Gram Parsons' "Blue Eyes," Ray Edenton and Don Winter's "You're Running Wild," Darrell Statler's "My Favorite Memory" or the classic West Texas rocker, "Party Doll," co-written by Buddy Knox and The Rhythm Orchids and the world-famous Jimmy Bowen—or whether they sing the songs they write,



which are finely crafted reproductions inspired by, say, the Delmore or Stanley classics. *Trust in me* when I say this: "My Favorite Memory" and "You're Running Wild" are two examples of those worth-the-price-of-the-whole-album recordings. To find two such jewels on one album is a minor miracle.

Of course, you don't hear The Louvins on the radio much these days. That's too bad! Because there are plenty of people—like readers of this magazine—who would tune that station right in. The smartest thing some Nashville record execs could do right now would be to sign up Barry and Holly, take a single with maybe "Home" on one side and "You're Running Wild" on the other and get a couple of radio stations to play it as an experiment in, say, Amarillo and Anadarko. They'd see what I mean.

—RUSS BARNARD



Garth Brooks

No Fences

Capitol C4 93866

With his 1989 debut album, *Garth Brooks*, Garth Brooks emerged as one of the top contenders in country music's contemporary "hat" competition. He is also many industry insiders' current pick as *the* potential superstar of the 90's.

Besides being an outstanding singer/songwriter, Brooks fills the other requisite visual and character requirements for membership in the "hat" brigade. He is fresh-faced, robust, good-looking, clean cut, well-mannered and God-fearing—and sports perfect creases in his shirts and jeans. In appearance, he is more like a Yuppie-ish, middle-class, Western veterinarian than a rangy cattle rustler. If Waylon and Willie routinely play bank robbers and outlaws in made-for-TV movies, then Brooks could easily be cast as the sheriff sent out to round them up.

No Fences, Brooks's second album, is every bit as solid as his debut and likely to sustain the tremendous career roll he is currently riding. Produced by veteran Allen Reynolds (Kathy Mattea, Crystal Gayle, etc.), it's full of the same gentility, faith, optimism, Western smoothness and sophistication that have made his style of neo-country such a big hit with listeners.

No Fences opens with "The

Thunder Rolls" (written by Brooks and Pat Alger), a wistful, folkish, extended metaphor: The threat of fierce summer storms mirrors the tumultuous emotions of a woman forced to recognize her husband's faithlessness.

On "Friends in Low Places," Brooks steps into the musical role of a jilted redneck who shows up drunk and belligerent at his ex-girlfriend's black-tie reception, but he does it with tongue in cheek, since it would be hard to imagine Brooks with either whiskey on his breath or lipstick on his collar. On "New Way to Fly," for example, he distances himself from his subject, surveying from afar those earthbound angels who have turned to the bottle after having been banished from love's saving grace.

Every "hat" album must have a rodeo song. Here it's "Wild Horses," a not particularly interesting number which turns the old cliché around: A cowboy is dragged away from his true love by the allure of wild horses. Brooks is far more fun when he rollicks along with the high-spirited, up-with-life fiddle song, "Two of a Kind, Workin' on a Full House."

The man's musical breadth and genuine idealism are apparent on "Unanswered Prayers," a gentle, unabashed testament of faith and optimism. He also shines with quiet urgency on Stephanie Davis's "Wolves," a bitter, heart-rending lament about farmers who've lost out to hard times.

Brooks stays in character on *No Fences'* token 1950's oldie: a fine, jazzed up remake of The Fleetwoods' "Mr. Blue" on which he casts himself as a fresh-faced, latter-day Pat Boone. Brooks may currently be riding a trend, or—better yet—leading one. But, as *No Fences* amply demonstrates, he's sure got the talent, conviction and finesse to back himself up, no matter what his next move is.

—BOB ALLEN

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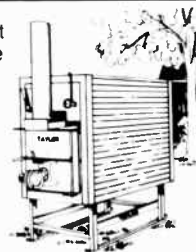
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Essential Collector / Videos and Classic Cassettes

■ Videos ■

Reba McEntire: *Reba* is a 30-minute collection of a half-dozen of her recent videos for MCA: "Whoever's in New England," "What Am I Gonna Do About You," "The Last One to Know," "Sunday Kind of Love," "I Know How He Feels" and "Cathy's Clown." Reba introduces each with a few recollections about how each video was produced in her natural, down-to-earth style that, in the eyes of some (myself included), shows up less often in her music.

One problem: All these songs are ballads, and six at one sitting can be monotonous from any artist, although those who are strictly fans of Reba's ballads should be



delighted. Reba's clearly at a crossroads. Like Dolly Parton before her, one segment of her fans applaud her for broadening toward pop music, while traditionalist fans gnash their teeth at her Vegas-style stage shows and the pop content of her albums. Watch this video and decide for yourself.

Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton: For my money, Kenny and Dolly's current single, a remake of Mickey and Sylvia's old 1950's rock hit

"Love Is Strange," is the best thing they've ever done. As for this hour-long video, *Kenny and Dolly: Real Love*, based on an old HBO special, it's far less sophisticated than most such presentations done today. The video was filmed in three spots. One is in concert. Another, set in a video control room, features Rogers and Parton onstage (on separate monitor screens) singing "medleys" of their hits. A third shows the two talking and singing in a rehearsal studio. All this flitting back and forth gets tiring.

I wish they'd done more of the video in the rehearsal studio, for these segments are the most natural and least contrived, without all the frothy glitz of their stage shows. Each does a separate concert segment before reuniting. They also sing their two Number One duets, "Real Love" and "Islands in the Stream." Fans of Kenny and Dolly and those who like this type of crossover material will be satisfied despite the irritating way the video was produced. Whether it qualifies as "country" is something you'll have to decide for yourself.

Ricky Van Shelton: I'd like to think Ricky Van Shelton was just having a bad evening when Patrick Carr interviewed him for last issue's cover story. He was obviously in a better mood when he helped create *Ricky Van Shelton: To Be Continued...*, an excellent production featuring several of his videos, among them "Crime of Passion," "Statue of a Fool," "I Meant Every Word He Said" and a hot live version of "Hole in My Pocket."

One thing that's clear from Shelton's comments is that even during his days growing up in Grit, Virginia, he had clearly defined goals of how he planned to make it in the music business. His parents



add their own testimony as to his longtime interest in singing professionally. Ricky talks about his first guitar (a J.C. Penney electric depicted in the photo on the back of the *Loving Proof* album), his love for restoring old cars (the camera even pans along the rusting hulks) and the way he's altered his farm to suit his tastes. He also talks seriously about his intentions to make sure that when his stardom peaks, he won't have to go back to pushing a broom, though he admits—tongue in cheek—that he does that pretty well.

Chet Atkins and Friends: Since Chet Atkins and British rock guitarist Mark Knopfler have just issued their first album together on CBS (Chet's best effort in many years), it's particularly appropriate to review *Chet Atkins and Friends: Music From the Heart*, originally broadcast in 1987 on HBO. This hour-long presentation, produced in Nashville, teams Chet with some old friends including Knopfler. The Everly Brothers (Chet played on some of their big hits), Waylon and Willie (he produced both during their largely unsuccessful pre-Out-

law years with RCA), Emmylou Harris and (inexplicably) former Doobie Brother Michael McDonald.

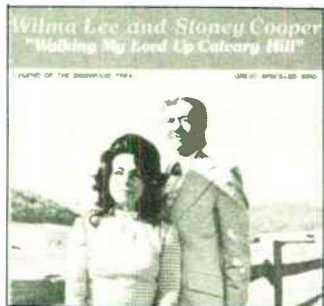
With Chet emceeding the proceedings with his dry, self-deprecating humor, he and Knopfler tackle "I'll See You in My Dreams" and "Walk of Life," the pop hit by Knopfler's old band, Dire Straits. Chet and The Everlys perform a medley of Don and Phil favorites ("Wake Up Little Susie" and "Bye Bye Love"). With Chet backing Emmylou on mandolin, she sings an exquisite version of "Precious Memories." Waylon sings "Rose in Paradise," he and Willie team up for "Good Hearted Woman" and Willie sings "Island in the Sea." Chet's moving performance of his tribute to his late father, "I Just Can't Say Goodbye," moves several of the participants to tears. The only sour note is McDonald's bland, yuppie pop music, which stands out like a Heavy Metal band at a bluegrass festival.

■ Classic Cassettes ■

One thing ought to be said about the "Greatest Hits" cassettes we review here. There are several types of "hits" collections: those with the original hit recordings, those made up of later re-recordings of the hits or mixtures of original recordings and re-recordings. Some fans want only the originals; others want the songs and don't care if they're originals or not. This column will always point out the type of package so you can make up your own mind.

Cowboy Copas: *Cowboy Copas's 24 Greatest Hits* (Deluxe DLX-7811) is just what it says: 24 numbers, although only a few were actually hits. The rest of them were cuts included on his early 1960's Starday albums. Of the hits featured here from his late 40's and early 50's period with King

Records, only "Breeze," from 1948, is the original recording. "Filipino Baby" is a later remake. Most of Copas's other chart hits, "Alabam," "Sunny Tennessee" and "Flat Top" are the original Starday hits. Though "Signed, Sealed and Delivered" was a hit in 1946, the 1961 re-recording included here was also a hit. The remaining numbers include cover versions of "I Dreamed of a Hillbilly Heaven," "Satisfied Mind" and "Beyond the Sunset." His instrumental version of "Wildwood Flower," retitled "Cope's Wildflower," shows more of the formidable flat-picking he did on "Alabam."



Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper: On December 27 and 28, 1973, Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper, Grand Ole Opry stars and traditional music greats, went into a Nashville studio to record *Walking My Lord Up Calvary Hill* for Power Pak, a subsidiary of Gusto Records of Nashville. Released in March 1974 and long out of print, it's recently been reissued on cassette (Hollywood HT-348) and has all the forcefulness it did 17 years ago. Wilma Lee's vocals and Stoney's vocals and fiddling with the raw backing of a small group of friends made for some powerful performances.

Most of the songs are country gospel numbers like "Tramp on the Street," "The Drunken Driver" (written by the late Molly O'Day's husband and performing partner, Lynn Davis) and two Roy Acuff standards, "Great Speckled Bird," and "Wreck on the Highway." The ancient gospel standard, "Little Rosewood Casket" provides a connection to the past. The hot

lead guitar comes from Joe Edwards, the grinning, mustachioed staff guitarist seen regularly on the Opry with The Carlisles and others. Carol Lee Cooper, Wilma Lee and Stoney's daughter, now leader of the Opry's Carol Lee Singers, helped out on background vocals.

Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson: *Waylon & Willie II* (RCA 63290), also called *WWII*, was Waylon and Willie's second pairing, released in 1982. The cut-down cassette version (only eight numbers) includes some of the best songs, though the outing as a whole was far from their best effort (with Chips Moman producing, that's hardly surprising). Their Number 13 hit version of the Otis Redding classic, "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," is the best-known number here. The rest include "May I Borrow a Cup of Sugar," "Roman Candles," "Lady in the Harbor," "Write Your Own Songs," "The Teddy Bear Song" and "Heroes," with "Last Cowboy Song" rounding it out.

Johnny Horton: If you drive a lot, you could do worse than to take along a Johnny Horton cassette. Horton's good background for the road, *America Remembers Johnny Horton* (PT 15593) brings together just about all his big hits for Columbia. Strangely, for one who's become a legend, only 14 of Horton's records, all for

Columbia, ever made *Billboard's* country charts.

From the earliest number here, "Honky Tonk Man" from 1956 (the same one Dwight Yoakam covered), to the rocking "I'm Coming Home," loaded with hot six-string bass guitar solos, the laid back "I'm a One Woman Man" (remade by George Jones not long ago), "Old Slewfoot" and "I'm Ready, If You're Willing," all have a stripped-down, honky tonk feel—but without the fiddle and steel, then falling out of favor in Nashville.

Horton's "saga songs," the historical numbers that truly made him a superstar in the year before his death, are well represented. Naturally, "Battle of New Orleans" and "North to Alaska" are included. So are "Johnny Reb," "Sink the Bismarck" and "When It's Springtime in Alaska." His magnificent version of Hank Sr.'s "They'll Never Take Her Love From Me" and "All For the Love of A Girl" (which he'd recorded earlier for Mercury) weren't hits, but they show his strengths as a ballad singer. The only big hits not on this collection are "Sleepy-Eyed John" and "Woman I Need."

Lulu Belle and Scotty: The traditional duo of Lulu Belle and Scotty Wiseman were based at Chicago's WSM *National Barn Dance*, where they worked from 1933 through 1958. They recorded

for a number of labels. Their best-known tunes were "Homecoming Time in Happy Valley," "Mountain Dew" (which Scotty wrote with folksinger Bascom Lamar Lunsford) and "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You," also written by Scotty. When they recorded *The Sweethearts of Country Music*



(Hollywood HT-269) for Starday Records in 1965, they'd largely retired from performing and were living in North Carolina, where Scotty taught at a small college.

This set picks up 12 of their old favorites including "Mountain Dew," "Homecoming Time," "Brown Mountain Light," "Empty Christmas Stocking," "Have I Told You Lately" and traditional songs including "Shortnin' Bread." These were among their final recordings. Lulu Belle went on to become a North Carolina legislator and Scotty died in 1981.

Hawkshaw Hawkins: A few issues back, the *CMSA Newsletter* profiled the career of Hawkshaw Hawkins, the West Virginia-based singer who died in the same infamous 1963 air crash that killed Patsy Cline and Cowboy Copas. *16 Greatest Hits* (DLX-7812), a collection of his best-known material for the King and Starday labels, mixes early hits like "Sunny Side of the Mountain" with such hot numbers as "Rattlesnakin' Daddy" (one of the best versions of this old blues ever recorded). There's also "Slow Poke," "I'm Waiting Just for You" and the 1963 hit that was re-establishing him as a major star at the time of his death: Justin Tubb's "Lonesome 7-7203."

—RICH KIENZLE

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Buried Treasures /

Reissues,
Rarities and the
Hard-to-Find



Jim Reeves: Most of the Jim Reeves reissues from both American and European producers around these days were thrown together in a variety of packages that make good listening but offer little in the way of history. Bear Family has helped make some sense out of the RCA Reeves legacy with *Gentleman Jim—The Legend: 1955-1959* (BFD 15437). This four-CD boxed set is the first of several boxed sets designed to trace Reeves's RCA career from the beginning. This one consists of 109 numbers: every single recording he made over those four years. Nearly all were issued previously, either as singles or as album cuts. Hard as it may seem to believe, though, given the number of Reeves reissues, Bear Family found 11 unreleased titles from this period, most as high in quality as those already known.

When Reeves signed with RCA in 1955, he was fresh from his 1953-55 successes with Abbott Records that included raw hillbilly numbers such as "Mexican Joe" and "Bimbo." The early RCAs show him more polished than the Abbotts, yet the cool, urbane Reeves that dominated the later RCA material, singing pop, religious and sophisticated numbers, had yet to emerge. In these years, he was still singing straight-ahead country songs, backed by a twin-

fiddle/steel guitar honky tonk band that often included Chet Atkins, Hank Garland, Floyd Cramer, fiddler Tommy Jackson and various steel guitarists, among them Don Helms, Jimmy Day and Bobby Garrett. The approach shows up on early RCA hits like "Yonder Comes a Sucker."

By the time his February 7, 1957, session rolled around, things had changed. Reeves had developed a new way of singing, pitching his voice lower, singing practically on top of the mike. The fiddles and steel were gone, part of the "Nashville Sound" effort to make country recordings more palatable to pop audiences. Reeves also found "Four Walls," a song Chet Atkins had figured was a song for a female vocalist. When Reeves recorded it and it topped the charts, his direction changed for good.

The formula continued to yield hits: "Anna Marie," "Blue Boy," Roger Miller's tune "Billy Bayou," "Home" and what many consider his greatest, the crossover smash, "He'll Have to Go," all appeared during the late 1950's. But keep in mind, while he may have cut more pop and gospel songs during that time, he never abandoned country.

The usual high-quality Bear Family treatment is here, including outstanding sound quality and Ronnie Pugh's fine liner notes. The accompanying booklets are

larger than in earlier BF boxed sets, able to hold more information. They include beautifully reproduced color and black-and-white photos, some rarely, if ever, seen. There's complete information on the recording sessions from the RCA files (even the time of day they were held!). Candid black-and-white photos shot at a 1956 Reeves session and another set of posed photos in front of a microphone give the entire package a "you are there" feeling.

Billboard Top Country Hits: Rhino Records has been releasing cassette and CD collections of ten-song rock 'n' roll and rhythm-and-blues hits, each covering a given year, for the past several years. They pick the hits based on *Billboard Magazine's* charts, use only the original hits (no re-recordings) and in many cases have cleaned up the sound considerably. Now they've begun to do the same with *Billboard Top Country Hits: 1959-1963*. There are no annotations on these sets, but the price is right, the sound is excellent and in some cases this package marks the first time certain songs have ever been available on compact disc. These releases are just the beginning. Another series of year-by-year collections will appear in time to be reviewed in the next issue.

1959 (70680) compiles classics such as Johnny Horton's "Battle of New Orleans,"

Johnny Cash's "Don't Take Your Guns to Town," Faron Young's "Country Girl," George Jones's classic, "White Lightning," the early Buck Owens hit, "Under Your Spell Again," Webb Pierce's hit recording of the Pierce-Mel Tillis composition, "I Ain't Never," Jim Reeves's "Billy Bayou," Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper's long out-of-print "There's a Big Wheel" and The Browns' unforgettable classic, "The Three Bells."

1960 (70681) picks up Marty Robbins's epic "El Paso," Buck Owens's "Excuse Me (I Think I've Got a Heartache)," "He'll Have to Go" by Jim Reeves and the answer song, "He'll Have to Stay," by Jeanne Black. It also includes Ferlin Husky's "On the Wings of a Dove," Johnny Horton's World War II saga song, "Sink the Bismarck," Don Gibson's "Just One Time," the long-unavailable Hank Locklin standard, "Please Help Me, I'm Falling" (with Floyd Cramer's peerless "slip-note" style piano) and its answer song, Skeeter Davis's "I Can't Help You, I'm Falling, Too," plus Ray Price's "One More Time." Thanks to the mediocre "answer" songs, this set is the weakest release in this noteworthy group.

1961 (70682) was a particularly interesting year anyway, since it was the year in which the following numbers appeared: "Sea of Heartbreak" by Don Gibson, Jimmy Dean's "Big Bad John," Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces," Faron Young's recording of Willie Nelson's "Hello, Walls," Marty Robbins's "Don't Worry" (with Grady Martin's heavy metal guitar solo), "Foolin' Around" by Buck Owens, Leroy Van Dyke's "Walk on By" (unavailable for years), Johnny Horton's "North to Alaska," George Jones's "Tender Years" and Floyd Cramer's instrumental hit version of

"San Antonio Rose."

1962 (70683) picks up Marty Robbins's "Devil Woman," Patsy Cline's classics, "Crazy" (the second Willie Nelson song to go Top Ten in a year) and "She's Got You," Walter Brennan's novelty, "Old Rivers," Rex Allen's "Don't Go Near the Indians," George Jones's "She Thinks I Still Care," Claude King's crossover smash, "Wolverton Mountain," Hank Snow's "I've Been Everywhere," Jimmy Dean's "PT-109" and the Jim Reeves number, "Adios Amigo."

1963 (70684) also saw its share of hit songs that became classics: the original Ned Miller recording of "From a Jack to a King," Buck Owens's "Love's Gonna Live Here" and "Act Naturally," Dave Dudley's "Six Days on the Road," "Ruby Ann" by Marty Robbins, Bill Anderson's "Still," Skeeter Davis's "The End of the World," Carl and Pearl Butler's masterpiece, "Don't Let Me Cross Over," George Hamilton IV's "Abilene" and Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire."

Willie Nelson: Rhino's *Nite Life: Greatest Hits and Rare Tracks: 1959-1971* (70987) brings together some of the essential, pre-superstar Willie Nelson recordings. Since I worked on this one, I'll give you a basic rundown of the tracks. His rare first recording of "Lumberjack" on the Willie Nelson label isn't here, but his first 1959 release for Houston's D label, "Man With the Blues," is. Other D recordings include "What a Way to Live" and "Rainy Day Blues."

Musicians on these tracks included longtime Willie companion, guitarist Paul Buskirk, and former Texas Playboy steel guitarist, Herb Remington. The original "Nite Life" (the spelling on the original label) cut with the same musicians had to be recorded privately by Willie, since the D people thought it wasn't country enough. Two of the early Nashville demos are included, "You'll Always Have Someone" and "Everything But You." Willie's stint

with the Liberty label is represented by his recordings of "Crazy," "Mr. Record Man," "Touch Me" and "Hello, Walls" along with an orchestrated recording of the pop ballad, "Am I Blue," that anticipates the *Stardust* album by 16 years or so. One problem: The version of "San Antonio Rose" mentioned in the notes was to be the version Willie Nelson recorded with The Texas Troubadours. A later version with overdubbed horns was substituted mistakenly.

Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whitley: On June 29 and June 30, 1971, Ralph Stanley entered the R.D. Homer recording studios in Clinton, Maryland, with his Clinch Mountain Boys. In that band were guitarist Roy Lee Centers, fiddler Curly Ray Cline, bassist Jack Cooke and Ralph's two young proteges: guitarist-singer Keith Whitley and vocalist, mandolin and fiddle player, Ricky Skaggs. Whitley and Skaggs recorded their *Second Generation Bluegrass* (Rebel CD-1504) album on those days, recently reissued by Rebel on compact disc.

Their youth, high harmonies and devotion to The Stanley Brothers sound revitalized Stanley's band and led Ralph to reinstate songs he hadn't sung since his brother Carter died in 1967. Obviously both Ricky and Keith were far younger then, yet their voices are still recognizable. The album leads off with none other than "Don't Cheat in Our Hometown,"

the same song Skaggs took to Number One 12 years later. The other songs include one written by Ricky's mother, "All I Ever Loved Was You," and Ricky's own instrumental, "Son of Hobert," named for his dad. Skaggs and Whitley do a terrific job on the old instrumental, "Daybreak in Dixie," with Ricky's mandolin leaping through the theme, followed by Stanley and Cline. Whitley picks out the lead on an instrumental version of "Wildwood Flower," and together they tackle two Stanley vocal chestnuts: "Memories of Mother" and "This Weary Heart You Stole Away." For fans of both, this one's both entertaining and enlightening as a look at their musical roots 20 years ago.

Roger Miller: Bear Family's Roger Miller package, *King of the Road* (BCD 15477), contains 29 songs, including all his RCA Victor recordings from 1960-63, a period that wasn't particularly successful. Only three singles charted: "You Don't Want My Love" (Number 14 in 1960), the Miller-Bill Anderson composition, "When Two Worlds Collide" (Number 6 in 1961), and "Lock, Stock and Teardrops" (the same song that k.d. lang recorded—Number 26 in 1963). The 21 RCA sides have their strong and weak moments, but one of the better and more obscure ones is "Sorry, Willie," about one of Willie's now ex-wives.

The eight Smash recordings show how Miller's most

successful work compared to the RCA material. "Dang Me," "Chug A Lug," "King of the Road," "Engine Engine #9," "Kansas City Star," "One Dyin' and A-Buryin'," "England Swings" and "Do Wacka Do" account for nearly all his big hits ("Husbands and Wives" is excluded). The fact is, they would have been better covered on a separate CD with more of the gems he cut for Smash. Otto Kit-singer's notes are based on an interview with Miller. No detailed information about the Smash recording sessions is provided.

Eddy Arnold: Bear Family's *Cattle Call/Thereby Hangs a Tale* (BCD 15441) combines two entire Arnold Western albums from 1959 and 1963, respectively, plus one added track, on one CD. The content of both albums was strongly geared toward three different types of Western songs. In the folk-Western category fall numbers like his 1959 hit version of Jimmie Driftwood's "Tennessee Stud" and Nancy Chase's "The Battle of Little Big Horn." Pop-Western standards include such numbers as "The Wayward Wind" and "Davy Crockett," while traditional songs like "Tom Dooley," "A Cowboy's Dream," "Carry Me Back to the Lone Prairie" and "Red Headed Stranger" make up a third group. Bob Nolan's repertoire is represented by "Cool Water" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." The version of "Cattle Call" included here is a re-recorded version of his 1955 hit.

The sound on these records differed considerably from the sound on Arnold's hits. For one thing, Chet Atkins used a smaller group of accompanists and an airy, guitar-laden sound much like the one used on Marty Robbins's Western songs. Only the presence of The Anita Kerr Singers gave the records any slickness. The technical sound quality is outstanding. On the other hand, Jon Hartley Fox's liner notes are inadequate—below par for Bear Family packages.

—RICH KIENZLE

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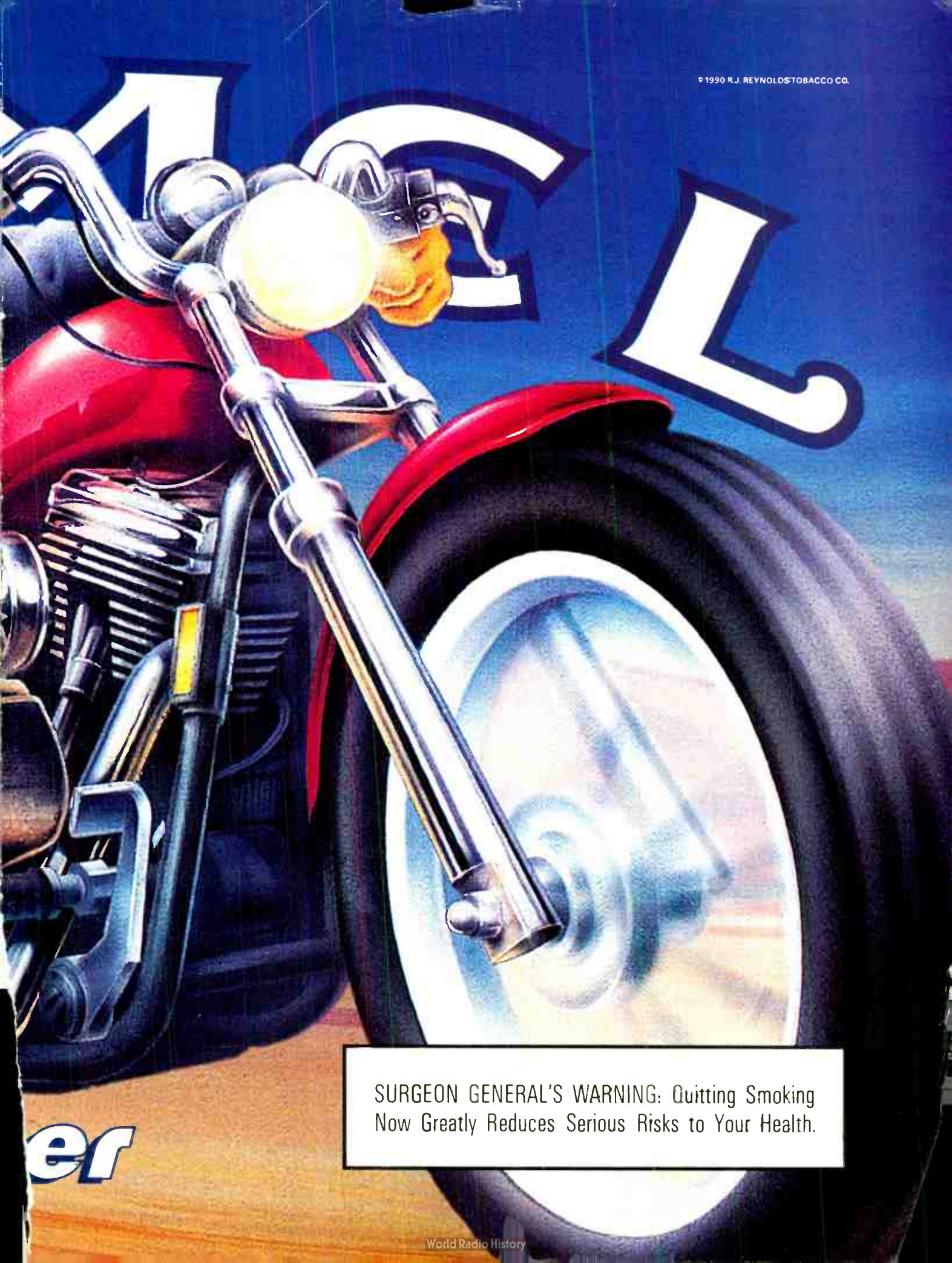
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