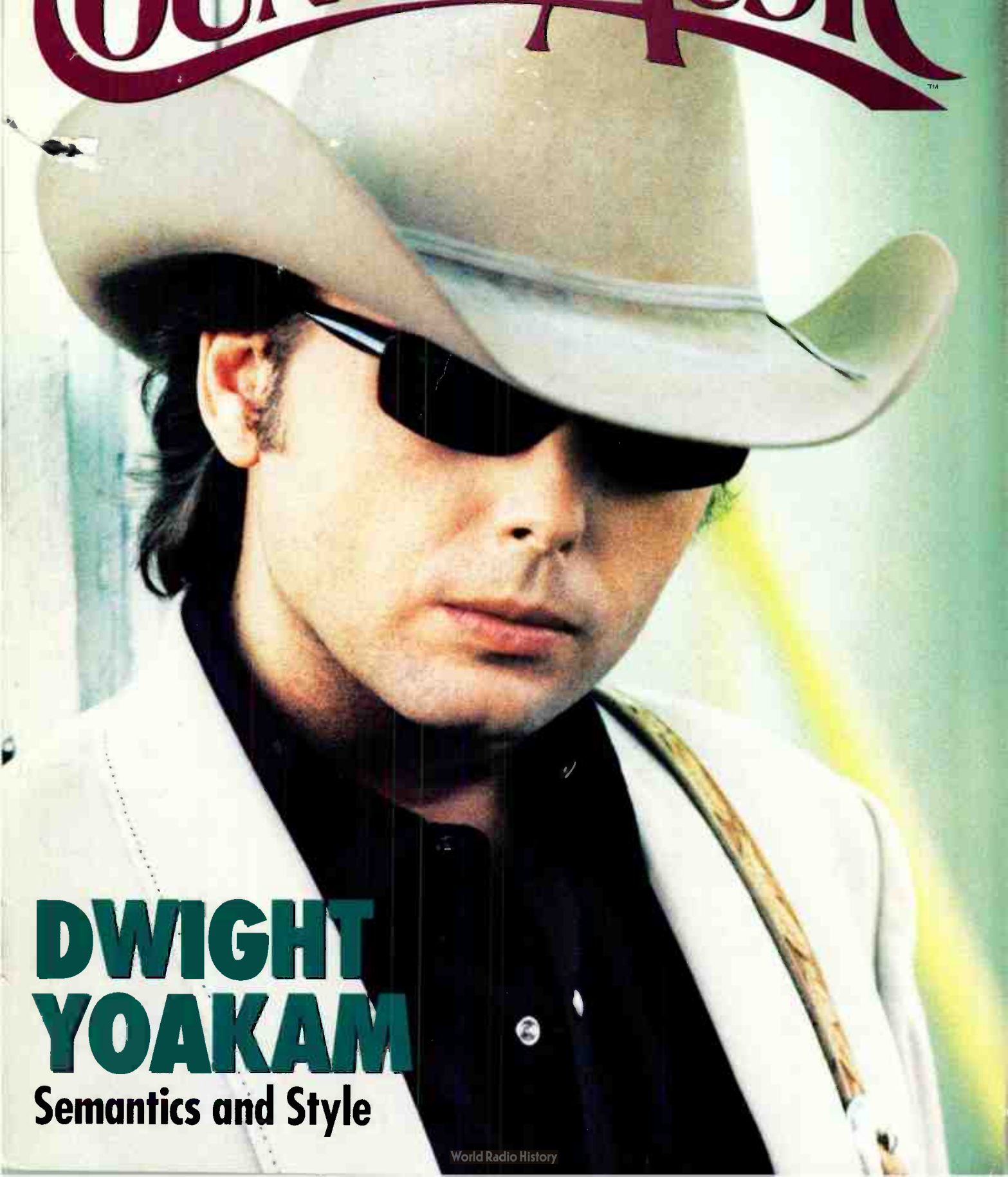


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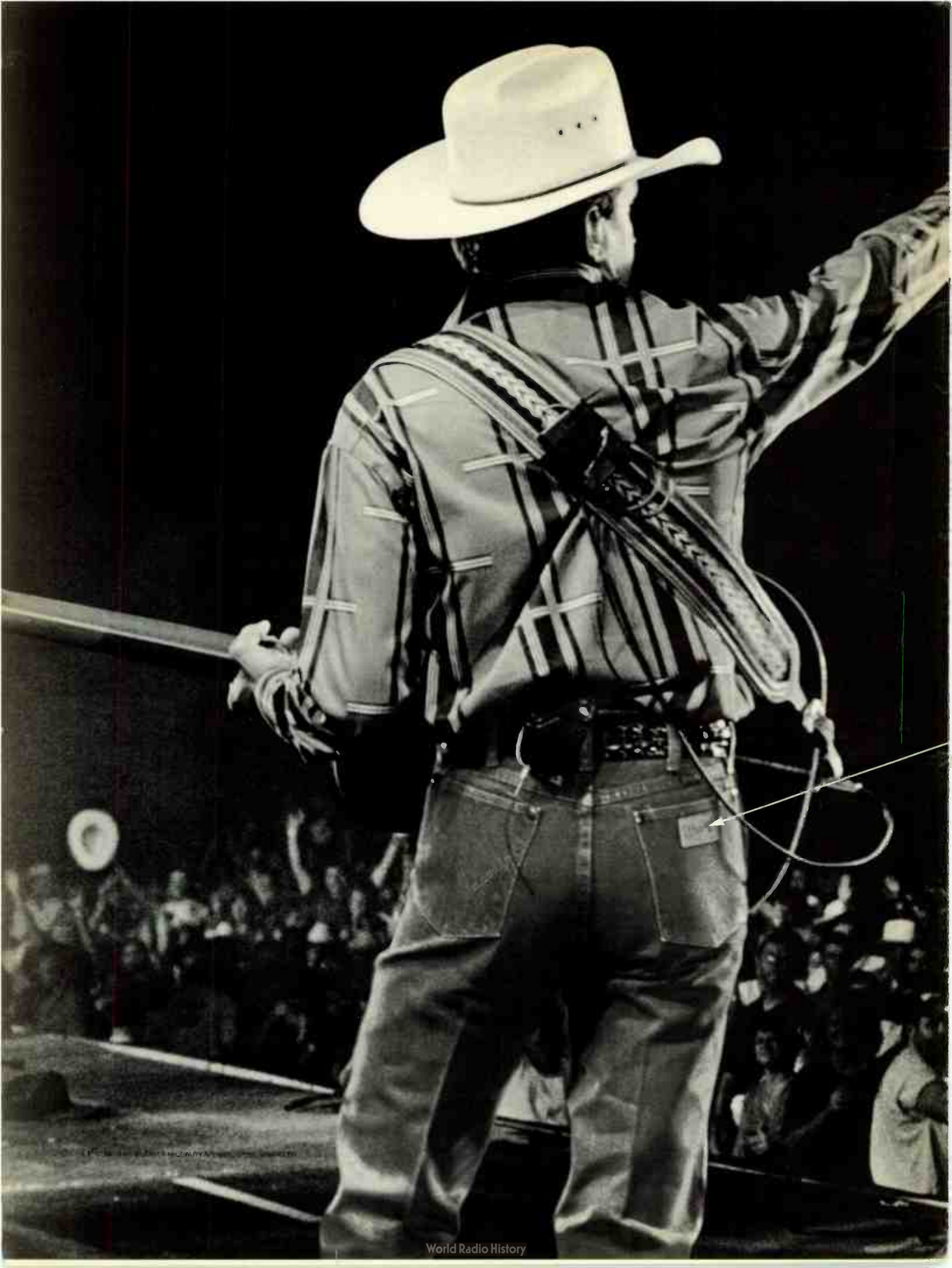
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People

SOMEBODY SPECIAL

I want to go on record saying that **Dolly Parton** is the smartest female Tennessee ever birthed. She is so famous, I don't have to rerun her accolades as country singer/songwriter, movie star, theme park owner/operator, businesswoman, television star, etc. Recently she returned home to the Grand Ole Opry as Dolly Parton, country singer. Wowed them hillbilly fans, she did. Everybody loved the mountain girl from Sevierville. Debuting songs from her new record titled *Something Special* on Columbia Records/Blue Eye Records (Dolly's very own label), she first sang her Number One single from 1973, "Jolene," which she re-recorded for this project, followed by "Something Special" and the angelic duet with **Vince Gill** on "I Will Always Love You." I predict this will be a single record which will lead the voting members of the CMA to award Vocal Event of the Year to Dolly Parton and Vince Gill. And radio cannot say no to this awesome duet, and if it does charttop like I think it will, that will be four times at Number One for the song penned by the great Ms. Dolly. Interviewed on *Back-*

stage at the Opry by former singing partner, **Porter Wagoner**, Dolly wore a high hem, low-neck cream-colored dress with aqua trim. She chose royal blue with rhinestones—same neck and hem line—for her Opry appearance. Vince wore well, I thought, in his black jacket, dark shirt and long-legged jeans. Later, at the party at her office, Inca-Hoots, Dolly changed into a black lace number—still the same neck and hemline. With each outfit she wore stiletto, backless heels at least four inches tall. I'd a broke my neck. Dolly is the real thing. I don't see any difference in her today and 25 years ago when I first saw her. Her beauty, more than skin deep, still shines through her mountain eyes as honest as laurel on the ridge. Another star who makes us proud to be what we are.

JUDD FOLKS

Hot off the movie set of *Heat*, starring **Al Pacino**, **Robert DeNiro** and **Val Kilmer**, Miss **Ashley Judd** brought her Music City self home to her Tennessee mama, **Naomi Judd**. To be sure her feet were firmly planted on the ground, she, mama Naomi and pop (step-dad) **Larry Strickland**, as well

as my family and myself and all the rest of the people with good taste and sense to match, took themselves to the Ryman Auditorium to see **The Cox Family** and **The Nashville Bluegrass Band**. Naomi wore RayBans while Ashley dressed in a casual beige top and skirt with flat sandals. Her blonde hair pulled straight back, she wore little or no makeup. She looked terrific. So did her mama. She, however, wore makeup. Me too!

15 YEARS AT ONE LABEL

With New York tailor-mades on their backs and hillbilly safe in their hearts, CEO/RCA Label Group **Joe Galante** and Senior VP/GM **Randy Goodman** hosted their way through 15 years of **Alabama** fame at the posh Union Station Hotel, where we were served the finest of liquids along with made-on-the-spot pasta from the pan of a chef, along with other goodies to appease the palate. It was Galante who signed the fabo foursome 17 albums ago. From *My Home's in Alabama* in 1980 to *In Pictures* in 1995, the legacy of **Randy Owen**, **Teddy Gentry**, **Jeff Cook** and **Mark Herndon** is one of pride for all of country music. They are tied with



Highlights of Dolly Parton's first Opry performance in seven years included an interview with Porter Wagoner on TNN's *Backstage* at the Grand Ole Opry and songs from her new album, including the duet with Vince Gill on "I Will Always Love You."

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People

MOTHER AND CHILD



Suzy Bogguss shows off son Ben, born to Suzy and husband Doug Crider in March. The Capitol recording artist is among the singing moms—both pop and country—featured on the new IRS Records Christmas album, *Mother and Child*. Also included are Martina McBride, Amy Grant, Belinda Carlisle and more.

Merle Haggard for Number One singles, with 37 to their credit, and are two shy of breaking the late Conway Twitty's record. The group has sold over 50 million records, with 13 platinum albums and 7 multi-platinum. Some folks who turned out to help the guys celebrate were former RCA head Jerry Bradley and his wife, Connie Bradley, who serves as executive director of ASCAP, and Mark Wright, who was in A&R at RCA when the guys were signed and is now Senior VP/Decca Records. Starting out playing in Myrtle Beach, the boys from Alabama now own a club there. They own their own jet, piloted by drummer Mark Herndon. They own a very successful music publishing company on Music Row, Maypop Music. They still perform for sellout crowds. And they still reside in their hometown of Ft. Payne, Alabama. I want to go on record as stating, "Alabama, the group that made a state a household word." Nuff said.

MAN IN BLACK

The Man in Black has left the building. Yep, Johnny Cash closed his renowned House of Cash Museum. I deemed it my duty to drive out and take a last look for you and me. It was sad seeing all those

wonderful awards, photos and memorabilia too numerous to mention and knowing it would be no more. But it was time, I'm sure. All good things come to an end. As I drove away, I felt like I did the first time I heard George Jones sing "He Stopped Loving Her Today" and I had to pull off the road 'cause I couldn't see for the tears. I drove back to Music Row knowing country music was richer because Johnny Cash passed our way and feeling better about myself that I took the time to say goodbye.

A GARTH STORY

Garth Brooks was having lunch at a small, nondescript out-of-the-way Mexican restaurant with a couple of buddies when this kid, maybe 12, came in the door. The boy walked over to Garth's table and asked for an autograph. Garth looked up at the boy, laid down his fork, stood up, put his arm around the kid's shoulder and walked with him outside where they talked for 10 or 15 minutes. Yes, the youngster got his autograph and got his time as well. Like Johnny Cash and a few others, Garth never fails to make me proud to be in this business of music.

K.T. OK

K.T. Oslin, the "80's Lady," went in for a checkup. Her blood pressure was up. Way up. "Lose weight," demanded the doc. Diet she did. Didn't help. Then she had shortness of breath. Next, chest pains. She called the doctor. Made a 1:30 appointment, but mowed her yard with a push mower before going in. Diagnosis, triple blockage. She wasn't allowed to go home. Open heart surgery was performed the next day. The 54-year-old diva is okay and resting at St. Thomas Hospital as I type this report.

PRAYERS & GOOD THOUGHTS NEEDED

In addition to K.T., several other Music City regulars have taken ill lately. The old Master Writer of songs, Harlan Howard, had surgery twice recently, first an operation to remove an aneurysm from his stomach and three weeks later, back surgery. One week after that I ran into him at the Nashville Country Club where he was looking peaked. Tammy Wynette was hospitalized in Pittsburgh after canceling an appearance on *The Tonight Show*. She was reportedly suffering with throat problems. Former hubby and current duet partner George Jones was in and out of the hospital for a checkup. Waylon Jennings has been in and out of the hospital twice with high blood pressure. Keep 'em in your heart and in your prayers.

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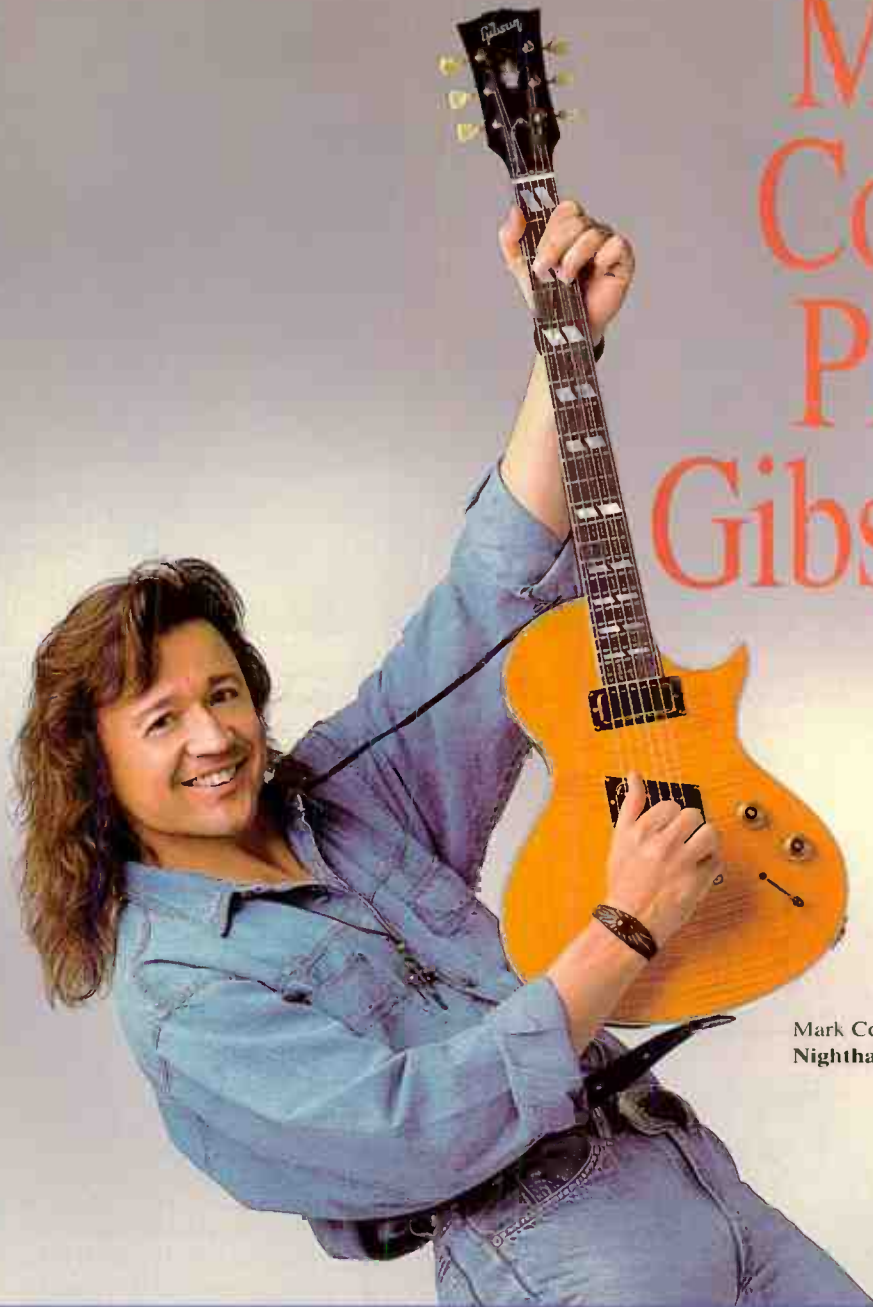
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People

NEW LABEL

There's a new label in town named Veritas, formed by former Sony Music President **Roy Wunsch** and multimedia producer **Bud Schaeztle**. The duo named **Bob Woodruff** as their first artist. They further hired former Sony Marketing VP **Connie Baer** to head up the marketing division and **Tracey Gershon**, formerly with Sony-Tree, as Director of A&R. Some of the people Roy invited to dinner at his lovely home "around the corner from the Governor's mansion and Minnie Pearl's estate" to celebrate were TNN's **Brian Hughes**, *Music Row's* **David Ross**, **Ed Morris**, **Norma Morris**, **Erin Morris**, **Jim Della Croce** (who manages Woodruff), and of course, yours truly, as well as Schaeztle, Baer and Gershon. The guys plan a boutique label with no more than 12 acts, they say. Here's hoping God puts wind beneath their wings and lets them soar.

TWO-PARTY DAY

I speak not of politics, it's show biz that's my line. First party, held at the beautifully renovated Hermitage Hotel was hosted by the inimitable **Tim DuBois**, Prez of Arista/Nashville, honoring the Belle of Music Town, Ms. **Pam Tillis**. Pam's plati-



First signee to new label Veritas is **Bob Woodruff** (center). **Roy Wunsch** (left) and **Bud Schaeztle** formed the label. Wunsch is the former president of Sony Music-Nashville and Schaeztle has been the producer of numerous specials on country music.

num record, *Sweetheart's Dance*, prompted the star to dress in a shiny platinum pant suit tailored especially for the trendy event. Everybody turned out to honor the much loved Ms. Tillis, including mom **Doris Tillis**; sis **Carrie Tillis**; manager **Mike Robertson** and his able assistant, the almost perfect **Carol Harper**; *Billboard's* **Chet Flippo**; Arista VP's **Mike Dungan**, **Jack Weston** and **Fletcher Foster**; hubby/songwriter **Bob DiPiero**; *Music Row's* **David Ross**; **Bob Oermann**; TNN's **Brian Hughes**; Polygram Publishing's VP

Doug Howard; *USA Today's* **Dave Zimmerman**; and **Ron Huntsman**.

I'll tell you what, the second party, held at the Country Music Hall of Fame, is one for the history books. See, old Nashvillians wanted this city to be the Athens of the South. Lots of aristocracy, power, money and, of course, education in this town. This "do" was actually a meeting of the hillbillies and the educators. I find it truly mind-blowing that the prestigious Vanderbilt University Press (no better school on earth than Vanderbilt) and the Country Music Foundation Press will co-publish a series of books, some new and others reissues. The series includes *Ramblin' Rose: The Life and Career of Rose Maddox*; *Sing Your Heart Out Country Boy*, a book of lyrics and stories by those who penned the songs; *My Husband, Jimmie Rodgers* from the pen of Mrs. **Carrie Rodgers**; *Bob Wills: Hubbin' It*; and *Truth Is Stranger Than Publicity* by **Alton Delmore**. Alton's children—songwriter **Lionel Delmore** and his sister **Debbie Delmore**—were present for the announcement. And the party was like any other Music Row event, except for the ties. The last time I saw that many ties, I was at a funeral.

DIAMOND RIO AT THE SHOE-BILEE



Three-time CMA Vocal Group of the Year winners **Diamond Rio** pitched in to help celebrate the 90th Anniversary of Minnesota's Red Wing Shoes. The band performed at the three-day "Shoe-Bilee" for a crowd of Red Wing employees and invited guests. A TNN special was also filmed. D.R.'s **Dan Truman**, **Marty Roe**, **Dana Williams**, **Brian Prout** and **Jimmy Olander** check out a replica of Red Wing's very first delivery truck.

MARTY, TRISHA AND BILL

Marty Stuart, **Trisha Yearwood** and Sony's **Bill Johnson** were honored by the NARAS people as inductees into the Grammy StarWalk at Opryland. A total of 65 singers, songwriters and creative people have received this honor. Whenever fans visit Opryland, they can view the plaques with hand prints, etc., with each star's name in concrete. It's quite an honor. We congratulate the threesome, **Marty** and **Trisha** for their music and **Bill Johnson** for his wonderful album covers for Sony Music.

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People

GAIL DAVIES WEDS

Leeds, England, was the location for the recent nuptials of singer/songwriter **Gail Davies** and her beau, **Rob Price**, a bass player over there across the pond.

THE DAY DICK CLARK CAME TO TOWN

Dick Clark, **R.A. "Rac" Clark**, **Barry Adelman** and **Gene Weed** from dick clark productions were chosen by the powers at TNN to produce the flagship show for the network. This will fill the spot to be vacated by *Music City Tonight* and its hosts, **Lorianne Crook** and **Charlie Chase**. The announcement was made at the Wild Horse Saloon by **Kevin Hale**, General Manager/Vice President of The Nashville Network. Both the Clarks, plus Adelman and Weed, were present for the press conference. Young **Rac Clark**, son of Dick, will be on hand to physically produce the nightly show which originates from the Gaslight Theater. There will be a new format and new host which will be announced later, we were advised. Let's hope all goes well with this new arrangement. Trying not to sound like an old fogey.... I trust my



Dick Clark and company are preparing to head up the replacement show for TNN's *Music City Tonight*. Announcing the new production agreement are TNN's VP/General Manager Kevin Hale, Dick, R.A. Clark (Dick's son), and TNN's Director of Programming, Brian Hughes.

friend, Mr. E.W. "Bud" Wendell, the President/CEO of Gaylord Entertainment. He has never failed to come through for country music and its people. Just call me a name dropper!

TANYA WANTS TO ACT...NOT ACT UP

Tanya Tucker, whose escapades include boozing, schmoozing, lowcuts, upper cuts and doing what she dang well pleases, allowed as how she'd like to act. Who'd she like as a leading man? **Kevin Costner**. That really ain't nothing new. All of us girls want him. Anyway Tanya's biz at hand was hosting the Black Velvet Smooth Stepping Showdown dance at Opryland. The girl dressed in black for the Black Velvet folks. After the contest the ever-ready Tanya did a concert. Starting at 9:30 P.M., the lady who'd been all day working sang for over an hour. Tanya might act up, but she still can put on a great show.

THE HOSSMAN

Let's say a few words about one of our own, **Hoss Burns**. The first major "in the loop" player in our wonderful business to be diagnosed with AIDS, Hoss came forward saying that he would no longer serve as DJ for Nashville's Number One station, WSIX, but would spend his remaining time helping to raise money to fight the deadly disease. The station held a 12-hour radiothon/tribute/fundraiser that brought out some of country music's brightest and biggest stars in support of Hoss and the cause. Hoss will continue as host of the weekly syndicated country radio program, *Country Hitmakers*, for **Ron Huntsman**. By the way, funds raised from the 12-hour event were donated to St. Jude's Hospital in Memphis for AIDS research in children.

1995 CMA AWARD WINNERS

Entertainer of the Year	Alan Jackson
Song of the Year	"Independence Day"
Songwriter	Gretchen Peters
Single of the Year	"When You Say Nothing at All"
Artist and record company	Alison Krauss and Union Station/Rounder
Album of the Year	<i>When Fallen Angels Fly</i>
Artist and record company	Patty Loveless/Epic Records
Female Vocalist of the Year	Alison Krauss
Male Vocalist of the Year	Vince Gill
Vocal Duo of the Year	Brooks & Dunn
Vocal Group of the Year	The Mavericks
Vocal Event of the Year	Shenandoah with Alison Krauss "Somewhere in the Vicinity of the Heart"
Musician of the Year	Mark O'Connor
Horizon Award	Alison Krauss
Music Video of the Year	"Baby Likes to Rock It"
Artist and director	The Tractors/Michael Salomon
Hall of Fame	Roger Miller (performer) Jo Walker-Meador (non-performer)

People

FACE VALUE

Hillbilly face value, what it is! Russell, do you suppose when **Jimmie Rodgers** wrote "Blue Yodel" before either of us was born that he ever dreamed of a credit card? Well, I never dreamed of seeing a hillbilly face on a credit card. Third National Bank (where I keep all my millions) has up and put faces of **Reba McEntire**, **Alan Jackson**, **Travis Tritt**, **Brooks & Dunn** and **Tracy Lawrence** on Visa cards. So, if you are a Visa-carrying person, why not carry one with star power? I believe it was my friend, **Waylon Jennings**, who wrote and sang "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?"

CONWAY HONORED ON TNN

The Life and Times of Conway Twitty is the name of the special, and it's coming soon on TNN. The hour-long documentary will examine the late **Conway Twitty's** life and career through interviews with friends and associates, performance clips and more. Among those sharing their thoughts are duet partner **Loretta Lynn**. Look for its premiere on November 15th.

RVS SING ME A SONG

Took myself to the GEO Theater; I did, to see **Ricky Van Shelton**. His sold out, two-hour show on a 97-degree night left the fans screaming and his clothes soaking wet with sweat. A 35-song list covering his hits and a few of his faves made this one of my favorite shows for the summer. Ricky looks great; slim, tan and healthy. Spends his time on his bulldozer working around his farm when he's off the road. Still touring at least 15 days a month, Ricky has one of the best shows on the road. It would be a crying shame to let this true country singer slide through the cracks. He could sure use a radio hit. The man's a star.

MY FRIEND, THE GREAT VINCE GILL

Invincible, he is. Let's look at a week in the life of **Vince Gill**. Hosting a golf tournament called the "Vinny," Vince and his pals raised over \$200,000 to benefit Junior Golf in Tennessee on Monday and Tuesday. Participants included **Diamond Rio's Marty Roe** and **Brian Prout**, **Gary Chapman** and his wife

Amy Grant, Tennessee Governor **Don Sundquist**, **Mark Collie**, **George "Goober" Lindsay**, **Chet Atkins**, **Billy Dean**, **Suzy Bogguss**, **Larry Stewart**, **Kix Brooks** of **Brooks & Dunn**, **John Michael Montgomery**, **Dean Dillon**, **Joe Diffie**, **Mark Miller** and **Tracy Lawrence**. Over 27,000 fans turned out in the heat for the event held in Kingston Springs. 'Course all the golf pros played, too. Lo and behold, on Monday night Vince performed at Starwood for a sold-out crowd and sang for two whole hours, including my favorite Vince Gill song, "Go Rest High on That Mountain," which he penned in memory of **Keith Whitley** and his own late brother. I can tell you right now, there wasn't a dry eye in the crowd when Vince sang that song. **Bruce Hinton**, **Tony Brown** and all them smart people at MCA released the song as a single, and I'm glad. Must mention his impeccable guitar work as well. Vince brought the crowd to its feet time and again during his two-dozen-song set. **Patty Loveless** opened the show, and **Amy Grant** joined Vince onstage for their duet, "House of Love." Then on Thursday, Vince went out to the new **Ralph Emery Show**, which required his presence at 5:30 A.M. Be impressed. I am.



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COUNTRY MUSIC 13

People

DON WILLIAMS' NEW MUSIC

Just a note for all you Don Williams fans. Don has new music on American Harvest, the same people he recorded *An Evening with Don Williams* for last year. He calls this new record *Borrowed Tales*, probably because the songs he's cut were all hits by others and he has borrowed them, so to speak. Songs that Don sang for years that he feels good about on the album include such diverse titles as Eric Clapton's "Lay Down Sally," Lefty Frizzell's "Long Black Veil" and "If You Could Read My Mind" by folkie Gordon Lightfoot. It's different, but it's good.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR LEE ROY

Career Records—remember the name—has scored its first Number One record with their Number One signee, everybody's pal, Lee Roy Parnell. "A Little Bit of You" charttopped, so we just took ourselves to LaPaz in Green Hills to sip, sop and celebrate, Mexican style. Lee Roy arrived in his chariot, a red Cherokee Jeep, the same one he'd driven to ASCAP earlier in the day for his first celebrating at noon. Anyway, the red-headed Texan (does that ring with familiarity?), man of



Labelmates Vern Gosdin and Don Williams meet up on the set of Williams' new video. Gosdin, who recovered from a stroke earlier this year, has a new gospel album out now. Both artists are signed to American Harvest Records.

the hour, was honored by all the powers at Career and all his friends for the achievement. When I tell you that you could not walk in that place, please believe me. Tequila was flowing like water while the faddish of the biz hung around being cool and congratulating Parnell and labelhead Tim DuBois. Next morning at the crack of dawn, Lee Roy, manager Mike Robertson and label VP Fletcher Foster caught the early jet to NYC, where the star blew 'em away on *Late Night with David Letterman*.

EYE SAW

Eye saw Bill Monroe at the Cracker Barrel. He was between Opry shows. We talked. I mentioned Jerry Garcia's death...Bill said yes, that was bad. I told Bill that last year during an interview Garcia said he would still play guitar with Bill if Bill would hire him. Bill smiled. I never told Bill, but I always thought it was the length of Garcia's hair and beard and his choice of clothes that caused him to fail his audition as a Bluegrass Boy. Lastly, I complained mightily that NBC, CBS, ABC and CNN all omitted the term "bluegrass" when Jerry died. Bill Monroe was Jerry Garcia's hero, and bluegrass music was his favorite. In my heart I know bluegrass has lost a friend. A real good friend.

MS. REBA

Dressed in fit-to-kill dark beige linen slacks, light beige jacket and black blouse with trendy black and white sneakers, Reba McEntire looked svelte and wealthy at the party honoring her Number One single, "And Still," penned by Liz Hengber and Tommy Lee James. Connie Bradley and her ASCAP staff served up big boiled shrimp, fried buffalo wings with peanut butter dip, fresh fruit and veggies with dip and two trays of sinful iced cake for dessert. Naturally, there were drinks to go around. I talked a bit with the movie-star handsome Narvel Blackstock, Reba's hubby/manager. His eyes look clear through you. Dressed in a checked silk sports coat and dark pants, he was a hunk. ASCAP awarded the writers, CMA awarded the writers, the mayor's office honored the writers and a good time was had by all. I also talked to Shelby Kennedy whom I like a whole lot.

MERLE AND WADE TAKE NASHVILLE



After a standing-ovation performance at the newly-renovated Ryman Auditorium, Merle Haggard and newcomer Wade Hayes cross paths with Sony Music Publishing honchos Don Cook (left) and Donna Hilley. Cook, Senior VP at the publishing firm, is also Hayes' producer. Hilley, of course, is President and CEO of Sony Music Publishing. It was a big night for Hayes: He opened for his hero, and his label, Columbia, presented him with a Gold record for his debut album, *Old Enough to Know Better*.

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by Elke Hutchens



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Charlie Rich

1932-1995

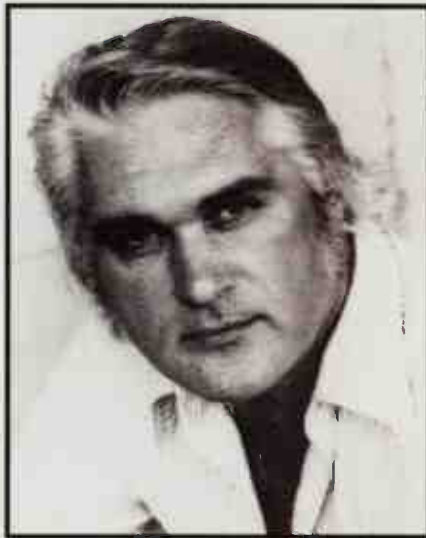
The year was 1975. At the CMA Awards, Charlie Rich, 1974's CMA Entertainer of the Year, stood by to announce the new winner. After opening the envelope, in a voice dripping with sarcasm, he announced the winner: pop-folkie John Denver. Then, in a silent protest, Rich set fire to the envelope, an act that made *TV Guide's* 1995 list of the ten greatest moments of rock 'n' roll TV. On Music Row, where Denver's award stirred as much controversy as the stardom of certain of today's artists, some admiringly chuckled at the Silver Fox's audacity.

Such audacity, however, was rare in Charlie Rich's life. In fact, his behavior had more to do with a shy man's discomfort with the sudden, glitzy, brass ring of stardom. Before it, he spent years in obscurity. His sudden death on July 25, 1995, propelled him into the spotlight a final time. A pulmonary embolism—a blood clot in a lung—suffered while asleep in a Hammond, Louisiana, motel, ended his life too soon at age 62. He had been vacationing with his wife and frequent songwriting collaborator, Margaret Ann.

For sure, Rich was no overnight success. Born December 14, 1932, in Forrest City, Arkansas, he spent most of a comfortable childhood on a farm near Colt, in the Arkansas portion of the Mississippi Delta, where he fell in love with the blues. C.J. Allen, a local black sharecropper and pianist, gave Charlie his first informal blues piano lessons. Rich went a step further by falling in love with progressive jazz, specifically the virtuoso piano of Oscar Peterson and the complex music of Stan Kenton's orchestra.

Briefly attending the University of Arkansas, Rich left to join the Air Force. Stationed in Oklahoma, he played music on the side as pianist in The Velvetones, a hip jazz band. His wife and childhood sweetheart Margaret Ann sang with the group and later wrote some of Charlie's most enduring songs. After his discharge in 1956, the Riches moved back to Forrest City, where a wealthy uncle loaned Charlie money to buy a farm. Memphis wasn't far away, and Charlie began playing clubs on weekends.

Margaret Ann taped some of Charlie's singing and playing, and, like Elvis, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis, Charlie headed for Sun Records. The Riches met saxophonist-bandleader Bill Justis, whose 1957 hit recording of "Raunchy" was among the first releases on Sun's new Phillips International label. Justis, though impressed by



Rich's musical finesse, gave him some Sun rockabilly 45's, urging him to come back when he could play "that bad."

Soon, Rich's piano graced Johnny Cash, Warren Smith and Billy Lee Riley sessions at Sun. He also recorded dozens of demos. In August of 1958, Rich recorded the rockers "Philadelphia Baby" and "Whirlwind" for Phillips International. They got minor notice; "Lonely Weekends" became his first real hit. He never landed a followup at Phillips. In 1963, Bill Justis brought him to Groove, RCA's rhythm and blues label. He made some fine recordings there, including searing versions of "Big Boss Man" and "Old Man River." After moving over to RCA, he was produced by Chet Atkins. He had no successes at either label and no real desire for a country music career.

His next move, in 1965, took him to Smash Records, where his recording of "Mohair Sam" was a Top 30 hit. He cut two LP's, produced by Jerry Kennedy, one of which, *The Many New Sides of Charlie Rich*, remains one of his finest albums. No follow-up hits emerged, and he fared no better recording country for the Memphis-based Hi label in 1966. In 1967, longtime Rich admirer Billy Sherrill, who'd engineered some of Rich's Phillips International sessions, signed Charlie to Epic Records.

Rich did three excellent LP's with Sherrill: *Set Me Free*, *Boss Man* and *The Fabulous Charlie Rich*. None sold. Rich continued enjoying wide respect among musicians and performers. He had the advantage of Margaret Ann's incredible songs, among them "Life's Little Ups and

Downs" and "Sittin' and Drinkin'." Peter Guralnick, in his groundbreaking book, *Feel Like Going Home*, was among the few to capture Rich's sensitivity, demons and consummate talent, as well as his shyness.

Then, when nobody expected it, Rich and Sherrill struck paydirt in 1973 with the romantic "Behind Closed Doors." Despite his disinterest in a country career, Charlie Rich was now the "Silver Fox": a country superstar. The follow-up, "The Most Beautiful Girl," topped both pop and country charts. In 1974, after the CMA voted him Entertainer of the Year, his old labels rushed out past recordings. His earlier RCA recordings ended up competing on the charts with his Epic singles.

Success came with a price. Longtime Rich fans conceded Sherrill's success while bemoaning the blandness of Sherrillized production. After "Behind Closed Doors," Charlie performed vocals only on his records. Sherrill brought in studio ace Pig Robbins to play piano, robbing Charlie of part of himself. Rich found himself learning stage choreography, the better to wow Vegas audiences, alien moves that worsened his discomfort—and his longtime drinking problems. After leaving Epic in 1977, Rich's essence was buried deeper under syrupy production with United Artists and Elektra. His final hits came in 1981.

If nothing else, he could afford to fade away from the stage in comfort, his wealth enhanced by early investments in the growing Wendy's hamburger franchise. For nearly a decade he remained silent, yet music was never far from his mind. Jam sessions with friends led to the album he'd always wanted to make: his 1992 masterpiece, *Pictures and Paintings*. The album's after-hours soulfulness dazzled critics, though few old fans were aware of its existence. In his notes, co-Executive Producer Peter Guralnick concluded, "As good as it may be this time around, you know that the next time you hear Charlie Rich, there will be something altogether different."

As it turns out, there will be no next time, and there's no replacing a fountainhead. Yet before he moved from this earthly plane, a man who deserved stardom got it by giving the masses what they wanted. And in a final triumph, he made a definitive statement of his brilliant, sensitive and complex genius. Once he sang, "Don't put no headstone on my grave." An apt statement, for Charlie Rich's greatest music will serve as his true monument. —RICH KIENZLE

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Record Reviews

The Mavericks

Music for All Occasions
MCA 11257

At first glance, the cover of *Music for All Occasions* might puzzle some fans, so a bit of explaining is in order. For the past couple of years, reissues of 1950's and early 60's instrumental LP's with titles similar to this have become the rage among younger retro music fans. Most of these LP's featured anonymously-recorded music, appropriate for everything from cocktails to making out, decked out in offbeat covers depicting models in some situation relating to the music's purpose. Such LP's can still be found in any junk store or the growing number of stores selling used LP's. In fact, this, *The Mavericks* third album, was even pressed on vinyl in a limited edition of 5,000 LP's. The older instrumental LP's of this type, are not only collector's items, some of the music itself is back in vogue, like the "space age bachelor pad music" of eccentric Mexican bandleader-arranger Esquivel. Do I listen to stuff like this? No comment...

There's nothing that quirky about the music within this, the followup to *What a Crying Shame*. With Don Cook co-producing, *The Mavericks*' vision remains intact, the band tighter than ever, contemporary and forward-thinking while rooted in the past. Lead singer Raul Malo co-wrote all but two songs, including "Foolish Heart," which he penned with Evan York. Its loping beat and female chorus straight out of The Anita Kerr Singers give it the feel of a late 50's/early 60's Marty Robbins outtake. Malo and James House, who work similar musical territory, wrote "One Step Away" together. Not surprisingly, it pays hom-



age to both mens' mutual hero, Roy Orbison.

The simple lyrics of "Here Comes the Rain," written by Malo and Kostas, are strengthened not only by Malo's delivery, but by the band's roaring, compelling arrangement. "Missing You," a Malo-Al Anderson joint effort, goes even farther afield, adding orchestrated strings totally appropriate to the song. They actually enhance Malo's solitary, moody desperation. Not only does the song possess subtle Orbison influences, but you can hear The Beatles' influence as well. The second Malo-Anderson tune, the rocking "All You Ever Do Is Bring Me Down," comes complete with Flaco Jimenez accordion and a boogie-guitar line lifted from George Jones' "White Lightning."

Rafe Van Hoy's "My Secret Flame" moves toward Shelby Lynne's style of swing, again with orchestrated strings and a low-keyed Malo performance. "Loving You," Malo-

Anderson song number three, rides the time-honored shuffle beat characteristic of another Mavericks hero: Buck Owens. Although beautifully arranged, it isn't quite on a par with their other songs. Malo and Kostas' "If You Only Knew" isn't much lyrically, yet succeeds on the back of an explosive rockabilly arrangement.

"I'm Not Gonna Cry for You" proves Malo can write decent material without collaborators.

Undoubtedly, one number will earn maximum attention: their revival of the lightweight 1967 Frank and Nancy Sinatra hit, "Something Stupid," pairing Malo with Trisha Yearwood, wife of Maverick bassist Robert Reynolds. This performance, which could have been done up as campy as the album cover, possesses far more charm than the Sinatras' original and deserves any success it receives.

Following a blockbuster album is no easy trick. Few acts ever quite succeed—memories of their past triumph are too

much in the way. Here producer Don Cook shows what he can do with artists capable of more than line dance drudgery. The Mavericks have an achievement here every bit as formidable as their last, one that looks towards the future.

—RICH KIENZLE

Dolly Parton

Something Special
Columbia AC 67140

Ironically, in the last decade or so, as Dolly Parton has worried her way into the national consciousness as a movie star, theme park owner and super-savvy business woman, her musical significance has seriously diminished. The last time I checked, none of her classic early 1970's RCA albums—which really are the plinth upon which her musical reputation was first built, were even in print. Country radio obviously doesn't take Dolly seriously anymore, either. Her only trip to the Top Ten in the last six years was with "Rockin' Years," a duet with Ricky Van Shelton. In the last decade she's only made one or two solo albums even worth the price of postage to write home about.

That's all the more reason why *Something Special*, her newest album, is reason for true blue Parton fans to sing hosannas. In terms of her songwriting, her musical focus and (aside from a few occasional lapses into self-parody) her vocal restraint, she's right on the money. This is one of her best efforts in years.

The real strength of *Something Special* lies in the way Parton has reached back and re-connected with her rich musical past. New originals like "Crippled Bird," "Green-Eyed Boy" and "Speakin' of the

Record Reviews

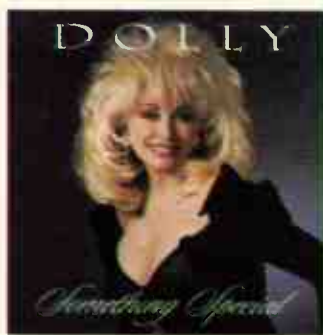
Devil" conjure up the same Appalachian imagery, country girl sauciness and occasional Biblical inferences that gave songs from landmark early 70's Parton albums—*Coat of Many Colors* and *My Tennessee Mountain Home*—such integrity and authority.

Parton has strengthened this link with her vintage years by re-recording fine updates of a couple of her semi-forgotten gems of yesteryear. Included on *Something Special* is a new version of "Jolene," which was a Number One for Parton in 1973. There's also a rendition of "The Seeker," which Parton took to Number Two in 1975.

I suppose if I were Parton, I would want everyone in the world to know that I wrote "I Will Always Love You," the ubiquitous Whitney Houston pop mega-hit of a couple of years ago. (Parton has twice had her own Number One country hit with the song, first in 1974, then again in 1982.) Thus, on *Something Special* she's included her own tour de force re-remake of the song, this time as a soaring duet with Vince Gill.

"I Will Always Love You" is the cut on *Something Special* that's getting the biggest "buzz." Yet, to me, it's about the least satisfying track in this collection. Sure, Dolly's and Vince's vocal acrobatics are stunning—like an audial high wire act. It's awe-inspiring as mere "spectacle"—like holding your breath as Pavarotti reaches for the high C. Unfortunately, the song itself, after ten jillion airplays, has already had most of its emotional edge worn away. Because of this, Parton and Gill's overwrought performance merely evokes a shrug and a yawn.

Fortunately, this remake of "the song that won't go away" is Parton's one market-savvy bit of audience manipulation amidst a work that's otherwise as austere as it is honest. The overkill of "I Will Always Love You" is easily atoned for by the homespun charm of the



title tune, the hushed mysticism of "Crippled Bird" and Parton's shimmering vocal on the delightfully swingy "Speakin' of the Devil." When it's all said and done, *Something Special* reminds us all what a great artist Dolly Parton once was...and still is every once in a while. —BOB ALLEN

Shelby Lynne

Restless

Magnatone MGT 102

Shelby Lynne deserved every iota of acclaim she received for her *Temptation* album two years ago. That it was issued on the small Morgan Creek label wasn't a disadvantage, though it barely made a dent in the mass market. Certainly, it didn't conform to the mid-90's formula for female megastardom, which requires artists to record airy, empty songs, many produced by hack pop producers hailing from Hollywood or New York. In any case, Shelby, once signed to Epic Records (who didn't know what to do with her), remains on a small label: Magnatone Records, who've afforded her the same freedom she had the last time.

Lynne and producer Brent Maher didn't revive *Temptation*'s big swing band; instead they opted for a honky tonk edge with enough swing to maintain continuity with the past. That, combined with first-rate new songs, makes the difference. The jerky Cajun beat on "Slow Me Down" sets up a new direction, Lynne bearing down on the lyrics she wrote with

Stephanie Davis and Maher. Those lyrics cover old ground, yet her vocal ferocity and the funky arrangement put it across. Moving on to the Maher-Allen Shamblyn "Another Chance at Love," an upbeat shuffle in the Ray Price tradition, she keeps things hopping, not slowing things down to ballad level until Jamie O'Hara's "Talkin' to Myself Again."

"Restless," a collaboration between Maher, Lynne and Jamie O'Hara, bridges the gap between honky tonk and swing much as Patsy Cline did when she tackled swing material. The darker, sensual "Just For the Touch of Your Hand," penned by Lynne, O'Hara and Maher, could easily succeed in the adult pop market. It revives the spirit of O'Hara's old group, The O'Kanes, with a slightly fuller band. "I'm Not the One" and "Wish I Knew" wouldn't sound out of place on Reba's or Faith Hill's albums, yet Lynne remains true to herself, never edging into those



singers' territory. For once, the Nashville String Machine, an orchestral recording band I've bashed in the past, are used effectively, unlike the bland arranging that usually renders them a fifth wheel.

Temptation fans will love the white-hot swing of "Reach for the Rhythm," and the closing "Swingtown," both also from Lynne, Maher and O'Hara. The latter pays homage to departed swing architects from Count Basie and Cab Calloway to Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Bob Wills, and uses a small band. While drummer J.D. Blair's opening tom-tom

work evokes 30's swing legend Gene Krupa, Randy Howard's fiddling pays tribute to several departed swing violin greats, among them jazzman Stuff Smith and ex-Texas Playboy Keith Coleman.

This is the second album to show Lynne's talent fully formed. I salute Magnatone for giving her the freedom to do it her way, validating yet again that a good producer like Brent Maher can mix integrity and commerciality. What troubles me is that though her fans see it, too many of the tin-eared automatons who program major market country radio stations can't. It's their loss. —RICH KIENZLE

Don Walser and The Pure Texas Band

The Archive Series, Vol. 1
Watermelon CD 1041

The Archive Series, Vol. 2
Watermelon CD 1042

Don Walser may be the best-kept secret in country music right now, but something this good is bound to draw attention. A longtime west Texan, the 61-year-old Walser relocated to Austin about a decade ago as part of his auditor's job with the National Guard, from which he retired in 1993. Since then, he's spent much more time on his music (which he'd been playing continually since his teens, despite the day job). He's probably the best-loved country artist in town, appealing equally to the traditional two-steppers, the old hippies, and the post-punk crowd. More recently, he's been touring outside the area now and again.

So what's the appeal? Well, at 6-foot-2 and 350 pounds, the man cuts an imposing figure, naturally. But mainly, it's his music, as it always should be. Walser has forged an irresistible Texas style that's equal parts Western, Western swing and honky tonk. His bands have included such undisputed

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Record Reviews

masters as steel players Bert Rivera, who put in ten years with Hank Thompson's Brazos Valley Boys, and Jimmy Day, who's worked behind everyone from Hank Williams to Elvis to Willie Nelson, Ray Price and Webb Pierce. Walser always turns out the real deal, uncompromised by superfluous instrumentation or background vocals. Nothing gets between him, you and the song. That's what wins the respect of such a diverse group of fans.

Last year, he released his first Watermelon CD, pro-



duced by Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson. The tracks on these two CD's are gathered from the three cassettes and a CD he did himself before that, to sell from the bandstand. They represent quintessential Don Walser, quintessential Texas music, quintessential country music. It has virtually nothing to do with anything else on the market today. You can't call it a throwback when the man had never stopped playing this music, but you can say that it's the traditional country music of the Lone Star State, performed without so much as a whiff of the kind of revisionism that usually seeps into such endeavors.

First off, the man's got a classic voice—a thin, but wiry, high tenor that glides like a bird, slashes like a knife, and cracks like a whip. His version of "Long Black Veil" is, for my money, the most chilling on record (though it doesn't match the doomy live treatment Walser gives this one on a good night). He's tender on a heart song like his own "You,"

but he can also put real muscle into a standard like "Fraulein" without overpowering the lyric.

And Don Walser yodels. Effortlessly. On his version of Eddy Arnold's "Cattle Call," he eases from a falsetto into a high yodel so cleanly you can hardly tell where one ends and the other begins. He yodels on songs by Jimmie Rodgers ("Waiting for a Train") and especially on songs associated with one of his true idols, Elton Britt ("Chime Bells," "Cowpoke"), as well as on great originals like "Rolling Stone from Texas," which he first recorded in the mid-60's with his group, The Texas Plainsmen Band.

Finally, the man's a human jukebox, singing about cowboys, oilfield workers, farmers, windmill men, musician friends, hobos, rodeo riders, cheating husbands, drunks and true fine lovers. He puts his stamp on oldies both familiar and obscure—Ray Price's "Curtain in the Window," Hawkshaw Hawkins' "Lonesome-77203," Slim Whitman's "Casting My Lasso," Hoyle Nix's "Big Ball in Cowtown," Merle Haggard's "Shelley's Winter Love," Bob Wills' "Take Me Back to Tulsa." His originals vividly capture that era when country musicians spoke first, and often solely, to their immediate communities. When Walser sings about "Fuzz Dixon," an oilfield



roughneck, you know that Fuzz and the others mentioned by name are real people, and that the Frontier Cafe where they hung out is a real place. "Yodel Polka" celebrates harvest season in a

tiny town with such a real-life balance of matter-of-factness and jubilation that you know Walser was there when it happened.

So you see, I can get pretty carried away when I start talking about Don Walser. But you should find out for yourself. You really do have to hear Walser to believe him. He rips out your heart in a way that leaves you feeling good all over. —JOHN MORTHLAND

Don Williams *Borrowed Tales* American Harvest 57703

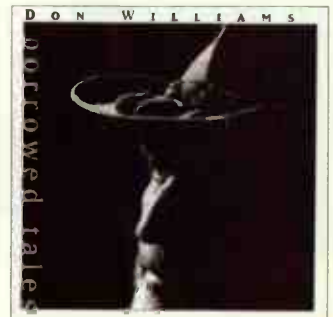
When Charlie Rich died this summer, he left a big hole in country music. Not only did he have one of the richest, calmest baritone purrs around, but he also had one of the broadest musical visions. He plucked songs from every genre and gave them a confessional transparency which is the common element in country, blues and folk music. Now Don Williams has filled the void left by Rich's death with a new album, *Borrowed Tales*.

As the title implies, Williams' new recording "borrows" 13 songs made famous by other singers and recasts them in his laid-back, old-fashioned country drawl. As Rich often did, Williams draws his materials from all over the American musical landscape—from fellow honky tonk Texans like Ray Price and Lefty Frizzell to rock 'n' rollers like Eric Clapton and The Box Tops, from 60's folkies like Gordon Lightfoot and Tim Hardin to jazz crooners like Peggy Lee and Nat King Cole. In every case, Williams makes a familiar standard sound fresh again. He does so by subtraction; he strips away every bit of vocal flamboyance and production excess until the song is distilled to its essence—a lyric, a melody and one of the most mesmerizing voices in country music.

For example, "Crying in the Rain" is transformed from the

Orbison-like grandeur of The Everly Brothers' original into an understated string-band arrangement. This puts all the weight on the vocal, but Williams bears the burden well, getting at the hurt and loneliness of the song as no other version has. "Fever" is so stripped down that nearly the only instruments audible behind Williams' voice are a churchly organ, a walking jazz bass line and finger snaps. Williams swings the rhythm so expertly that you can almost hear the sexual desire of the lyrics simmering in his throat. He never brings that desire to a boil, for the singer has always implied far more than he has stated, and this remarkable project is no exception.

Williams has a real gift for



extending a syllable in a silky purr which links one line to the next in an unending flow of melody. This is especially evident in his remake of Price's "I'll Be There"; the relaxed confidence of Williams' delivery makes this pledge of romantic loyalty more convincing than it would be otherwise. Williams—a former member of the folk trio, The Pozo Seco Singers—has a special feel for such folk numbers as Lightfoot's "If You Could Read My Mind" and Hardin's "Reason to Believe." He gets rid of the self-absorption which marred so many 60's folk performances and replaces it with a down-to-earth realism which transforms the material into country songs. In fact, Williams was exploring the connections between folk and country long before Mary Chapin Carpenter and Kathy Mattea came along.

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Record Reviews

Williams has been pushed off the major labels by Nashville's youth movement. While this is bad commercial news for him, it may be good artistic news. Acting as his own producer again, he is able to pick his favorite songs without regard to Music Row fashions and to emphasize his gifts as a vocalist. Williams has always had a good ear for songs—he recorded "Come From the Heart" and "Standing Knee Deep in a River" before Mattea did—and he ranks with Willie Nelson, Ray Charles and the late Charlie Rich as one of our best, boundary-crossing song interpreters.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Collin Raye

I Think About You
Epic EK 67033

Smooth as a Reno croupier, Collin Raye studiously lays it on the line. It must be remembered, however, that a line exists in only one dimension.

You can't fault the bags Raye reached into for material. The title song is by Don Schlitz and Steve Seskin, "Sweet Miss Behavin'" by Kostas, "Heart Full of Rain" by Hugh Prestwood, and the brilliantly enigmatic "Time Machine" by Gary Burr.

Raye means to touch a nerve, and he's rarely subtle about going for it. He says he like to make people think with his music. But this is state-of-the-art mainstream country pop, so, of course, you aren't asked to think about much or very deeply. "What If Jesus Came Back Like That" drives home a rather ham-handed gospel message: "We've all got a cross to bear/When it gets a little hard to care/Just think of Jesus hanging there." "I Think About You" tells us the sight of a drop-dead beautiful woman reminds Raye of his little girl, and thus controls his lust. Uh-huh.

Yet, if there is a taint of the button-pushing manipulator in the ballad delivery, Raye is



also capable of invoking a little pointless fun with "I Love Being Wrong," "On the Verge" and "Sweet Miss Behavin'." I think he is at his least self-conscious here, and certainly lets you enjoy the music without having to be especially mindful of the forced poignance of some middle-brow "message."

I think the best estimate of Raye in this outing is that the album is as seamless and perfectly calculated as a good Don Henley record. In fact, "I Volunteer" borrows so much signature melody and feel from Jackson Brown's "The Pretender," and "I Love Being Wrong" finds him sounding so much like Henley, that you are reminded of the years Raye spent in Nevada gaming towns fronting a copy band. And that, depending on how you view Henley, Brown and contemporary acts who cop other people's signatures, is also the damnation of this record.

There's nothing really wrong with this album in its objective quality and execution, despite my suspicion of one-dimensionality, but as observed earlier, Raye is just pushing buttons here. He just didn't manage to push any of mine.

—BOB MILLARD

Blackhawk

Strong Enough
Arista 07822 18792

First, a word to the letter-writers who've written, upset that I've skewered one or another of your favorites (particularly one male artist with three names). Keep in mind that critics and fans have

two different functions: ours being to give our views, yours to agree or disagree. I, for example, am well aware that in many cases, if I knock an act, single or album, there's a 50-50 (or better) chance that that act, single or album will be a hit. In fact, a Kienzle Gauge might be a good future way to pick successes. The harsher my words, the better an act's chance for real, mass success. Interested? Send in your cards and letters.

All kidding aside, there's no shame in making commercial music with taste and individuality (the latter being a trait with a currently uncertain future on Music Row). That's why I find Blackhawk so likeable. They make no secret of their pop and rock origins. Henry Paul's from the Southern-rock band, The Outlaws,



and his own Henry Paul Band, while Dave Robbins and Van Stephenson were veteran pop performers and composers. Their jangling sound, smooth harmonies and catchy material doesn't spell innovation, but has an appeal that can score commercially without annoying or boring anyone to death.

Strong Enough features plenty of their trademark vocal harmonies, beginning with the retro-twang "Big Guitar," a pleasing (if not politically correct) woman-as-instrument analogy. "Like There Ain't No Yesterday," written by Walt Aldridge and Mark Narmore, fits perfectly behind it. Two of the strongest numbers come from the no-nonsense pen of Dennis Linde. His "Cast Iron Heart," enhanced by a pound-ing, driving arrangement, excels, as does the closing "Hook,

Line and Sinkers," the witty tale of a woman redeemed from a life of crime by her man, who soon finds himself royally shafted. "Almost a Memory Now" gives the band a chance to show off their harmonies, though the song itself isn't much. The same thing applies to "King of the World."

The remaining songs have the same pleasant, jangly feel, from "Bad Love Gone Good" to the clever "Any Man with a Heartbeat," which is typical male pride over a girlfriend. The Paul-Robbins-Stephenson composition, "A Kiss Is Worth a Thousand Words," takes a different spin on another time-honored subject: kissing. It's clever, though you know what's coming from verse one. The same applies to "Bad Love Gone Good."

I think there's a place for Blackhawk in the greater scheme of things. Personally, I like my contemporary country a bit edgier and individualistic, but I can see why so many enjoy the group. It's like fast food. It's tasty enough and you know precisely what you're going to get—every time.

—RICH KIENZLE

Kris Kristofferson

A Moment of Forever
Justice JR 2001

Now this here is a bona fide "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation. Kristofferson is a legend, a well established genius, or at least he was some decades ago when he was recasting the standards of honesty and literacy in country music song-writing. You want to honor this man's brilliance, his place in the pantheon, and God knows it's politically incorrect to do otherwise. But, given such a pretentious title, how can one not point out that the Emperor has no clothes on?

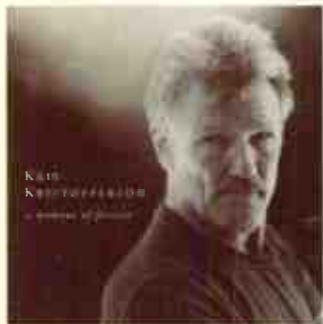
Billboard Magazine raved about this record, which just goes to show the continuing power of the Kristofferson publishing legacy and legend

Record Reviews

in Nashville. "It's new; it's Kristofferson; ergo it's fabulous." Is it possible to be both brilliant and boring at the same time? Yes, apparently. With due and obligatory respect to this man's legacy, this unrelentingly draggy and bummed out batch left me quoting the opening line from one of the songs from this collection, "Good Love (Shouldn't Feel So Bad)." "Damn the way you always bring me down."

I remember distinctly talking to him from his Hawaii retreat on the occasion of *Third World Warrior*, his snitty 1990 Sandinista-influenced political manifesto disguised as a record. I must have been the first guy to ask him the obvious question about that self-righteous and pedantic piece of musical polemic, "Why?" Just as I never needed Marty Robbins telling me George Wallace was our man or Moe Bandy fawning over George Bush, I didn't need Kristofferson, Rhodes scholar or not, to straighten out my world view, either.

He seemed offended that I'd even asked. Like, how come I didn't see things as black and white and angrily left-wing as he did. About some of the issues I probably came closer than he imagined, but Jeez, Louise, it's only music. What's so rotten about the life of a



Hawaiian millionaire movie star to make a person mean as a snake, grim as roadkill?

This time, as always, there are incredibly well-crafted lyrics. Kristofferson is no slouch at craft. But, without exception, instead of drawing you in with startling imagery and powerful, accessible emotion as he used to, every song here seems

determined to lean out and box your ear. His ideas are sour, self-absorbed and tiresome. Try these lines, cadged from "Shipwrecked in the Eighties," on for size: "And you're shooting through space on this/River of life that you're riding/And it's swirling and sucking you deeper/On down every day." It's not "Take the ribbon from my hair/Shake it loose and let it fall," that's for sure.

Kris Kristofferson never was exactly cheerful, but I'd rather listen to one of the lesser-known folk-poet songsters of our generation, a Richard Dobson or Forrest "Shrub" Smith album, for instance. There you get a little redemptive twist to your craggy-voiced poetry and lovable loner edge. Hey, Kris, lighten up, buddy.

—BOB MILLARD

Dusty Springfield *A Very Fine Love* Columbia 67053

Everybody's coming to Nashville! Every washed-up Hollywood rock star without a record contract, every bluegrass picker with ambitions bigger than the folding-chair circuit, every folkie songwriter without a purist's attitude, and every big-voiced crooner without the hair for MTV—they're all coming to Music City in the belief that it's the last place on earth where the song counts for more than the style. Even Dusty Springfield has dropped in.

Ah, Dusty Springfield! She was one of the great singers of the 60's with a voice so gritty, so soulful and so deep that many thought she was American, black and male until they saw her on TV in her thick mascara and towering blonde beehive. She was, in fact, born in London as Mary Catherine Isabel Bernadette O'Brien in 1939. She is perhaps best known for 1969's *Dusty in Memphis*, the legendary R&B-influenced album which yielded the Top 10 hit, "Son of



a Preacher Man," recycled 25 years later for the *Pulp Fiction* soundtrack. Now she has returned to the American South for *A Very Fine Love*, which could have been called "Dusty in Nashville."

The results aren't a straightforward country album, but rather a pop album with an undeniable country flavor. She worked with a country producer (Tom Shapiro), country songwriters (Bob DiPiero, Jim Photoglo, John Jarvis, Randy Goodrum, Matraca Berg and Craig Wiseman) and country musicians (John Jarvis, Lonnie Wilson, Dann Huff and Glenn Worf). She even climaxes the album by singing with Mary Chapin Carpenter and K.T. Oslin on a number Oslin wrote.

That latter song is "Where Is a Woman to Go," the confession of a woman who finds herself alone in a saloon after her man has walked out on her. When Springfield's raspy alto draws out the lines, "My daddy would die if he knew his baby was seekin' refuge in a little bar 'cross town," you understand not only her reluctance to enter such a place but also the power of the loneliness pushing her past that reluctance. It's a great country vocal and the second best thing on the album.

Too much of the album is devoted to warmed-over pop-soul served up by Hollywood hacks like Diane Warren and Will Jennings. Still there are some sterling country moments. DiPiero and Photoglo wrote "Fine, Fine, Very Fine Love," an exuberant celebration of a good relationship which finds Springfield sounding like Reba McEntire imitat-

ing Aretha Franklin. Shapiro's "I Can't Help the Way I Don't Feel" is a wonderful country ballad, and Springfield captures the forlorn helplessness of a confessional line like "Love is up to love and not to me." Framed by chiming acoustic guitars, Springfield's throaty vocal on Wiseman's "All I Have to Offer You Is Love" is a miracle of phrasing and inflection as she admits she can't be everything to a man—only his lover.

The best thing on the album, though, is Berg's "You Are the Storm," which sums up the problem of trying to save a man from himself in these telling lines, "I might as well be holding the wind in my arms; oh, I can't give you shelter when you are the storm." Springfield is the perfect singer for the song, for she is able to deliver the verses in a breathy sadness and then shift gears to belt out the chorus with conviction. She has all the qualities of a great honky tonk singer, and one can only hope she will make a full-time commitment instead of this part-time, inconsistent approach.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Faith Hill *It Matters to Me* Warner Bros. 9 45872

To mention the similarities between Linda Ronstadt and the new crop of female country singers—Trisha Yearwood, Faith Hill, Pam Tillis, Martina McBride and the like—is merely to point out the obvious. Once California country-rock had taken over commercial Nashville, it was inevitable that the "Sweetheart of Rodeo Drive" would become the model for a new generation of women. More interesting than the similarities, though, are the differences, for the Ronstadt model inevitably changed as it entered the country mainstream. The instrumental arrangements didn't change much at all, for Nashville was moving in the

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direction of loud snare drums with twangy guitars anyway. The subtle but crucial distinctions can be found in the lyrics and in the vocals.

Consider, for example, Faith Hill's impressive sophomore album, *It Matters to Me*. On first hearing, the overall sound—with its big pop melodies, crisp clarity, punchy beat and choppy guitar chords—reminds one of L.A. in the 70's, but if you listen again, you'll notice a difference. In the heyday of Ronstadt and The Eagles, everything was geared to the big hook in the chorus; verse lyrics were often subordinated to an atmospheric production which set up the key line in the chorus which was hammered home again and again.

Well, you can change a lot of things in country music, but you can't change the emphasis on storytelling. That meant young women in Nashville, no



matter how much they admired Ronstadt, had to sing songs where the narrative developing in the verses was as important as the pay-off in the chorus. Which meant, in turn, that the verse vocals had to be out in front of the production values so they could be heard as plainly as the chorus vocals. As a result, Hill benefits not only from the forceful momentum and pop catchiness of Ronstadt's example, but also from the storytelling traditions of generations of hillbilly

women before her. And Hill has some terrific stories to sing on this recording.

The album kicks off with "Someone Else's Dream." The verses tell the tale of a woman whose mother pressured her to become a beauty contestant and whose father pressured her to pin all her hopes on Mr. Right. But the sequined bathing suit didn't fit, and Mr. Right ended up in divorce court. And these Tammy Wynette-like details in the lyrics set up the big Ronstadt-like moment in the chorus where Hill belts out over a juicy melody, "All my life, I've been pleasin' everyone but me, waking up in someone else's dream."

Ariel Caten's "A Man's Home Is His Castle" is the story of a diner waitress who wears dark glasses because "make-up won't cover up a blackened eye" caused by her husband. As the details accumulate—an empty whiskey

bottle, an indifferent policeman, a half-packed suitcase and the housekeys clenched in a fist—Hill builds to a surprise climax. Her former tourmate, Alan Jackson, wrote "I Can't Do That Anymore" for her, and it proves a sharply focused portrait of a frustrated housewife. Once again, Hill moves gracefully from the traditional country lament in the verses to the bold pop moment in the chorus.

These three songs aren't the only tracks on the album which describe the raw deal women often get. Unlike some so-called feminists, however, Hill doesn't waste time telling men what they should be doing; she concentrates instead on announcing what she's going to do. This is in keeping with the strength of her voice and the confidence of her delivery.


There are other sorts of material on *It Matters to Me*—the exuberant celebration of impulse on "Let's Go to Vegas,"

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the forceful plea for communication on the title track, and the powerful gospel duet with Shelby Lynne on "Keep Walkin' On." In every case, Hill proves she's much more than a pretty face; this Mississippi soprano has the pipes and attitude to put across the trickiest story line. And she proves that Nashville still has as much to teach California as it has to learn. —GEOFFREY HIMES

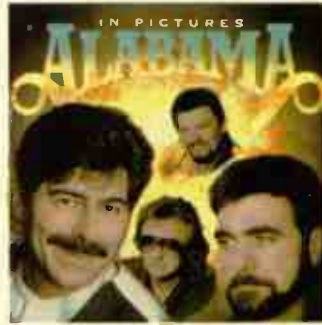
Alabama *In Pictures* RCA 66525

Seven or eight years ago, Alabama's music had sunk into a dreadful morass of predictability (low-lighted by their horrible 1988 live album). If you'd asked me then if I thought they'd still be around today, I might have said no.

Then again, if you'd asked me

the same question five or six years ago, when the band began making some of its best music ever, with fine second-phase albums like *Southern Star*, I'd have most likely replied, "Oh, yeah! No doubt about it!"

Of course, time flies—whether you're having fun or not. Already we're 15 years down the road from "Tennessee River," Alabama's first single. And here they are, still going strong. Though *In Pictures*, their latest, is not a landmark album like *Southern Star*, it is a solid, inspired, workmanlike effort, nonetheless. And it suggests the band still has a lot of life left in it. Maybe it's a sign of age that Alabama has dipped deeper than ever into the honey pot of sentimentality. Songs like the title tune (penned by Joe Doyle and Bobby E. Boyd), "It Works" (Mickey Cates and Mark Alan Springer) and "The Maker Said Take Her" (written by Ronnie Rogers, who's com-



posed a slew of Alabama hits through the years) are about as maudlin as anything I've heard since Bobby Goldsboro reigned in the country Top Ten. And maybe it's also a sign of age that I find myself lapping up nearly every bit of this sentimentality-in-extremis as lead singer Randy Owen purrs earnestly of true love, down-home virtue and the old-fashioned way.

Fortunately, the band has balanced this—admittedly appealing—emotional excess with some beach party music and

some high-steppin' country-rockers. "Sunday Drive" is a super-charged paean to drag racing written by Ray Kennedy and Dak Alley. "She Ain't Your Ordinary Girl" is an exuberant celebration of falling in love for all the right reasons. "Say" (written by Steve Bogard and Jeff Stevens) is a shout-it-out testimonial to the power of feeling good when there's every reason not to. Jeff Cook does his usual meat 'n' potatoes shuffle as co-writer (with Phillip Wolfe) and lead vocalist on "Heartbreak Express," a rock 'n' soul-flavored barroom ode to bad love.

Over the years, I took great delight in sticking pins in Alabama and predicting their demise. So it's all the more pleasant now to be able to say that I hope they're around for at least another 15 years. Today's problematic music scene would surely be a bleaker and worse off place without them.

—BOB ALLEN

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Record Reviews

John Hiatt

Walk On

Capitol 7243 8 33416

John Hiatt long ago established his country credentials. His brilliant country songs have been recorded by the likes of Willie Nelson, Ronnie Milsap, Emmylou Harris, Asleep at the Wheel, Gail Davies, Suzy Bogguss and The Desert Rose Band. He lives in the Nashville area, where he remains one of the most intelligent and idiosyncratic songwriters in the state. Hiatt's brilliant new album, *Walk On*, was recorded in Tennessee but was produced by Don Smith of Keith Richards fame. The results are all over the map stylistically, but they contain enough traces of country and country-rock to make the record a must-buy for every adventurous country fan.

There's an unmistakable hill-billy twang to David Immergluck's mandolin riff which kicks off the album. The song is "Cry Love," a coyote's hilltop howl about the irrationality of love. "The heart won't remember the burning fire," Hiatt cries, "the next time you feel the flame of desire." A mandolin riff is also the glue which holds together the next song, "You Must Go," a superb summary of the overpowering urge to travel on which afflicts some of us. The country-rock band, The Jayhawks, provide the Eagles-like harmony vocals to Hiatt's knowing chorus, "You must go and you must ramble/Through every briar and bramble/Till your life is in a shambles." The lyrics are filled with Dylanesque imagery ("It's gonna take a midnight train/To straighten out your winding brain/Like a snake in the rain"), and Hiatt backs them up with Dylanesque harmonica.

Hiatt wrote these songs while he was on his 13-month tour of Europe and North America with his band, The Guilty Dogs, and the lyrics are full of references to restless motion ("You Must Go," "Walk

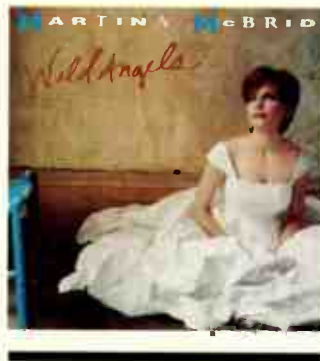
On," "Dust Down a Country Road," "I Can't Wait"), homesickness ("Your Love Is My Rest") and the senseless forces which keep us moving when all we really want is one love, one home. Whether it's the Neil Young-ish folk-rock of "Walk On," the Curtis Mayfield-like R&B of "I Can't Wait" (featuring vocals by Bonnie Raitt), or the Dire Straits-like film-noir-rock of "Wrote It Down and Burned It," Hiatt's thematic concerns and high level of artistry are remarkably consistent. There are only two missteps: an unfocused attack on the media on "Shredding the Document" and an overstated depiction of fast-lane living on "Good as She Could Be."

The album's highlights, by contrast, all have a country tinge. "Friend of Mine," featuring Hiatt all alone at the piano, is a slow, old-fashioned hymn for a dead friend with music as reserved and as moving as lines like these, "His voice is still/Like the night/



Rustling wings/Of angels' flight/Take him home." Even better is "Your Love Is My Rest," a country-folk ballad with a tender, lovely melody to match lyrics which yearn to be back home with a true love. Best of all is "The River Knows Your Name," which has the sing-along quality of a slow Appalachian gospel tune. In his raspy voice, Hiatt sings of a river which will wash away all our tears, all our unspoken secrets, all our restlessness with a mother's uncritical acceptance. In describing the river, this song pulls together all the contradictions of the album and resolves them.

—GEOFFREY HIMES



Martina McBride

Wild Angels

RCA 66509

You don't have to listen too hard to *Wild Angels*, Martina McBride's third and latest album, to figure out that she's a pretty happy camper these days. She's got a new baby, she's married to a man she's madly in love with and her career is in fast forward. A sheer sense of confidence and emotional centeredness echoes through nearly every cut on *Wild Angels*, which McBride also co-produced (with Paul Worley and Ed Seay). McBride wasn't involved in the songwriting this time around. She's instead relied heavily on perdurable women writers like Matraca Berg (who's got two co-writer cuts on here) and the formidable songwriting trio of Pat Bunch, Pam Rose and Mary Ann Kennedy. (Their names turn up, collectively and individually, on three songs.) The result, more often than not, is semi-inspirational, ultra-positive cuts like the title tune, "Safe in the Arms of Love," "You've Been Driving All the Time" and "Born to Give My Love to You"—songs that celebrate the more affirmative and enduring aspects of love, between a man and a woman, and a mother and child.

Even the sad songs on *Wild Angels* just don't seem all that doleful. They're buoyed by inventive, high-energy arrangements and McBride's spirited vocals, which are by turns tender and yearning, gutsy and sassy. On "Cry on the Shoulder

of the Road" (Matraca Berg and Tim Kregel) McBride coaxes a free-wheeling roadhouse performance out of the studio musicians and is backed on roughhewn harmonies by Levon Helm, formerly of The Band. "Beyond the Blue" (David Kent and Ashe Underwood) is a salute to The Beatles that features some intriguing melodic shifts and chord changes and a theme that mines the silver lining beyond the dark clouds of heartbreak. McBride really lets loose on a spirited rendition of Delbert McClinton's rowdy "Two More Bottles of Wine," a hit for Emmylou Harris some years ago. Once again, McBride lets the studio band break loose like it's Saturday night down at the Twist & Shout.

There are other neat flourishes, as well, like the nifty bass/bass drum intro to "Safe in the Arms of Love," and the inventive contrast between the hard country fiddle and steel backing in the verses of "You've Been Driving All the Time" and the rock-hard drums and electric guitar behind the chorus. "Born to Give My Love to You" (Bunch-Rose-Kennedy) is McBride's deeply passionate tribute to her daughter, Delaney, and it features some Beatlesque vocal harmonies and a hooky counter-melody.

Ultimately, though, *Wild Angels*'s biggest drawback is that, sad to say, the mellowness of personal contentment never makes for quite as compelling country music as does the ragged edge of heartbreak. This collection also suffers simply because there aren't any songs nearly as challenging as 1994's "Independence Day," McBride's hard-hitting anthem of self-actualization which added a couple of notches to her credibility as an artist. The closest thing to it on *Wild Angels* is "Phones Are Ringin' All Over Town" (Marc Beeson-David MacKechnie-Kin Vassy) in which a woman makes her much-delayed escape from a neglectful relationship by simply getting on a

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jet plane and vanishing.

On *Wild Angels* McBride has, for the most part, chosen to look inward and give her music a slightly softer focus. The result is an album that's both compelling and predictable, in about equal measure.

—BOB ALLEN

Jimmy Buffett

Barometer Soup
Margaritaville/MCA 11247

Like the sea he so admires, Jimmy Buffett's creative output seems to ebb and flow. Good news, Parrot Heads; it's high tide again!

Barometer Soup is a gumbo of literary allusions, eclectic thoughts and sounds cooked up by Buffett and his band with producer Russ Kunkel while wintering in Key West this last year. There is actually a concept behind the creation of this album, even if it doesn't become obvious until you have



the hermeneutical key, supplied by Buffett in the liner notes. "Between the studio at the Fish Camp and the old Monroe County Library, we searched the works of our collective favorite authors for source material." So, titles and ideas come from the likes of Mark Twain, Herman Wouk, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jim Harrison and others.

"Bank of Bad Habits" is pure Buffett, the latest winking confessional lark and loads of the usual fun. But, for most of the rest of this album, Buffett the novelist merges with the singer/songwriter for ambitious gems like "Remittance Man" (inspired by Twain's little-remembered

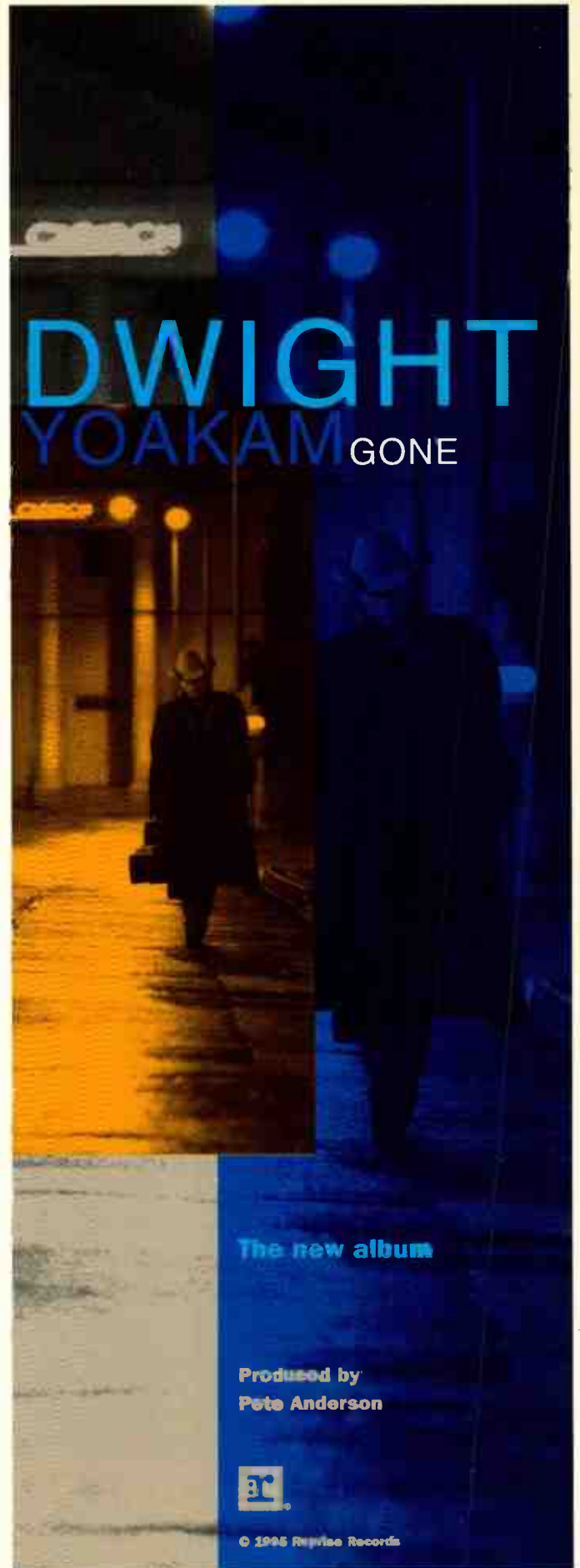
novel by the same name), and "Diamond as Big as the Ritz" (drawing enigmatically from the writings of Fitzgerald and the life of Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar). They are fascinating, well-told little tales set to music.

Before you are off-put by the literary references, remind yourself that this is Buffett we're talking about. While it's not all steel drums and reefer madness, there's plenty of twinkling smiles to go around here. Buffett dishes up happy-go-lucky existentialism on the back of rollicking party tracks in "Don't Chu-Know." "The Ballad of Skip Wiley" is a densely told tale of a goofy eco-anarchist that gets better every time you hear it. "You can shoplift your days at Blockbuster/but you can't steal the Orange Bowl Queen." Sort of a thinking man's margarita.

My favorite songs here are probably the least typical of the Buffett oeuvre. The simply accompanied waltz time vision of fireworks on the beach in "The Night I Painted the Sky" drew me into a reverie about my own childhood when my cousins, the Wells twins, showered Roman candles in whooshing arcs over their daddy's fat '57 Cadillac in the dark night of the Muhlenberg County, Kentucky, countryside. And welling violins out of a weighty 50's romance movie soundtrack and sparse Nat King Cole-style piano are perfect foils for a delicious gut string guitar, making a lush jazz tribute to Buffett's favorite Key West bar and grill, "Blue Heaven Rendezvous."

Frankly, I could have done without Buffett covering James Taylor's "Mexico," whose lyric, if you remember, is from a guy who admits he's never been to the place he's celebrating. Being there and making you want to join him is the genius of Buffett. He invites you all along on his permanent beachside vacation one album at a time. Fifteen bucks for about 54 minutes in Key West, as many times as you want to spin the disc; that's not a bad deal.


—BOB MILLARD



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That Emmylou Harris would celebrate her 20th year as a solo artist by challenging herself with a project ripe with risks should not be a surprise. After all, she has spent the last two decades following her creative instincts into daring territory, and it's often resulted in original music that stands apart from that of her peers and from whatever trends or styles happen to be popular at the moment. She's been called the mother of New Traditionalism, but her career is rich with experimental changes in directions that defy the traditionalist tag. Her latest album, *Wrecking Ball*, came from a collaboration with producer Daniel Lanois, a rock producer best-known for his work with U2, Peter Gabriel and Bob Dylan. We talked about it with her in a conference room at Asylum Records as her calm, shaggy dog wandered in and out.

1 The last time we talked, in 1995, you were preparing for a final show with *The Nash Ramblers*, and you had just started working with Daniel Lanois. At the time, you said it was going to be a departure for you. *Wrecking Ball* does sound different than anything you've previously done.

I guess it is. The main difference is a sonic one, because of Daniel's presence and the unique sound that comes from everything he does. That's why I was excited to work with him. But I do feel it's not out of character for me. I think I've gone for that kind of haunting sound before, drawing from different wells and not just limiting myself to any particular type of song. But I think obviously this step has a very distinct sound.

2 Maybe you could explain how that comes about.

That's Daniel. It's not just the melodic parts; the rhythms he goes for are real unusual. On "Orphan Girl," which could seem really cut and dry, he came up with something completely unique by having the bassist play a bass drum with a stick by clacking it against the side. It was just



20 Questions with EMMYLOU HARRIS

by Michael McCall

enough of a different direction to come up with a unique reading of the song. Every song was an adventure like that. The idea was to explore where we could take it.

3 In a way, it seems as if this is a continuation of a mood explored on *Cowgirl's Prayer*, even back as far as *Bluebird*. I think *Wrecking Ball* is a natural progression for me. I

think I got to a point of departure where I could go off in different directions. I think this one might be the most extreme, musically. But, song-wise, it's very much in keeping with the kind of material I like to do.

4 Were you nervous going into the recording, knowing you were working with someone outside of country music?

Not really. I trust my instincts. I loved Daniel's work. I would either be comfortable or I wouldn't, and it would be very obvious very fast. And I was comfortable right from the start. Basically, all I had to do was sing and play, and I could do that all night if I love the songs. So my job was easy.

5 There have been a lot of changes this year for you. Did you want to shake things up?

I was thinking I was going to be taking some time off. (Laughs.) What a joke! But *The Ramblers* had a four-year run, and Randy (Jon Randall, RCA recording artist) was going off on his solo career. I thought it was time to move on to something else, to cut the moorings and see where I landed, instead of just holding on to a known quantity. That's the easy thing to do, but ultimately it can be inhibiting to the creative process. It seemed like the right time to pull back and put all my energy into recording.

6 Did you feel it necessary to go outside of Nashville to try something new?

No, it was just that Daniel was someone I wanted to work with. The idea had been put in my head by Jon Condon of Asylum. He asked me, "If you could work with any producer, who would it be?" I said Daniel. I didn't see us actively going after that. I was just in a period where I didn't know what I would do next. I had just assumed I would go back in with Alan Reynolds and Richard Bennett. I've been very happy with the work they have done. But I think sometimes it's good to just do something very different. When that opportunity is presented to you, it's important to make the change.

7 What is it about Daniel Lanois that you liked?

I am just such a big fan of his music. His solo record, *Acadie*, and his Dylan record (*Oh Mercy*) are two of my favorites. His work with other people also impressed me as being so creative and so very

musical and different than anything anybody else was doing. The opportunity to work with him was something I couldn't pass up. It was such a gift.

8 *If you look back over the last few years, some of the best country records have been made by rock producers from outside of Nashville....*

I think it's good to broaden the scope and connect with soulmates outside of your particular field. I suppose categories serve a purpose, but the boundaries are definitely bleeding, and that's good. There are pure forms that will influence the younger generation, and they will take it a step forward. But I think it's a mistake to try to recreate a modern version of older music. I think you have to bring something new to it. Face it, we're of a different generation. We have to make different poetry. I think it's an obvious thing to do, to bring those worlds together. The collaborative aspect of music drives it forward. It's always a good move—well, most of the time. (Laughs.)

9 *If you look through the history of rock music, most of the best stuff brought together different styles*

There's a wonderful show over in England called *Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?* They show videos that are obviously pulled together by this theme of Hank Williams and their vision of country. I recently hosted it. The videos they aired were Neil Young, Kieran Kane, Bob Dylan, Pam Tillis, The Byrds, Kelly Willis, Jon Randall. I was in heaven. I thought, "This makes so much artistic and creative sense to me. Why can't I turn on the radio and hear music like this?" Maybe you can on these Americana stations. I'm assuming that's what they're headed for. The Lucinda Williams, the Joe Elys, the Dead Reckoning crowd, but also bringing in Bruce Springsteen and the other artists I mentioned. My vision of country has always been much broader.

10 *You can see it on your song selection here. You have Neil Young and Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix—that one will surprise people. You have some very cool songwriters, like Steve Earle and Lucinda Williams and Dave Olney, and some that people might not recognize, like Gillian Welch and Julie Miller.*

Gillian Welch is a new writer who is making an album with T-Bone Burnett. I've always thought from the first time I heard her that there was something very different there. She blends these bluegrass and mountain influences and hardcore country, yet brought something completely different—her own particular poetic vision. The idea of going outside of Nashville initially is a good idea. We'll see what happens. I love everything she's written, but "Orphan Girl" I just responded to so immediately.

Julie Miller is primarily known as a Christian artist. I met her through her husband, Buddy Miller, who I'd met through Jim Lauderdale—who's another great artist making the kind of music we're talking about. Julie and Buddy asked me to sing on that song, "All My Tears," on her album, *Orphans and Angels*. Which I did. I played the original demo of the song for Daniel, and he was really taken by it. It has a real Staplesque quality to it, that real down-on-your-knees, black gospel, Pop Staples kind of thing. It was the first thing we cut.

11 *You changed Dave Olney's "Deeper Well" some when you recorded it. You and Lanois are listed as co-writers. That was the song that eluded us. We cut it three times. All three are very different versions. We re-wrote it with David's blessing. We took a very masculine verse out, and in the process of taking it out, we came up with more verses. It turned out to be something really different, unlike anything I've ever done, I think. I really liked getting down in a lower vocal register.*

12 *The song has sort of a spiritual theme, and that kind of runs through the entire album, the idea of spirituality and searching.*

I think so, too. Searching and yearning. I think everything on the album raises questions. I'm not comfortable with songs that provide answers. I like songs that just deal with the questions. I don't think there are any answers. There are only the questions. But it's important to ask them.

13 *You've said in the past that you build your albums around certain themes. When we last spoke, you said the theme of this album hadn't surfaced. But you figured it would with time. Did it?*

It did. I think it is about yearning. I think it's a theme that has run through a lot of my albums. Ultimately, all good songs are about that, even the happy songs. (Laughs.) They're about going through the process from the dark to the light.

14 *Your version of Lucinda Williams' "Sweet Old World" will make people cry.*

That's such a wonderful song. I had several Lucinda Williams' songs I wanted to do. It was hard to pick. But this one seemed to be the consensus. What can you say about that song? It's so unique, in what it deals with. I mean, it's about suicide, isn't it? Yet it turns out to be kind of a love song. That's a pretty hard thing to do. (Laughs.) She's one of my favorites.

15 *Steve Earle's "Goodbye" also has a sadness to it.*

Oh God, that song is so incredibly sad it should be illegal. He's just one of our best writers. I'm so glad he's back and making music again. I really missed him. I think his acoustic album is phenomenal, and I'm really looking forward to this next record he's doing.

16 *How did you come upon Hendrix's "Waterfall"?*

That came from sitting around my house with Daniel. He was talking about how you can find country melodies in pop mu-

sic. His example was this Jimi Hendrix song, and he started playing it for me. I started doing harmony with him, and it sounded good. We thought that might be one to try.

17 *"Wrecking Ball" is another beautiful song.*

Malcom Burn, who played bass on the album, pitched that song. He has a theory that on every Neil Young album there is one great, overlooked song. That was his nomination, from the *Freedom* album. It takes someone like Neil Young, who transcends all categories, to manage to blend so many different musical forms into a unique sound that is his own. I love the imagery in that song. I love the image of the wrecking ball, of destruction and violence, juxtaposed against this very romantic song. It's like a late-night tango. You can almost see the smoke. It's like a soundtrack from some old movie. It calls up all kinds of black and white images, which I love.

18 *Why choose it as a title? Was there a reason?*

It was nice and ambiguous. There are a lot of beautiful and melodic sounds on this record, but there's a real rough bottom to it. As Daniel says, there's a lot of rust on it. It sums up the atmosphere of the record.

19 *Do you have a band yet? What are your plans?*

I'm bandless! I just wanted to let the dust settle. I'm not sure where I going to take this live. I'm thinking of stripping down even more. We'll see....

20 *As great as your last few albums were, we didn't hear them much on the radio. Will it be different this time?*

We're hoping for play on AAA (album adult alternative) radio. I think country has made it known that they're pretty much not interested in my music. And that's fine, because I have an audience in spite of that. AAA has been responsive to me in the past. I might as well go where I'm invited.

DWIGHT YOAKAM

by Patrick Carr

Our visits have assumed a certain form, perhaps even an aspect of ritual. Upon the completion of a new Dwight Yoakam album, before its release to the public and after often complex negotiations, a veteran *Country Music* correspondent—myself the first and second times, John Morthland the third, now me again—ventures west to Hollywood, gets himself to the appointed place at the appointed hour, and waits for Dwight.

Dwight is always late, but never that late—he will arrive soon, as usual, breathless and sincerely apologetic—and so one gets a little time to look around, chitchat with the gang, maybe learn something. This time the news is that here we have an unusually smog-free Los Angeleno day, the vista from Dwight's office eight floors above Sunset Boulevard offering everything from crisp white visions of the pristine *haciendas* close by in the Hollywood and Beverly hills (Dwight country) to long, cancer-gray vistas of the megapolitan sprawl everywhere else. I realize for the first time that, gee, you sure can tell where the rich folks live in *this* burg.

Another new insight, into Dwight himself, emerges from chitchat with Gary Ebbins, his personal assistant, and Tresa Redburn, his publicist. Talking about Dwight's current domestic project, the total renovation of his second old Hollywood hills house, Tresa marvels at his attention to detail. He's handling everything himself, she says, all the way down to the fittings for the doors and such; he must know his way around every hardware store in Los Angeles County by now—"and he's like that about *everything!*" Gary marvels, too. Dwight showed him the house just after he found it, and Gary couldn't believe his eyes. "I said 'Dwight, that's got to be the ugliest house I've ever seen!' I mean, it was horrible. I thought he'd totally lost it. But then he started explaining what he was going to do with it, and I realized he could see it all in his mind, he could visualize exactly how it would be. I couldn't, even after he explained it, but he could. He can look at a room and see not just what kind of lights it needs, but exactly how it'll look when it's all done and the lights are turned on."

Dwight, then, is—What? Creative, visionary, perfectionistic, perhaps a tad obsessive? That all fits, I think. Certainly those characteristics are part of the package that gives his work its winning combination of imagination and precision (though they may not be much involved

in its other best qualities, its emotional accuracy and its purely musical depth).

When he arrives, Dwight is the way he usually is away from the stage or the camera: animated to the point of eagerness, dressed way down, very much the pretty pleasant regular guy, not at all the skintight-leather, mysteriously hatted Mr. Cool so popular out there in alternatonk-country land. 'Cool' doesn't even come close, in fact, when he learns that the advance cassette of *Gone* to which I've been listening is not the properly dubbed version. Then he gets so badly annoyed that he storms off into another office, closes the door, gets on the phone and handles the matter immediately. When he emerges after five minutes, he's still a little steamy, but I *will* have the correct tape within the hour, he says, and that's a promise (which comes true). The incident reminds one that Dwight doesn't exactly need an engraved invitation to fret and worry, and furthermore the objects of his angst don't have to be very important in the great scheme of

things—during my last visit, I recall, he was pretty torqued about the shortcomings of garbage pickup outside his house. On the other hand, he laughs often, and easily; he's wrapped a little tight, you might say, but he's still a good companion.

We get settled in, Dwight sprawled back in his antique desk chair, and go to it.

"So, Dwight, is *Gone* the third album in your second trilogy? Are you still thinking of your work that way?"

There's a long pause while he considers the question carefully. "Ahhh...Oh, I don't know. No, I don't think so. This was not anything that was a conscious extension of anything, other than just music. I started writing some of the material last year, little bits of it, then began to write on a regular basis in the middle of the spring this year; but every song, I remember feeling like it was the most, well, disperate body of work that I'd ever done at one time..."

He continues talking, but I'm puzzling over what he means by 'disperate,' because if such a word existed, it would mean *not* separate. He's talking as if the new songs *are* separate, though. When he pauses, I request clarification.

Things get muddy at this point, because at first he doesn't understand that I'm confused by the word itself, not the concept behind it. Eventually, though, I get that across to him, and he says, "Ah! Let's go to the Oxford!" Quick as a wink he snatches a well-thumbed copy of *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* from the top left-hand

SEMANTICS & STYLE

There's a lot of both when Dwight and Patrick meet again. Talk centers around songwriting, loss, creative inspiration... and the proper use of words. Dwight says we should title this piece "Half-Literate, Half-Cocked & Dangerous."





drawer of his desk, and we get the matter resolved: he means 'disparate,' which he's been mispronouncing as 'disseparate'—it's one of those deals where you've read a word a thousand times, but never heard anyone else use it or used it yourself on someone who knows what it means. That's not the point, though. The point is that here's a hillbilly singer/songwriter with an Oxford at his fingertips—not a Webster's, mind you, and certainly not a Random House or whatever, but an *Oxford!* That's my kind of guy. And let's remember, while we're at it, Dwight's defiance of stereotype in other areas: his enthusiasm for health food and firearms, for Rimbaud and Ray Price, for Studio B pedal steel and the Memphis Horns; his overall status, to quote myself, as "the best-armed New Age hard-core honky tonk tee-totalling metaphysabilly I know." Not to mention that he dated Sharon Stone, of course. Certainly not to mention that.

To continue, then. "You see, I was just writing, and whatever came to me, I wrote. I remember writing 'Near You.' I was walking from the kitchen to the front of my house, through the living room—I was going in there to actually work on another song—and it just started rolling in my head. I just started singing the words and the melody simultaneously...*(singing)* 'Everywhere you go each day I...' Just walking. And by the time I got to the front room, which is where I write, the den, I had this idea going, so I grabbed the guitar and put the tape on. So, you know, the songs on this album kinda came almost out of a stream of consciousness. Not to be too esoteric."

That same spontaneous quality ruled the recording process, Dwight says. "We just showed up and said, 'Here. Music.' Pete [Anderson, his producer/bandleader/guitarist] being an arranger in the process, it's a little different for him, but even with Pete, I watched him, and for him too it was all just going on. It just went on. We sat down on a Saturday, we started on Monday rehearsing the band, we finished rehearsal that Saturday, and

we went in the following Monday morning and began taping tracks."

So it went with the sequencing, too. "I remember I lived with *This Time* in my car for a while, and I remember rearranging the sequence a couple of different times, but *Gone* just kind of presented itself. I had a couple of mental sequences, but I never executed them. I never put them on tape. I never had the songs arranged any other way but how they are on the finished album. Not that sequence is paramount, but I do think that in the presentation of songs as a body of music, it can lend itself to harmony or distraction, one or the other."

For the record, Dwight's sequence lends itself to harmony: the songs flow very naturally. Also for the record, *Gone* is a pretty great piece of work. As usual, it combines intelligence and style with emotion, and expresses both love of country's best traditions

and a lively sense of musical adventure. There's not much new or different about it—it's just a little deeper and a little wider, offering intensification rather than directional change—and that's good. Dwight's direction, out there on his lonely road away from the scoot-poppin' herd both physically and creatively, has been entirely admirable ever since *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc. Etc.* a decade ago.

I've jotted down some notes on each track of *Gone*. I scan them for something that might provoke a reaction.

"Okay, Dwight. 'One More Night.' I wrote here, 'Horns very Stax/Volt. A set piece. Got a Steve Cropper guitar, big emotion, a Wall of Sound sound...'"

"Hm. A little bit."

"It's got a sitar."

"You heard that. Yeah, we snuck a little see-tar in there. Just attribute it to Joe South. 'See-tar' might not be in the Oxford, though. Maybe we should try the Webster's. But I remember when that song came to me. I was actually right on Sunset on my motorcycle—not to over-romanticize it, 'cause I was with a couple of buddies—and I just stopped, 'cause for some reason I was singing. Even as loud as the bike was, I could hear this music. Maybe it was the drone of the engine. We were just kind of left alone to ride, see; it was in a section out through there, not a lot of lights, not a lot of stop signs. I stopped, and they stopped, and I jotted down that line *(singing)*: 'One more night and I knooooow...'

"I never touched a guitar in this song 'til I'd written the first two verses. I'd gone and done a film and come back with this scribble on the paper for myself and the basic idea in my head, then picked up the guitar and started playing around. Inadvertantly I'd picked up the electric; had I picked up the acoustic, I might have gone a little different way with it. It might have gone more Haggard-like in its lyrical thought and

its melody, 'cause that's how I first heard it in my head. But I'm happy it didn't. I'm happy that I did what I did with it, 'cause I find it very satisfying. And if it's a set piece, so be it. I hope that's a positive thing."

"It is. You know, there's some beautiful use of the B-3 Hammond organ on this record."

"Yeah, I agree. The guys all played wonderfully. They eclipsed even their previous work. Skip Edwards on keyboards, Taras Prodaniuk on bass, Scotty Joss on fiddle..."

"You've got 'Peggy Sue' drums on 'Gone.'"

"Yeah—and ironically, to me that's got a bluegrass melody. I'd love if Ralph Stanley and I could do that acoustically. We'd probably have a great time with it."

He pauses a moment, then begins to talk about his music in general. "It's a melting pot. And like I said a couple of years ago to you, I don't think I'll ever be able to escape that. I think it'll become more and more that. The first three albums were probably my need to express the cornerstones, my foundation musically and the things I heard first from my parents growing up in Ohio, the things they brought with them from Kentucky, the things that I still use as a primary foundation for what I do musically, but beyond that... Well, I know you and I talked about this before, and Pete and I have talked about it, that I come from that time when music just exploded on AM radio. You would hear Buck Owens come right behind The Beatles or The Stones and lead into them with Van Morrison, and then go into maybe The Statler Brothers doing 'Flowers on the Wall,' Henson Cargill doing 'Skip a Rope.' All that stuff. King Curtis, of course, the 'Soul Twist' stuff, and Booker T and The MG's, Otis Redding, The Box Tops; that Memphis thing exploded. Motown, too. From '63 to '67 Motown was all over the place. *Everything* was going on."

It sure was. I add Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, The Byrds, The Lovin' Spoonful, The Beach Boys, The Animals, The Kinks, The Yardbirds... "Yeah, Dwight, you've even got some Yardbirds on this record. Pete's guitar sound in 'Never Hold You' is from 'Over Under Sideways Down.'"

"Exactly. Yeah, exactly. All that stuff. I mean, I won't escape what I heard. And whether it's disparate or disseparate, Patrick, it's music."

We ramble on, going through *Gone* and lighting some of the bits that please us both: wonderful vocal performances by Joy Lynn White and Beth Anderson; Lee Thornburg's beautiful, sweeping string arrangement on the Yoakam/Kostas "Heart of Stone"; the slow, sad, lovely regret in "This Much I Know." This is all music fan talk, though; we need some personal-ity stuff. It's old ground, but I edge into it anyway. "Dwight, most of these songs are pretty dark—not the music, but definitely the lyrics."

"Yes. It's cathartic, though. It's like moaning the blues. When you're singing the blues, it's not a tragedy to you. It's almost, not to sound trite about it, but it's like a joyous expulsion of whatever it is, your blues, your burden. It's joyful to expel those things."

"Right," I say. "The way I've put it in the past, the blues are a formula for transforming pain into beauty. So is country music."

"I don't know if it's a formula," Dwight counters, "cause see, I think it comes out of the human nature, human instinct. I don't think those guys a hundred years ago were thinking that way: 'Oh, let's create an art form that's so sad and desperate, it gets you out of the doldrums.' I think they just did it out of instinct. You know, the DNA programming in us said, 'Hey: (*singing*) If hurts sooo

bad, I got ta scream and holler...'"

"We're having different understandings of the word 'formula,'" I suggest.

"Well, we were on 'disparate.' I think I'll just get the Oxford out again."

"I'm using 'formula' in the sense that people have developed these musical keys that unlock emotion, and they're available for other people, like you, to come along and use."

"Okay. Yeah," he agrees. "I just wanted to be clear that I thought it was something organic. A *paradoxical* organic response. Maybe." He's having fun with this; he starts chortling.

We can sure fix *that*. "Nevertheless, Mr. Yoakam," I go on, "here on *Gone* we have two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight songs written from the position of a man deserted, heartbroken, failed in love. Is your love life all messed up, Dwight?"

"I'm not gonna really comment on it. I don't think it's very pertinent. It's like a painter who paints very solitary, lonely-looking individuals. Is he lonely? Maybe. Or maybe not. I don't know. I just know that all that stuff came out of my head, for whatever reason. And I don't know that I even want to go into overanalyzing for myself what or why at the time..."

Another pause while he muses. "Ah...I know that I am looking for, and probably willing to accept, domestic companionship. I haven't settled into that as of yet. I've had various relationships and for different reasons they haven't led to that. Beyond that, I don't know that everything on every line in every song is specific to my life anyway. I think it's an expression of life in general and people I've seen whose relationships have gone bad, people I've known...It's not really my nature to be that expositional in conversation with people about my love life, but I've sure watched and listened to a lot of other guys I've known, people I grew up with, relatives and uncles, cousins..."


Accepting his reticence, I venture that I myself am certainly drawn to sad songs, that in fact I've felt the pull of a kind of river of sadness my whole life. Why is that? Is it that I'm just a depressive kind of guy?

"No, I don't think so," Dwight responds. "You see, I lost someone very close to me a couple of years ago, as I know you did. This was the most immediate person to me ever to have left this life: my aunt, my mother's older sister, who was married to my dad's older brother. I lost my father's parents when I was so

young I don't remember, and my mother's parents died when I was in my early 20's, but then again you're prepared for that, there's almost an unconscious preparation that goes on; it's expected that they're not going to live throughout the fullness of your life. But as I said, this particular woman, my Aunt Margaret, she and my uncle never had children, and we lived very close to them all along, so when she died it was almost as if I'd lost a second mother. It was a very sudden illness, too. The diagnosis occurred in early March, and by May she was gone.

"And see, when you talk about this river of sadness, I don't think it's there because its power comes from being appealing or attractive. I think that in reality, this life is a journey of loss. And I don't know why we're here and what we're here to learn, but I do know we're here to learn *something*, and the purpose for being here may not be revealed until we're experiencing our own existence on another plane.

"I don't think that matters. I just know that there are times when I feel compelled—obviously a greater amount of the time, as you pointed out—I feel compelled to write about the things that are dealing with the loss of love. And I don't know that in this pe-



"And by the time I got to the front room, I had this idea going, so I grabbed the guitar and put the tape on. So, you know, the songs on this album kinda came almost out of a stream of consciousness. Not to be too esoteric."



riod of writing I just went through, some of the sense of loss I felt for my Aunt Margaret wasn't represented in the emotional articulation that occurs in this album. You know—maybe I'm expressing a lot of things that are very personal and very specific to things that have nothing to do with romantic love, but I'm doing so in that context, and seeking relief therein. And of course that's not an idea I'm identifying or expressing for the first time. It's something that throughout time, the prophets—the rational mystics, as philosophers call them—have tried to explain to us: Give over those things you can't do anything about. Give that pain away. Expel that pain and you'll be free from it, some day some way.

"But anyway," Dwight continues, "that river of sadness. We're all compelled to follow a river, you know, because it's going somewhere. We don't know where, but rivers do lead you somewhere. The earliest people used to walk along riverbanks; gatherers would stumble on a river and then kind of follow it to its mouth. We probably found the ocean that way. Maybe our collective unconscious remembers that."

We wander around the tributaries of the metaphor for a while, until it becomes apparent that we're running out of water and time. Tresa sticks her head in to tell us we've got five minutes.

We'll round up the usual questions, then.

What is Dwight's latest weapon? A reproduction .44-40 Remington New Army revolver he got while working on a movie written and directed by Billy Bob Thornton, *Some Folks Call It a Sling Blade* (doubtless noir to the core). He's also been co-writing his own western, *South of Heaven*. *West of Hell* (ditto).

What is Dwight's latest vehicle? Nothing new since last time. "I did put a new top on the '59 Coupe de Ville that Buck Owens gave me. When he gave me it, I said, 'Buck, there's no top on this.' He said, 'Dwight, it never rains in Bakersfield.' I said, 'Well, I live a county or two south of you; it rains down here occasionally.' So we found an old '59 Coupe de Ville hard top and put it back together. Other than that, I drive my old El Camino."

What has Dwight been listening to? "Gosh. Well, The Stanley Brothers again. and... Oh, yeah. Petula Clark. So between those

two, I've pretty much got it covered. don't you think?"

On more topical matters, Dwight says that the tour he did in support of *This Time* was "gratifying, I think, and satisfying," and that a film of the final concert (which produced the *Live CD*) will be released shortly. And while he believes that there's way too much personal revelation in our culture right now ("We've become prisoners of this exhibitionist mindset; daytime TV is appalling"), he also thinks there's at least a small sign of change for the better in radio. "The Americana chart is at least a step in the right direction to reintegrate music."

Tresa hasn't terminated us yet, so there's time for a final thought. "Back to the subject of loss," I say. "The vision of life as a series of losses isn't very popular. To the official culture, loss means defeat."

"Oh, yes, the negative of surrender. But that's the beauty of the lesson, I think. When you surrender to the river, you don't surrender hope; you surrender burden. you surrender pain. Ironically, surrender sets you free."

"I mean, some of the saddest music you'll ever hear uttered or sung on the face of the earth is bluegrass music sung by The Stanley Brothers, Ralph and Carter, and even Ralph's music since Carter's death. But it's also simultaneously some of the most uplifting, most mesmerizingly spiritual music you'll ever hear sung. And my granny, Irlene, sang that way. My mother and some other people in my family were bothered by it because it was so sad, but to me it was elevating. There was a sorrow, but a joy in the surrender that was being achieved in that expression, that was otherworldly. I'd love to be able to sing like my granny. You'd hear her and you'd just kind of lift up and float away."

"That's what I used to do as a kid. I escaped everything—everything—through music. Given enough time and energy, I can still do that. So it's harder now than it was ten years ago for me to be analytic. I had to be analytic back then, I think, because I was still engaged in the enormous struggle just to have my music heard, and I needed to be able to explain it. That struggle is over, though, and now I'm going to just sing. It feels like I did that with *Gone*."

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Of Dust Bowl Days, Books and Interns

Country Music Magazine's home base of Westport suffered, along with the rest of the Northeast, from a drought that lasted many weeks. The beautiful days, one after another through summer and fall, just didn't seem right. As water restrictions loomed, the ground was like dust, the trees started to droop, our lawns resembled hay, and where there was corn (unirrigated), it was dark brown in the fields.

One thing (among many, of course) that did come to fruition as the summer months went by was the book: the revised edition of *The Illustrated History of Country Music*. Those of you who have known George Fletcher and Kathy Gray and me through the *Newsletter* for several years can imagine how happy we were the day we were finished! George and I carried the page proofs and the

film to the Federal Express drop-off point with happy hearts. We hope you CMSA members will buy lots of copies!

Last issue, we mentioned the two editorial interns who worked with us over parts of the summer, John Barnard and Jennifer Agiesta. John worked on the book, and the fruits of his and everyone's labors on that project will be available soon. Jennifer's are right in front of you: she assembled a good portion of this *Newsletter*, including the Collections page, Readers Create and some of our Reviews & Features items. And where did we find these hard-working and capable students? We didn't have to look far: John is Russell's and my son, and Jennifer is George Fletcher's sister. They've been right under our noses for years! Happy Holidays to All!—H.B.

A Look at Stump Water

Angie, Louisiana, is home to member Benton Kennedy, a frequent contributor. He fills us in on a local bluegrass band that keeps the old-time traditions alive.

Enclosed is a photo of the Stump Water Bluegrass Band from Mobile, Alabama. It was taken at a festival that took place May 26th and 27th at the Great Southern RV Park in Angie, Louisiana. Stump Water is great. They have a cassette, *By Request*, and a video. Caleb Lewis, their 18-year-old fiddle player, is a two-time Alabama Grand Fiddle Champion. He's as good as Mark O'Connor and the great Roy Acuff, and even has his own cassette. Anyone interested in Stump Water can write: P.O. Box 190792, Mobile, Alabama 36619.

Benton Kennedy
Angie, Louisiana

Letter from the Other Side

Paula Webster is a member who is incarcerated in Quincy, Florida. She adds her voice to the ongoing dialogue on the Pen Pals section.

I am a diehard country music fan. I love what country music has to offer today. I also love what your magazine has to offer. The reason I am writing is to clear up a matter that's been bothering me. I answer a lot of the ads in the Pen Pals section, but many of the entries use the words "no inmates" or "will answer all, no inmates." I just want the opportunity to say that people today have a lot of misconceptions



Front row: Benton Kennedy, Christina Watts and Dannie Webb on mandolin. Back row: vocalist and rhythm guitarist Dennis Young, bassist Larry Eubanks, banjo player Don Graham, lead guitarist and vocalist Shane Young, and fiddler Caleb Lewis. Christina is Benton's niece.

about "inmates." All inmates aren't murderers or people out to harm other people.

I am a 29-year-old female. I completed high school and went on to get my Associate's degree in computer science/data entry. I married, had three beautiful

children and my own business by the age of 25. I had traveled and seen 40 states. I'm in here for passing worthless checks—my own at that! A lot of times in places like this people have no one, and there's one person out there who could be a friend and make them feel like a part of society again. We are people, too. We have feelings. We have hearts. We all make mistakes in life. It's amazing how two little words, "no inmates," can put a person's self-esteem back at zero. We spend a lot of time here bettering ourselves only to be knocked back down before we're even out on the streets.

Paula L. Webster
Gadsden Correctional Institution
Quincy, Florida

In This Issue

- Your Stories, Your Photos
- Looking Like the Stars
- Stonewall Jackson in Legends
- Collections and Readers Create

Editor: George Fletcher
Executive Editor: Helen Barnard
Art Director: Katheryn Gray

Happy Birthday from Aaron

Freda Barrett, a CMSA member—and Aaron Tippin Fan Club member—hails from Cleburne, Texas, and enjoyed a birthday with Aaron.

The older we get, the less we enjoy our birthdays, but on this day, I received the nicest gift of all. We were at Cowboy's in Dallas, Texas, and it was the third occasion I had seen Aaron Tippin in concert. Now that I am a member of his fan club, I was allowed to visit with him on his bus. I presented him with poems, had this picture made, and received his signature on a picture taken at the second concert, and on my Western duster, which he had signed previously also.

Aaron has a very entertaining show, and a talented band, and I look forward to each and every time he returns to the Dallas area. Thank you, Aaron, from the bottom of my heart for the three hugs, your attention and being so sweet. Like you say, "I wouldn't have it any other way." You made my 36th birthday unforgettable.

Freda Barrett
Cleburne, Texas



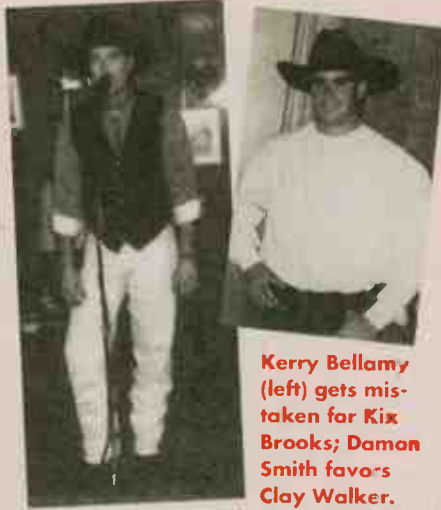
Freda Barrett enjoyed a birthday visit to Aaron Tippin's bus.

A Star in the Family

Two members have written to say that they have family members who are often mistaken for current country singers. Susan Smith gives us a look at her son, Damon, while Violet Tomlinson tells us about her grandson, Kerry. Besides looking like the stars, both of these guys are singers to boot!

COULD BE CLAY

I just wanted to write and share this picture of my son, Damon Smith, with you. This young man, who also sings, has been mistaken numerous times for Clay Walker. (As if you couldn't tell!) Recently, for example, he was at a Clay Walker concert, and before the concert began, a group of girls came running up to him believing he was Clay. The whole



Kerry Bellamy (left) gets mistaken for Kix Brooks; Damon Smith favors Clay Walker.

evening became quite humorous—as people passed by they would constantly make comments about Damon looking like Clay. Then, after the concert Damon was standing by the stage, and a member of Clay's crew noticed him and could not believe the resemblance. He had a security guard take Damon backstage and put him in line to meet Clay. He commented that Clay would think he was looking in the mirror. Sadly, when he was only eight or 10 people away from seeing Clay, the

head security guard came around checking for backstage passes, and made Damon leave....

These are just a few highlights of how often people say Damon looks like Clay.

Susan Smith
Ada, Oklahoma

A LOT LIKE KIX

I have read your magazine for about 10 years, and I used to do volunteer work at nursing homes. We did a show called "Puttin' on the Hits" where we would dress like the stars and do their songs—Willie Nelson, George Jones, etc. The folks really liked it, and they loved country music. They thought we were playing the instruments and doing the singing! But when the March/April 1995 issue came, I had to write you.

We have a grandson, Kerry D. Bellamy, who appeared on the syndicated television program, *Nashville Star Seek*, and does lots of karaoke. In person he looks just like Kix Brooks of Brooks & Dunn—so much so that, when I first got the issue with Brooks & Dunn on the cover, I thought, *how did he get his picture on there?* I showed it to other people, and they agreed.

Violet Tomlinson
Elwood, Indiana

September 1995 Poll Results

George Strait *Lead On*

Due to space constraints last issue, we couldn't print the Top 25 Singles, so voting this month just covered the Top 25 Albums. And your Number One album pick? George Strait's *Lead On* is your favorite again. That's two polls in a row for George, and he's got a brand new album in the racks—a four-CD boxed set actually. We'll see how it performs in the November Poll. As for the rest of your favorite albums, Alan Jackson's *Who I Am* lands in the Number Two spot for the second time in a row. Dream duet team George Jones and Tammy Wynette roll into third place with their new one, *One*, while John Michael Montgomery (by guess who...) moves into fourth (it was fifth last issue). Your Number Five album for the month is Shania Twain's *The Woman in Me*. The rest of your Top Ten album picks, in order, are: Tim McGraw, *Not a Moment Too Soon*; Lorrie Morgan, *Greatest Hits*; Reba McEntire, *Read My Mind*; Brooks & Dunn, *Waitin' on Sundown*; and Travis Tritt, *Ten Feet Tall and Bulletproof*.



Tim Vodak meets The Oaks' Joe Bonsall.

Remember The Oaks

Member Jeanne Vodak of Platteville, Wisconsin, wants people to know that The Oak Ridge Boys are still pleasing their fans after all these years.

My two daughters and my grandson and I have been fans of The Oak Ridge Boys for years. We have attended their last two Open Houses and enjoyed them. Plus, we've gone to many fairs and Christmas

concerts of The Oaks. We have loved their music for a lot of years, and continue to look forward to more albums by them. They are friendly and caring to their fans. Example: My grandson, Tim Vodak, age 10, got to meet them at the 1994 Open House. They all took a lot of time to visit, have pictures taken, sign autographs, and then gave a wonderful concert. They are the best group in country music today, we think. We also saw their 1994 Christmas concert in Des Moines, Iowa, and it was wonderful.

Even though there are many good new artists in country music, we get sad when the older artists get overlooked. I hope you can print this to let them know that they are still loved by many fans.

Jeanne Vodak
Platteville, Wisconsin



Johnny and June Carter Cash in Branson.

Dennis Devine Checks In

Regular contributor Dennis Devine of Council Bluffs, Iowa, updates us on another year's worth of Johnny Cash concerts. Dennis has been a fan for 35 years. Lots of Cash concerts in 1994—five in all. And John sang "Rock Island Line" for me at almost every show. The fan club had a contest, and I won: a call from Johnny Cash. I'm waiting for the call, as John has been in and out of the hospital with his jaw. I last saw him in concert in Branson in July and August 1994, four shows in all. He and June gave 100 fan club members a meal, pictures and autographs after the last concert. What a gift to us. I've also been working on getting John inducted into the Mid-America Country Hall of Fame, and in May 1995, he was inducted.

Dennis Devine
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Country Classic Legends

CMSA members have often lamented the lack of country greats on the radio these days. Here's a program that answers those complaints, if only for a half-hour a week. The great demand for country legends on the radio has spawned a new, weekly, half-hour syndicated radio show, *Frank Dell's Country Classic Legends*. Dell interviews and spins only the legends of country—and newer artists who capture the spirit of "real" country music—during his half hour. He says he feels that "new country" has destroyed country music's uniqueness.

Some of the stars he includes in the show are Eddy Arnold, Pee Wee King, Tom T. Hall, Jim Reeves, Johnny Western, Merle Haggard, Mickey Gilley, Moe Bandy, Jim Stafford, Boxcar Willie, Jerry Lee Lewis, Faron Young, Dave Dudley, Hank Thompson, Hank Snow, and even early material from Reba McEntire and Ricky Van Shelton. The show often features artists sitting in as guests, talking about their music and careers.

Country Classic Legends has been picked up by 38 stations since the



Frank Dell, host of Country Classic Legends.

show's start earlier this year, including outlets in cities like Kansas City; Louisville; Providence, Rhode Island; and Richmond, Virginia. They've also reached smaller outlets around the Midwest. Stations that are already carrying it are praising it for drawing larger audiences than their regular programming. If you'd like information about the show, write to the Country Classic Legends Fan Club, P.O. Box 7171, Duluth, MN 55807.

—Jennifer Agiesta

A Little About Alice

Alice Van Camp, a CMSA member in New Philadelphia, Ohio, sent along a clipping about her collection of photos and memorabilia on the stars that appeared in her local paper. Here's our take on Alice's collection.

Alice is known in her town as "Country Music's Biggest Fan." She's been a fan since she was a child, and a collector from the 50's. She has met hundreds of the stars over the years, from Hawkshaw Hawkins to Minnie Pearl, to Loretta Lynn, Merle Haggard, Clint Black, Keith Whitley and George Strait.

In 1985, Alice's husband passed away after almost 50 years of marriage, but the friends she made among the stars, plus her five children and three special local friends (Jewel and

Sly Slezak and Lonnie Clayton), kept her going. For her 71st birthday, several friends got together to give Alice her lifetime-dream trip to Nashville and Memphis. Alice sent a photo of herself, plus one of her "Country/Western Memory Quilt," in which her dog, Ginger, appears.



Alice, left, and her living room shrine with dog Ginger.



CMSA COLLECTIONS

Attention, Members!

The Collections page is once again temporarily closed due to an excessive backlog of material. Do not send any entries for this section until further notice. Entries arriving during this timeout will not be processed. Thanks for your attention.

Collecting the Magazine

Members help each other complete their magazine collections.

•100's of Country Magazines for sale. For five-page listing, send two stamps/SASE. *Country Music, Country Weekly, MCN*, etc., etc. 1972 to present. **Rick J. Cunningham, 134 Berwick St., Berwick, ME 03901**

Information, Please

Please write each directly about information or items listed. When corresponding, include SASE. We reserve the right to edit for space and style.

•Female duo needs band! My friend and I are just getting started and we need a band. If you're interested in a professional music career, write and send me a demo tape of your playing. **Joni Chadwick, 707 5th St. N., Carrington, ND 58421**

•Country albums for sale. 6000+. All artists. Graded collectibles. Send 4 stamps for catalog. Also lists available (2 stamps each): Reba, Dolly, CD collectibles, singles and full length, Vince, Judds, and radio shows. Specify interests! **Rick J. Cunningham, 134 Berwick St., Berwick, ME 03901**

•British collectors seek country music photos, posters, autographs, concert programs and magazines. Seeking all modern artists and Jim Reeves, Hank Sr., Hank Snow, Roy Rogers, Patsy Cline, etc. Send detailed list for offer by return. **Star Shots, 47 St. Austins Grove, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8DF, England.**

•Your favorite country stars' photos, buttons, posters, videos, more. Also up to four mailing addresses per artist! Thousands of items, most under \$2. For catalog, send \$1 (refundable with first order) to: **Backstage Enterprises/CMMI, P.O. Box 304, Dallas, GA 30132.**

•I'm looking for a copy of a song recorded by B.J. Thomas entitled "I Need to be Still and Let God Love Me." It is on a religious album. Also who wrote the lyrics? Is sheet music available? **Lois McHugh, 1413 S. McKinley, Harrisburg, IL 62946.**

•Attention Dolly Parton fans and collectors: Looking for Dolly's appearances on *Saturday Night Live* and *Barbara Mandrell and The Mandrell Sisters* show. Will supply tape and/or pay reasonable price. Also want Dolly and Porter Wagoner albums, *Just Between You and Me* and *Once More*. Will pay reasonable price. **Rich McGuire, 620 South Shore Ct., Vermillion, OH 44089.**

•For sale: December 1980 edition of *Miami Herald* with complete coverage of John Lennon's life with The Beatles and his tragic death. Preserved in plastic for 15 years. Make an offer. For a guaranteed reply, send a

SASE. **F.B. Murphy, P.O. Box 15614, Pensacola, FL 32514.**

•Conway wanted. Conway recordings, photos, autographs, videos, other memorabilia. Send list and prices to: **T.L. Toncray, 617 New York, Alamogordo, NM 88310.**

•Serious John Michael Montgomery collector will pay reasonable prices for anything related to JMM: photos—concert, backstage, etc., videos, articles, press kits, etc. Especially looking for life-size stand-up poster. Have JMM and many other country artists photos for sale or trade, including a six-hour JMM video any fan would love. **Terri Jennings, 20-C Airport Rd., Freedom, CA 95019-2616.**

•Wanted: LP, cassette or album, of "September Memories" by Don Gibson. Have looked everywhere and cannot find. Will pay reasonable price. **Martha E. Putnam, 2471 Apache Dr., Melbourne, FL 32935.**

•Wanted: anything on Kathy Mattea—posters, articles, newsletters, TV appearances, photos, tour merchandise, stories of meeting her and anything else. Will trade, including other artists. **Joann Freeman, Rt. 1 Box 242, St. Charles, VA 24282.**

•Wanted: Judds memorabilia. Please send list with description of items and prices. Serious collector. Will trade Judds for Judds. For sale: Press kits country artists. **Doug Stone, T. Lawrence, Trisha, K. Mattea, Joe Diffie, P. Tillis, Mary Chapin, Brooks & Dunn, G. Jones, M. Chesnutt, M. Osmond, Sweethearts, Tanya, Tammy, more. Video/radio show listing on many artists, collections on Randy Travis, Dolly, Shelby Lynne, Clint, pop music memorabilia, Cassidy/Partridge, Bee Gees, ABBA, Julio Iglesias, B. Manilow, Elton John, Anne Murray, more. Send Long SASE, no small envelopes, with four stamps for listing. **Dana Stein 345 East 80th St. #108, New York, NY 10021.****

•Many sets of trading cards, including Country Stars, Elvis, NASCAR, movies, TV and Desert Storm. Send SASE for list. Would like to trade match books, business cards, post cards, U.S. stamps. Also looking for episode of *Dukes of Hazard*, "Daisy's Shot Gun Wedding," also anything on *BJ and the Bear* and *Starsky and Hutch*. Many recorded shows to trade. **Sandy Olson, 216 N. Main, Westby, WI 54667-1108.**

•Wanted: Anything on George Strait, especially older stuff. Have tons of clippings for sale/trade on the following artists: Mark Chesnutt, Clint, RVS, Dolly, Garth, Reba, BRC, Vince, Dwight, Travis Tritt, Randy Travis, Alabama, Tanya, Lorie, Billy Dean, etc. Even *Melrose* and *90210*. Lots of used T-shirts too. Send SASE. **Tammy Henrickson, 3152 W. Holladay, Tucson, AZ 85746.**

•Wanted: April 19, 1995 taping of *Music City Tonight*, also Vince Gill on Grand Ole Opry with daughter. Anything with Patty Loveless or Hal Ketchum. Prefer to make trades, lots to choose from. **Diana Warmbrodt, 6742 Interurban Blvd., Snohomish, WA 98290-5312.**

•For sale: country magazines; country and Elvis collector cards sets; singles and LP's, country and Elvis; misc. 45's from 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's; country and Elvis plates. Dwight press kit. Everything in mint condition. Send want list w/SASE to: **P. Caron, 15 Marina Dr., Nashua, NH 03062-1242.**

•For sale: trading cards, autograph Bronson Tenny, Country Classic, Country '92 and '93, Elvis cards, singles and sets, Marilyn Monroe, Coca-Cola series #3 and #4, magazines, LP's and recipes. Send SASE to **Trecia Floyd, 510 Boston Hill Rd., Monticello, KY 42633-2909.**

•Six-hr. VHS tape of Dolly with five satellite feeds of rehearsals for *Heavens to Betsy*, her canceled sitcom, and her interview on *Larry King Live*, including non-aired portions of the show, and other Dolly appearances. Would like to hear from others who saw these, and from anyone who has Dolly collectibles for sale or trade. **Agnes Johnson, RR 5 Box 578, Malvern, AR 72104.**

Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail. Pen Pals is a means of introducing CMSA members who wish to correspond. It is not a "personals" column. Physical descriptions and requests for romance will not be printed. We also reserve the right to edit for space and style. Parent's written permission required for those 16 and under.

•I am a 20-year-old, single male who likes country music and heavy metal. Favorites are: Alabama, Billy Ray, Brother Phelps, Clint, Garth, Kentucky Headhunters, Linda Davis, Lorrie Morgan, too many to mention. Hobbies are making new friends, building models, music, singing, riding my 4-wheeler, much more. Would love to hear from women, 20 to 35. Photo would be nice. Will answer all letters. **Scott Davis, 986 N. Main, Hinckley, UT 84635.**

•I'm a 23-year-old cowgirl at heart. I'm married with one child. I love horses and horseback riding. Would like pen pals from all over. Will write to all. No inmates, please. **Tracey Ballard, 2348 Deerfield Dr., Maiden, NC 28650.**

•Hello from Australia. I am writing to see if there is a lady around my age (44) from Nashville who remembers Skeeter Davis (she seems to be forgotten these days) and who would like to write to me. I have been a huge fan of her since I was 14 and have nearly all her music. I loved her book. I'm married, have two daughters and many interests. **Nola Bleechmore, R.S.D. 291a, Burnie, 7320, Tasmania, Australia.**

•Single country lady enjoys Tanya, Reba, Loretta, Travis Tritt, Randy Travis, the late Conway and many more. I love to read, write, sing, poetry, dance, shop and take long country drives. Sincere replies from single men and ladies. I'm 24 but will respond to singles that are 24 to 44 in age. No inmates, please. **Miss Sue Adkins, 1454 Woodville Pk., Loveland, OH 45140.**

•This 40-something lady loves B.J.

Thomas, Garth, Alan J., Wynonna, Crystal Gayle, Billy Dean, lots of others. Really into the Green Bay Packers, like reading, writing letters. Would love to hear from anyone 35-55. **Pati Jahnke, 498st Bernard Dr., Green Bay, WI 54302.**

•I'm 31, married and have two children. My favorites are Travis Tritt, Confederate RR and Marty Stuart. Also like Faith Hill, Pam Tillis, Brooks & Dunn and many more. I love to read, write letters, cook, do gardening, collect recipes and photography. Would love to hear from you (sorry, no inmates or chain mail, please). **Karen Sue Russell, 204 4th St. East, South Point, OH 45680.**

•Want to become friends with a 22-year-old country gal? I would love to answer your letter. I enjoy sunsets and campfires. When I am not in the great outdoors, I like to dance. Too many favorites to list. Write and make a new friend. Your letter will be answered. **Jodie Lynn Jones, Rt. 1 Box 312, Kingwood, WV 26537.**

•I'm a single, 21-year-old female who loves country music. Some of my favorites include George Strait, JMM, Alan Jackson, Toby Keith, Tracy Lawrence and many more. Would like to meet guys and gals of all ages with similar interests. Write to **Jennifer Toso, 1202 1/2 First Street NE, Mandan, ND 58554.**

•Hello! I am a 21-year-old college student who really enjoys country and Western music. My ultimate favorite is George Strait, although I also enjoy John Michael Montgomery, Reba, Alabama and David Ball, along with a few others. Some interests include dancing, listening to the radio or tapes I have collected, watching sports, working with animals, writing and sight seeing. I would like to hear from anyone ages 18-30. Will answer all. Please, no inmates. **Lynda Saline, P.O. Box 711, Silver City, NM 88062.**

•Southern gal, former military brat (Army), mid-30's. Part-time broadcaster, full-time government employee, seeking pen pal: mid-30's to 45 (or so) male with similar life experience. Females welcome, too, for cross country friendships. Love Vince, Garth, Pam Tillis, Mary Chapin, etc. If Raymond Monateaux is a *Country Music Magazine* reader, I am desperately seeking you. Ray is a former military brat pen pal I have lost over the years. **Linda Gill Canada, P.O. Box 1345, Statesville, NC 28687.**

•I am single, 43, and a country music fan, as well as a first grade teacher. Some of my favorites are Emmylou Harris, Kathy Mattea, Patty Loveless, Suzy Bogguss, Mary Chapin, Joy Lynn White and Marty Stuart. I enjoy music, theater, traveling, watching old movies, animals and collecting coins, stamps, phone cards, license plates and other collectibles. I would like to hear from single ladies 21-40. Will answer all if possible. Your photo gets mine. **Rick Abrams, 22 Kingsbridge Ave., Staten Island, NY 10314-7217.**

•I'm a 22-year-old, single country girl who wants some true Alabama friends. I am a huge fan of Alabama!



TOBY KEITH

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1995

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

TOBY KEITH

Facts of Life

.....

Personal Data

Given Name: Toby Keith Covell
Birthdate: July 8, 1961
Birthplace: Clinton, Oklahoma
Hometown: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Family: Wife, Tricia; daughters, Shelley and Krystal; father, H.K. Covell; mother, Joan; sister, Tonni; brother, Tracy
Influences: Dad, Merle Haggard, Jimmy Buffett, Billy Joel, Mickey Mantle and the Pittsburgh Steelers during their Super Bowl reign in the 1970's

.....

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'4"
Weight: 215
Color hair: Blond
Color eyes: Blue

.....

Recording Career

Record label: Polydor Records, 1222 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37212

Albums	Release Date
<i>Toby Keith</i>	1993**
<i>Boomtown</i>	1994*
<i>Christmas to Christmas</i>	1995

*Gold album (500,000 units)
**platinum album (1,000,000 units)

Singles

"Should've Been a Cowboy"*
"He Ain't Worth Missing"
"A Little Less Talk"
"Wish I Didn't Know Now"*
"Who's That Man"*
"Upstairs, Downtown"
"You Ain't Much Fun"
"Big Ol' Truck"
*Number One single

Videos

"Should've Been a Cowboy"
"He Ain't Worth Missing"
"A Little Less Talk"
"Wish I Didn't Know Now"
"Who's That Man"
"Upstairs, Downtown"
"Big Ol' Truck"

Awards

Billboard Best New Artist—1993



Trivia

- Toby and his Easy Money Band toured the Southwest for about 10 years before Harold Shedd signed him to Mercury Records in 1992.
- Before getting his record deal, Toby played semi-professional football for the now-defunct United States Football League and worked in the oil fields of Oklahoma.
- Toby was the first artist signed to Polydor Records when Polygram (the parent company of both Mercury and Polydor) set up the Nashville division of the label.
- Toby and his wife, Tricia, have been married for 14 years.

Quotable Quotes

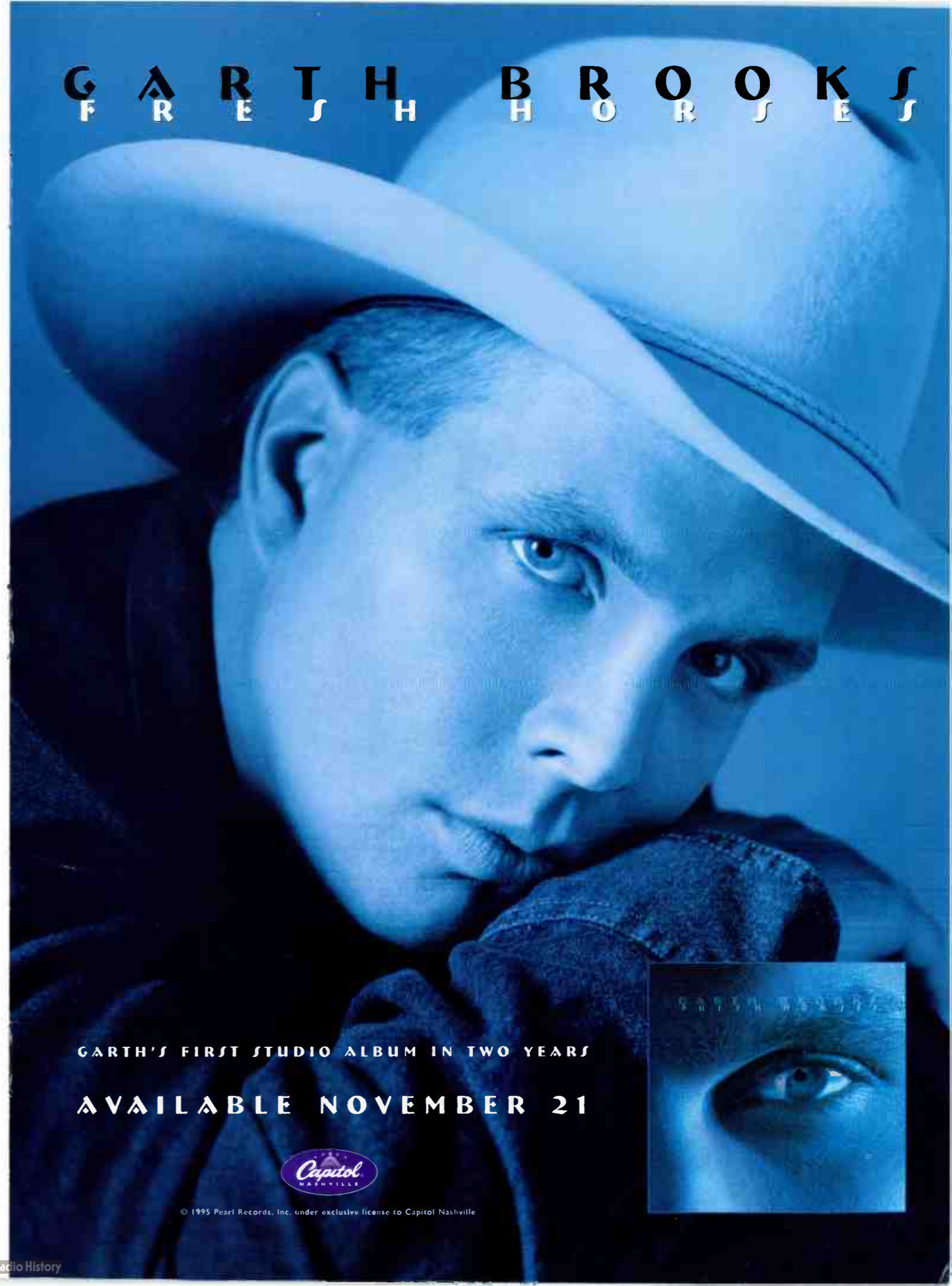
"The reason I am doing this today is exactly the same reason I was doing this 10 years ago. I enjoy making music for a living. That is the bottom line."
"I was gonna come into Nashville and take my one little shot, and if it didn't work, I was gonna go back home. I knew either way I wasn't going to starve. I was very successful with my band, and eventually, if I didn't get a record deal, I would've opened a nightclub somewhere and made a lot of money."

.....

Fan Club

Write the Toby Keith Fan Club at: P.O. Box 8739, Rockford, Illinois 61126-8739.

G A R T H B R O O K S
F R E S H H O R S E S



GARTH'S FIRST STUDIO ALBUM IN TWO YEARS

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 21



© 1995 Pearl Records, Inc. under exclusive license to Capitol Nashville

CMSA COLLECTIONS

Will answer any males and females out there. Please, no prisoners. Can't wait to hear from you. **Tammy Billings, Box 51, Church St., Willet, NY 13863.**

*I am 37 years old, single and love country music. I would like to hear from a guy pen pal. My favorites are Alan Jackson, Tracy Lawrence, Doug Stone. I like amusement parks, sports, traveling, long walks, nature, animals, the beach and going to county and state fairs. Will answer all. Fill my mailbox. No prisoners, please. **Kristi Lane, P.O. Box 11842, Ruidoso Downs, NM 88346.**

*Hi, I'm a 40-year-old, single female who loves country music. I like most all of the country singers, but a few of my favorites are Alan, Brooks & Dunn, Lari White, and Tanya. I also enjoy reading, leisurely walks, swimming and movies. No inmates, please. **Rhonda Green, PO Box 5840, Knoxville, TN 37928-0848.**

*Howdy! I'd love to hear from both men and women (25-45) who love country music as much as I do. Alan is my absolute favorite. I always enjoy making new friends through correspondence. I collect and trade business cards. Please fill my mailbox. **Francine Plourde, RR #3, 965 Baisley Rd., Edmundston, NB, Canada, E3V 3K5.**

*Hey! I'm a 21-year-old singer/songwriter/musician. Looking to correspond with anyone else of the three, over the age of 18, and willing to relocate to TN. Please respond ASAP. **Darla Chasteen, RR 1 Box 2250, Cameron, OK 74932-9787.**

*Hello, I'm a 60-year-old widow looking for someone who is honest and up front and who loves to write. Texan by birth so was raised on country music. Have many favorites. Am shut in a lot as I have a handicapped daughter at home. Don't drive, so have time to write. Will answer all letters. **Dottie Simmons, 812 W. 4th St., Grandview, WA 98930.**

*Hi! I'm 16 years old and I love country music. Some of my favorites include Garth, Travis, Sawyer Brown, Little Texas, Lorrie and Tanya (to name a few). I enjoy writing letters, collecting postcards and listening to music. Hope to hear from you soon! Will answer all, No inmates, please. **Audrey Ryan, 7125 New City Rd., Rochester, IL 62563.**

*Hi, I'm 43 and enjoy writing to pen pals from the good old USA and other countries. Love country music, want to hear from all over the world, male or female. I will answer all! Fill my mailbox! **Karin Kerns, 744 S. Richardson Ave., Columbus, OH 43204-2945.**

*Hi! I'm a 32-year-old, single male who enjoys songwriting and poems. My favorites are Mark Chesnutt, Doug Stone and Patty Loveless. My hobbies are NASCAR and all outdoors. Hope to hear from country girls with the same interests. Photo gets mine, will answer all anyway. **Mike Dawson, 1600 29th St., Sheffield, AL 35660.**

*I am a 31-year-old that really enjoys country music! My favorites are Faith Hill, Chely Wright, Pam Tillis, Alison

Krauss, Merle, George Jones, Aaron Tippin, Hal Ketchum, Sammy Kershaw, Clint Black, bluegrass, jazz, and dance. I enjoy sports of all sorts, body building, and much more. I'm ready to start fresh, without question. I'm not seeking handouts, instead an honest, caring heart and mind to share my thoughts and feelings with. I'll answer all, photo gets mine. **Robert Hoskins, #933223, I.S.P. Box #41, Michigan City, IN 46360-0041**

*How-dee! I'm a single, 19-year-old country gal looking to write to people from all over between the ages of 18 and 30. My favorite artists are Garth, Clay Walker, Aaron Tippin, John Michael, Little Texas, Alabama and many more. My hobbies include the outdoors, riding horses, writing, moonlight walks, stargazing and more. Will reply to all. Please send photo. **Amie Larsen, 632 Wallace St. Apt. 3, New London, WI 54961.**

*I'm 44, incarcerated, a country rocker seeking ladies 18 to 60 to write and share with. Stonewall Jackson to Alan Jackson, Kitty Wells to Reba. Photo and phone a plus. Will answer all. **Richard J. Griffiths N-18169, Shawnee C.C., Box 300, Vienna, IL 62995.**

*Hi. I'm 25, female, and love country music. Would love to hear from other females who are country music fans. John Michael Montgomery is my dream. Would really enjoy having pen pals from other countries. **Cheryl Price, General Delivery, Blairs Mills, PA 17213.**

*Hi! I'm a 17-year-old girl, and I love country music. I especially love John Michael Montgomery. I will write to everyone. **Christy Cook, 500 Tallchief, Fairfax, OK 74637.**

*Hello country music fans. I'm incarcerated down here in the great state of Texas. I'm 42, single, and would love to hear from all country fans who don't mind writing to a true country boy in prison. Anybody out there ever hear of Goosecreek, TX? That's where I'm from but they call it Baytown now-a-days. I'm a long time fan of Merle, Patsy, Ray Price, Jim Reeves, Willie and lots more of the oldies. Some of the newer artists I like are Reba, Lorrie, Trisha, Alan, Aaron, Vince and Brooks & Dunn to name a few. **Charles W. Graham 415968, Rt. 2, Box 4400, Hughes Unit, Gatesville, TX 76597.**

*Howdy! I am a 26-year-old college student studying journalism. I would love to hear from country fans of all ages. I love country of all kinds. I especially love Garth, Alan and Clint. I like the outdoors and horses. I would like new pals. Please, no prisoners. Photo gets mine. Will answer all who write to me. **Heather Jones, 444 Campbell, Kiowa, KS 67070.**

*Hi, I'm a 17-year-old female. I love country music. My favorite is Tracy Lawrence. I've been following his career since he started. Some other favorites are Tim McGraw, The Judds, Brooks & Dunn and the late, great Keith Whitley. I would love to hear from other country music fans, especially Tracy's. **Denise Lowery, 456 Thomas Dr., Melbourne, FL 32935.**

*I'm a 24-year-old, single male serving in the US Army. Country music is my life. I'm really into singers like Tracy Lawrence, Daron Norwood, Clay Walker, Rhett Akins, Rick Trevino and Wade Hayes, to name a few, but I like a lot of the older country singers, too. I love to sing country music, especially Garth tunes, and I have my own band. I'm looking to make friends with people of all ages from all over the country. So come on guys and gals, send this soldier a letter. Your photo gets mine. **John David Thrift, B Company 13th Signal Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX 76545.**

*Hi, I'm 21 years old, single and female. I am a line dancer and country music fan. Some favorites are Travis Tritt, Patsy, Mary Chapin and Garth. I would love to hear from some country guys! Please, no inmates or chain letters. **Jodie Lindenau, 64 Abbott Rd. Wellesley, MA 02181.**

*Hi, I'm a country music fan. A few of my favorites are Clint, George Strait, Brooks & Dunn and Clay Walker. I enjoy going to concerts and pen pal-ing. Would like to hear from other country music fans. No inmates, please! **Barbara Garrett, 203 Two Mile Pk., Goodlettsville, TN 37072.**

*I'm a 30-year-old who loves to write letters and get mail and wants to meet new pen pals. I enjoy a big variety of music, but country is #1. Favorites are Garth, Alan Jackson, BRC, Travis Tritt. I enjoy the beach and reading good love stories and mysteries. Currently engaged and will be relocating in the near future. I'll answer all letters and hold no restrictions. **Lori Brown, 2928 N. Natoma Ave., Chicago, IL 60634.**

*I'm 49 years old and a big fan of country music. Some favorites are Billy Ray, Neil McCoy, Doug Supernaw, Doug Stone, Reba, Faith Hill and Lorrie Morgan to name a few. I enjoy going to concerts and watching TNN. I collect pigs and teddy bears. I'm looking for some pen pals who are serious about writing letters and wanting to be pen pals. I will answer all, so fill my mailbox. Sorry, no inmates, please. **Kay Mason, Meadowview Apts. #79, Ellsworth, ME 04605.**

*I am 38 years old. I am a Christian gal who would like to make some new pen pal friends. I love country music. My favorite is Alan Jackson. Would like to hear from you, especially Alan Jackson fans. **Joyce Zellers, 155 Iris Dr., Billings, MO 65610.**

*I'm a 31-year-old, single male looking for pen pals to correspond with. My favorite is Dolly. Other favorites are Aretha Franklin, Barbara Mandrell, Davis Daniel and more. I'll answer all who write, male or female. **Dale Brown, 129 South First St., Black River Falls, WI 54615.**

*I'm a 22-year-old female moving to Nashville soon. Looking for pen pals from Nashville, especially those with musical interests. Love all country music. Big-time fan of Brady Seals. Hope to hear from you soon. **Carolyn Shepherd, N5335 County Rd. A, Deerbrook, WI 54424.**

*I'm 14 years old and love country mu-

sic. Favorites include Garth, Clay Walker, John Michael Montgomery and many others. Interests are animals, writing letters, the outdoors and more. Will answer all. No inmates, please. **Dezra Sigwing, 20395 Magnolia Ave., Nuevo, CA 92567.**

*21-year-old Texas girl looking for new friends. I enjoy country and Tejano music. My faves are George Strait, Vince Gill, Wynonna, Reba and more. My dream is to live out in the country with my border collie and horses. Anyone have this kind of life? Please write, let me know how it is. **Yolanda M. Juarez, 1055 Morelos St., Seguin, TX 78155.**

*I'm a 25-year-old girl, a heavy metal convert to country. I would really love to have new country pen pals. I'm a real loyal pen pal and will answer all who write. Favorites include Garth, Alan, Clay, George Strait and many more. No prisoners, please. **Heather Jones, 444 Campbell, Kiowa, KS 67070.**

*I'm 27 years old, married with two children. I love country music. Would like to hear from Sawyer Brown fans. Also enjoy Reba, Diamond Rio, George Strait, Chris LeDoux and many more. Hobbies: reading, crafts. No inmates, please. Will try to answer all. **Jenny Hubenthal, 144 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Casper, WY 82609.**

*Want lots of good-hearted women who enjoy country as much as I do and like to write. I like all country stars. I'm 26 and an inmate. Please take a chance and make a friend. **Scott Little #229-287, NCCL, P.O. Box 1812, Morrow-B, Marion, OH 43301-1218.**

*Howdy country boys and gals. I'm a 17-year-old country girl and would love to make new friends and pen pals. Hobbies include: pen pals, dancing, singing concerts and family. **Tonya M. Miller, 7433 N. Depot Rd., Ashtabula, OH 44004.**

*Country guys and cowboys. I'm a single, old-fashioned country girl, 37 (feel younger most of the time). Like getting out and having a good time. Includes cruising, going to the movies, video, arcade games and a lot more. Love all music but favorite is country and 70's and 80's rock. Guys 28-35 write. **Regina F. Ruehling, HCR76, Box 234 64th Avenue, Gruetli-Laager, TN 37339.**

*Pen pals wanted! I am currently locked up for a couple of mistakes I made and would like to have a few pen pals. I'm a country boy who loves the outdoors and country music. Will answer all. Photo gets mine. **Tracey W. Duke #596225, Rt. 20 Box 20, Midway, TX 75852.**

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Stonewall Jackson

Stonewall Jackson turned to music as an escape from his troubled childhood. The talent he uncovered made him a country legend.

By Rich Kienzle

At the First Battle of Bull Run in 1861, a Confederate officer noticed a certain Colonel Jackson standing by his troops amid heavy enemy fire. He shouted, "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall!" To this day, there's debate as to whether the remark was compliment or criticism. But Colonel Thomas Jonathan Jackson couldn't shake the name. Promoted to the rank of general, he became one of the Confederacy's greatest tacticians until accidentally shot by his own men at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863. He died a few days later, yet his place in American history was secure.

Sixty-nine years later, in Emerson, North Carolina, on the border of North and South Carolina, Waymon David Jackson, a 28-year-old logging train engineer unrelated to the legendary general, was about to become a father. A student of the Civil War and proud of his name, he proclaimed that if his wife, Lulu, had a boy, he wanted the child named Stonewall. Waymon Jackson died shortly before the birth on November 6, 1932. The boy was named Stonewall, youngest of three sons.

Raising three sons alone was rough on Lulu Jackson, who married a second time to one James Leviner, in the mid-30's. Stonewall's autobiography, *From the Bottom Up*, tells of the walking demon that was Leviner. Violent, alcoholic, foul-tempered and psychotic, he physically abused all three boys, particularly Stonewall. Today, when child abuse is taken seriously, Leviner would surely wind up in prison if discovered. But in the Depression-era South, Lulu tried to make the marriage work—until Leviner's abuse of the boys became too much. She took her sons to Georgia, where her late husband's brothers lived.

Leviner tracked her down, and she took him back. They stayed in South Georgia, the beatings continuing as the family tried to make a living farming. Both older boys left, and Leviner had only Stonewall to pummel. To make matters worse, he couldn't turn to his mother. Leviner convinced her that he'd done nothing to the

boy, and she dismissed Stonewall's horror stories. When she finally caught Leviner in the act of abusing her son and tried to stop him, he lit into her as well.

As an escape from this horror chamber, Stonewall had sought refuge in music and traded an old bicycle for his first guitar around 1942. He started trying to write songs, and he and his brother Wade wrote a ballad called "Don't Be Angry." The music of Eddy Arnold and Hank Williams captivated him, the radio a way of dreaming his way out of poverty. In 1947, he packed what he had and began traveling around the South, often sleeping along the road, a fate infinitely preferable to one more second with the Stepfather from Hell. Arrested in Atlanta for a curfew violation, he wound up in jail, but the Red Cross contacted his grandparents in North Carolina. Released, he headed there by bus, and started doing odd jobs in the area.

In 1948 Stonewall found religion, though he also had a reputation for fighting, an offshoot of the hostility built up through his childhood. During one visit to his mother, he had another encounter with Leviner. This time, Stonewall stood up to him, and Leviner proved his true cowardice by running away. Jackson then joined the U.S. Army until his age was discovered and he was discharged. He returned to Tabor City, North Carolina, close to his birthplace, where he sang in a gospel duo for a time.

Jackson then joined the U.S. Navy. Stationed on a submarine tender, he found sympathetic ears for his music. Singing country hits for sailors (including a country music-loving captain), he was admired, a boost to the self-esteem lacking in his youth. Honorably discharged in 1952, he moved to South Carolina, farmed and sang in a band led by his brother, Wade. Back to Georgia in 1954, he sharecropped tobacco and gave thought to trying his luck in Nashville. A good year of farming gave him the money to buy a new 1955 pickup truck. In the fall of 1956, he headed north to Nashville with \$350.

The story sounds too good to be true, but Stonewall pulled into town and found

Acuff-Rose, the song publishing firm Roy Acuff and Fred Rose had founded in 1942. Fred's son Wesley was now the head of the firm, Fred having died in 1954. Jackson got a chance to sing his songs in his raw, proudly hillbilly voice, accompanying himself on a borrowed guitar. The Acuff-Rose employee listening pronounced himself impressed, and Stonewall headed to a nearby motel. The next day, Wesley Rose himself called. He liked the songs—and Stonewall's voice, adding he thought he might be able to get him on the Opry, and had set up an appointment with Opry founder George D. Hay.

Hay's days as head honcho of the Opry had been over for a decade by 1956. Mental problems and changing times had reduced him to a beloved, yet mainly ceremonial figure. Dee Kilpatrick, who ran the Opry, had the power to decide. Trying to hold the show together in the face of rock 'n' roll, Kilpatrick heard Jackson's pure country voice and signed him on the spot. At his first Opry appearance on the Friday Night Frolics, Stonewall ran into giggles from certain cast members who, despite their own humble backgrounds, laughed at his battered guitar and patched clothes. The audience, thinking him some sort of comic, also laughed, until he turned up the passion in his voice. He wound up with a standing ovation.

Not surprisingly, his first Opry benefactor was Ernest Tubb. Known for his generosity to newcomers, E.T. not only bought him some used Western outfits for his November 10, 1956, debut on the Saturday night Opry, he added Stonewall to his touring show. Faced with several contract offers, Tubb suggested Stonewall take Columbia's. He recorded a raw version of "Don't Be Angry" at his first Columbia session that didn't sell. At one point, with money tight, he took a part-time non-music job to make ends meet.

Touring brought Stonewall into contact with other new, young stars, including George Jones. After he and Stonewall played one package show, where prisoners attended under guard, George talked to one who said he still had "life to go." George



GENE BEAR ARCHIVES

smelled a song. "Life to Go" became Stonewall's first hit in 1958, reaching Number Two nationally. The days of side jobs were over, and Jackson was able to book tours as a solo artist. He and Jones lived hard on the road, both capable of laying away the booze. At least once, Stonewall got walloped for a fight George started.

Nonetheless, Jackson was on a roll. In 1958, he married Juanita, a secretary he met soon after coming to Nashville. The next year, 1959, the infectious, rocking "Waterloo" went to Number One for five weeks and reached Number Four on the pop charts. The flipside, "Smoke Along the Track," became a Top 30 hit. In 1960 the gospel number "Mary, Don't You Weep" reached Number 12. "Why I'm Walkin'" reached Number Six, and the flipside, "Life of a Poor Boy," made it to Number 15. At a time when smoother singing was in vogue, Stonewall sang hill-billy, and the public responded. Yet as raw as he was, he had enough appeal to do appearances on ABC's *American Bandstand*, hosted by Dick Clark.

A couple of modest hits came in 1961, but early in 1962 "A Wound Time Can't Erase" went to Number Three. The B-

side, "Second Choice," made the Top 20. Another two-sided hit came mid-year with "One Look at Heaven," the A-side, at Number 11 and the B-side, "Leona," at Number Nine. "Can't Hang Up the Phone" reached Number 11 in early 1963, and "Old Showboat" got to Number Eight that summer. His second Number One came early in 1964 with "B.J. The D.J." That fall, a re-recording of "Don't Be Angry" made it to Number Four, followed in early 1965 by "I Washed My Hands in Muddy Water." This rocking number was country enough, but it became a pop hit that same year when singer Johnny Rivers covered it.

The rest of 1965 and 1966 saw Stonewall as active as ever, though his hits only made the Top 30, among them "Lost in the Shuffle" in 1965, "If This House Could Talk" in 1966 and, that same year, "The Minute Men Are Turning in Their Graves," a harsh swipe at anti-Vietnam protesters. Only "Blues Plus Booze (Means I Lose)" got as high as Number 12. "Stamp Out Loneliness" peaked at Number Five in 1967. He had his own bus by then, and tours continued unabated. His final big hit with Columbia came in 1971

with "Me and You and a Dog Named Boo." By 1973 his relations with Columbia soured. He signed with MGM, where "Herman Schwartz," reached Number 41 in the summer of '73. Donna Fargo revived "Don't Be Angry" as a hit in 1977. By then, his greatest recordings were seen as classic hard country. In 1987, Dwight Yoakam revived "Smoke Along the Track" on his *Hillbilly Deluxe* album.

Stonewall then recorded for a number of tiny labels, and toured extensively (son Turp was his drummer) and worked the Opry. By 1988, he'd cut down drastically on his touring. His troubled youth has led him to lend his talents to various causes involved with child abuse, and in 1991, Stonewall wrote his extraordinary autobiography. Not a slickly packaged book, in it he told of his remarkable journey in his own words. Many legendary singers have come up through hard times. Nonetheless, it took not only talent, but values and character as well, for Stonewall Jackson to overcome his rough beginnings and to achieve so much.

Albums Available

See For CMSA Members Only page.

Readers Create

Dedicated to Oklahoma City

The Oklahoma City bombing tragedy is one none will soon forget. Kristi Barrios of Riverside, California, dedicates this poem to all its victims.

Oklahomans

Reach for one
And then the other
We must all
Come together
Lifting each other
As one does a brother
Holding on
To one another
The babies are now
Little angels
Resting with God
And his holy angels
Pray for strength
And comfort now
All as one
Let's bow down
God will deal
With those men
Who wanted to take lives
By their own hands
He will serve
Justice that is due
Because He loves and cares for you

—Kristi Barrios

Reading the Words

"Country music is as much in the words as in the music." So says Shirley A. Gilley of Talala, Oklahoma, as she submits her words for you.

Pull Back, Hold On

I have learned from taking chances
some were right and some were wrong
I have lived my life with someone
I have lived my life alone
And have lost myself in pages
in a book up in my room
Where sometimes I read the words aloud
and say this rings so true

Pull Back, Hold on

Don't worry none too long
Pull back, Hold on
Don't worry none too long

I have sat down with a novel
and have read it line for line
I have wondered where the author was
just what was on the mind
In the hurry-hurry-hurry
just working to survive
Did the thought think we would listen
with the rhythm of this time

Pull Back, Hold on

Don't worry none too long

Pull back, Hold on
Don't worry none too long

I have searched for all the wisdom
and have read the written word
I have prayed to find the answers
and have waited to be heard
Like the need of every person
Every soul that steps the Earth
I have wasted time with worry
when I should have understood

Pull back, Hold on
Don't worry none too long
Pull back, Hold on
Don't worry none too long

—Shirley A. Gilley

Love is Colorblind

Member Helen Scott of Pocatello, Idaho, wrote this song for a friend of hers with a biracial child. She has been writing songs for 6 years and says her children were shocked when she told them she was sending them in.

Love Is Where You Find It

Billy Joe and Mandy were lovers
But no one ever knew,
'Cause where they came from the folks would talk
And they said, "Hey boy, green don't go with blue."

So when their young love took a turn,
And that love surrounded three,
Though it broke his heart to break his Mama's,
Billy left that town,
Long before that little boy was seen

And he said:
Love is where you find it
You just have to do your part
It shouldn't matter where you've been
Or the color of your skin,
It only matters inside your heart,
'Cause love is where you find it.

But thoughts of Mama kept creepin' in
So the three of them went home,
Scared to face what they'd left behind,
Scared they'd have to stand alone,
But as it was it wasn't very long
'Til they knew they'd done no harm,
'Cause the look on Mama's face,
Well it told it all,
When she picked up little Billy in her arms.

And she said:
Love is where you find it,
You just have to do your part
And it doesn't matter where you've been
Or the color of your skin
It only matters inside your heart
'Cause love is where you find it.

Love is where you find it,
You just have to do your part,
And it doesn't matter where you've been
Or the color of your skin,
It only matters in your heart
'Cause love is where you find it.

—Helen Scott



Clint Black Times Two

Dave Adkins of Xenia, Ohio, drew the sketch on the left as a gift for a friend. Sarah Neumann, from Elizabethtown, Tennessee, sent the one on the right in when she hadn't seen Clint in Readers Create for a while. You'll be seeing him quite a bit in record stores, as he's just released *Looking for Christmas*, a Christmas album consisting of ten new songs. Look for it, but in the meantime, here he is, folks, twice as nice as usual.

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JOHN BERRY

Brand New Life

Triumph and tragedy both have a way of helping you find your perspective. † By Bob Allen

The first time I saw John Berry perform was at an industry showcase in front of an audience that—at first—hardly seemed to be listening. Then Berry, a big, burly-looking former Athens, Georgia, nightclub singer with an even bigger, almost operatic baritone, took the stage. Except for his size, Berry is a pretty ordinary-looking guy; and he often stands inert as he belts out songs like “Your Love Amazes Me,” his Grammy-nominated Number One single from last year (from his platinum-selling 1993 *Liberty*, now Capitol, debut album, *John Berry*). Yet as I watched, it was almost as if an electric charge had been set loose, as his booming yet mellifluous voice filled the dimly lit venue. The walls seemed to reverberate, and the audience fell silent for a moment and actually listened.

In the beginning, program directors and country jocks didn’t warm much to Berry’s records. His first couple of singles didn’t even crack the Top Ten, and he looked like he was going to be a tough sell until “Your Love Amazes Me” broke through. But that night, he was hot. He nailed them to the wall.

Standing in a corner, taking it all in, I wondered if this bulky, intense-looking country-pop power balladeer might not be Nashville’s mid-1990’s answer to Pavarotti.

I may not have been far wrong. But first, the brain surgery: The very same week that “Your Love Amazes Me” first hit Number One, not long after he’d lost his father and just as his second child was being born, a CAT scan revealed a colloid cyst on Berry’s brain.

“The first doctor who diagnosed me told me I needed a craniotomy,” he recalls with a nonchalant grin. “Basically that’s where they just go in and take the top of your skull off, get a clean spoon and go after that sucker! They ended up using a newer procedure where they drill a hole and do an incision on each side and go into your brain with a laser with a camera on it and just drain it.

“Something like that does give you a new perspective,” he adds with a shrug. “I don’t seem to be as possessed about things as I was before. It takes a while, but there’s a lot of growth that comes out of something like that....Not that I’d recommend it to anyone.”

As we sit and talk, I begin to sense in Berry’s conversation the same intensity that burns so fer-

vently in his music. So it’s no surprise at all when the singer tells me, “Music is a very serious thing to me. I’ve never done just fun music.... There are some songs, like ‘Your Love Amazes Me’ and ‘If I Had Any Pride at All,’ off *Standing on the Edge*, that still make me cry. Even after all the times I’ve played them, they are still hard for me to sing some nights.”

And when asked about his early years, about how he first set his sights on a future in popular music, Berry says simply, “I’ve always known what I wanted to do; I’ve always been very specific about that.”

Berry was born in Aiken, South Carolina, but spent most of his growing up years in Atlanta, Georgia. He admits that, unlike a lot of his musical contemporaries, he never heard much country music in his youth. He found deeper inspiration in such diverse sources as John Denver, rocker Jackson Browne and silky-voiced Philadelphia soul groups like The Stylistics. He began writing songs as a youngster, but only joined one band. “I decided early on that I wasn’t going to throw the fate of my career in with other musicians who didn’t know what they wanted to do with their lives, because I knew what I wanted to do.”

During his high school years, Berry sang often and played a few solo gigs around Atlanta. But lightning didn’t strike until later, in 1985, when he was in his mid-20’s, when he moved from Atlanta to Athens, Georgia. There, he quickly became a fixture in the clubs around the University of Georgia, and began finding himself as a musician.

“I’d starved to death in Atlanta, but then all of a sudden I got this gig in Athens and went from making a hundred bucks a week as a musician with a part-time gig at a music store to making six hundred dollars a week just from my music. And it never went down from there.”

Berry’s first Athens gig was inconsequential enough—in a restaurant called *Wrappers*, because it was adjacent to the gift wrapping section of a department store. “When I started there with my back-up band, we were like the plants. Like the wallpaper. But we slowly started getting people’s attention, and we eventually drew so many people that they ended up closing the restaurant down and turning it into a college nightclub.”





And, as word of Berry's dynamic show continued to spread, the crowds kept getting bigger and bigger. "It was complete madness, is what it was!" he laughs. "Goodness! It was pretty insane. It was a lot of fun. It was like nothing we'd ever done before. I'd never experienced anything like that before."

The move to Athens proved fruitful in more ways than one. Berry met his future wife, Robin, in a nightclub during his second week in town—though he laughingly recalls that several years passed before he finally persuaded her to go out with him. Eventually, Robin became a part of the band. "Robin has been singing with the band since a year or so before I got my record deal," Berry smiles. "I've been doing a Christmas show every year at my church, Green Acres Baptist in Athens, for the last ten years; and since we've been married, Robin always sings with me there. Then she played a show with us once at a Georgia Young Farmers' Convention. I introduced her, and they just went nuts! It's the same way every night. People just love her. She should have her own T-shirt deal!"

As the years went by in Georgia, Berry, a natural showman learned more and more about pleasing his audiences. "There are songs I call reactionary material—reactionary songs," he explains. "As soon as the audience hears the first few bars, it causes a physical reaction. They're different songs depending on what kind of crowds you're playing for. 'Sweet Home Alabama'... 'Brown Eyed Girl'... We did tons of that stuff, and we'd mix in original material. It got to where we had a second set that didn't change for years. Just like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*! People knew it, knew which song was coming next, but they kept coming back, night after night. And even though we did the same songs every night, it always sounded fresh—like it was the very first time we were doing it.

"I would also go to an awful lot of trouble with the technical aspects of our show, and I think it was very obvious. I had a great band and a huge sound and lighting system. People would walk in, and go, 'God!' It was pretty massive.... And our following just kept growing until it was huge."

It's easy to imagine Berry belting it out in some little club, that huge voice of his shaking the walls, stopping the clock on the wall and overwhelming everything. It's easy to picture him packing 425 people into a club intended for less than a hundred—which he used to do—and knocking 'em all dead. (It's no surprise at all when he tells me he's got a brother who is a professional opera singer—the Big Voice obviously runs in the family.) It's easy to imagine, too, how all that overwhelming response would naturally make an ambitious fellow like Berry start dreaming of wider and greener pastures. "It was all part of a plan." He laughs, even though he's dead serious. "I didn't know if I would be in Nashville or wherever I would be. I wanted to be Elvis."

Berry paved the way for the future recording career he envisioned by making his own independent albums—six of them altogether. The earliest ones he did in his parents' house on home recording equipment. The later ones were done in professional studios in Athens and Nashville.

"I recorded all the time, nonstop, 24 hours a day sometimes, for years," recalls the singer, whose most recent and (in his own estimation) best two self-produced albums—*Things Are Not the Same* and *Saddle the Wind*—have recently been reissued on Capitol. "The first five albums I wrote everything—some pretty good songs, and some pretty bad ones," he recalls. "The last two I did in professional studios and financed them myself, with the help of friends. They came out real well. *Saddle the Wind*, which I made in 1990, sold about 12,000 copies locally, just around Athens and Atlanta. We all got our money back we spent making it in a few months."

Berry insists that making those independent albums was, in retrospect, the best thing he ever did. "Man, if you don't have your direction together you'll be knocked around all over the place in Nashville. You know: 'Hey, let's try a new hat on him! Let's try this kinda jacket!'... Fortunately, after I cut *Saddle the*



Berry's an ordinary guy except when he sings. Audiences react.

Wind, in 1990, I knew I had my direction; I knew I was on to something at that point. You can listen to *Saddle the Wind*, then listen to the first Capitol album, and you'll hear a definite connection."

As forward-thinking as he was, Berry, after six or seven years of playing in Athens, inevitably bumped his head on the realities of being a big fish in the small pond of the college club scene. "I had come to the realization by 1992, after playing in Athens for seven years, that it was not gonna send my kids to school. That it was not gonna last forever. I mean, after seven years I could see that eventually I'd end up playing in a lounge or something. I wasn't getting younger, and the college kids were. So Robin and I talked about it, and we decided to start coming to Nashville. We decided we didn't want to move here. I mean, I had a house, I had a farm—still have my house and farm. It's our home. But we decided the best way to do it was to start doing industry showcases around town."

Berry and his wife resolved to do showcases (that is, auditions in Nashville clubs to which everybody who is anybody in the record industry gets invited) every 45 days until somebody took notice. They sent out dozens of invitations to their first ones in early 1992; but almost no one bothered to show up. Almost no one, that is, except Herky Williams, then an A&R executive at Liberty Records. Williams had heard about Berry through his sister, who had seen Berry's shows while she was attending the University of Georgia in Athens.

"Herky came to one of our early showcases and was practically the only industry person there," Berry recalls. "But he just loved it. It just tickled him to death. He called Jimmy Bowen—the head of Liberty Records at the time—"that night. Woke him up out of bed and said, 'Man, you gotta hear this guy, he's that good!'

Bowen said, 'If he's that good, bring him over for brunch tomorrow.' But by the time Herky made the call, Robin and I had already packed up and were on our way back to Athens."

When Berry did another showcase in Nashville a couple of months later, Bowen, at Williams' insistence, was there. "Before the show Bowen asked me for a copy of *Saddle the Wind*, the last independent album I'd made," says Berry. "I said, 'Uh-uh: You're used to hearing demos that cost ten times what that record cost to make. Just come to my show and hear me do what I do.' Bowen said, 'Fair enough.' Well, that showcase was the most fun I ever had. Afterwards Bowen and I talked together a few minutes, and he just said, 'Let's make some records. Your manager can call me tomorrow and we'll work out the details.'"

After that, things happened fast. The transition from Athens club singer to Nashville recording artist was a heady, demanding ride. But just as "Your Love Amazes Me" roared up the charts and Berry began barnstorming the country, doing showcases in every major city and paying promotional visits to country stations, he began to wonder why he was feeling so awful.

"I just felt like hell and I didn't have any idea why," he recalls. "I just thought I was depressed—I wasn't very happy at that time at all, just all kinds of stuff going on. I had continuous headaches. I was taking Advil like M&M's, but it just kept getting worse and worse. And my appetite kept getting worse and worse until I lost 55 pounds. One of the last shows I did before the surgery was in Philadelphia, and I did 'Please Come to Boston.' The band had left the stage, and I was doing the song solo. Well, I remember the applause and the band coming back on stage, but I blanked out. I couldn't remember if I'd already done the song or not. I grabbed my drummer by the arm and said, 'Did I finish that? Did I finish the song?' He thought I was joking. He said, 'What are you talking about? Let's get on with the show.'

"Then we did one more show in Washington, D.C., and I flew home to see my wife, who was in labor with Thomas, our second child. I don't remember flying home, I don't remember renting the car at the airport, I don't remember driving to Athens. I got to the hospital, and I was sitting on the floor outside Robin's room, and the nurse came by and asked if I was all right. I said, 'No, I'm not.' They checked me into emergency, then sent me right to a neurosurgeon. That's when I knew it might be serious."

When a CAT scan revealed the cyst and he was quickly scheduled for surgery, Berry insists that, rather than fear, he felt immense relief. Regardless of how serious his condition was, at least he could stop wondering what the problem was. He also knew it could be remedied.

Still, as he makes clear, brain surgery was no walk in the park. "I don't recommend it," he shudders. "The headaches afterwards were awful. I felt on the verge of just wanting to throw up all the time. The clamps they put on my head for surgery were unbelievable. This big square cage was bolted into my skull. They couldn't deaden part of my skull for some reason when they were putting the screw in." He shakes his head and grimaces. "Unbelievable!"

Still, within a month, Berry was performing again, his dedication to his family, and his music, renewed. Highlighting his days now are a brand new tour bus outfitted for the whole family, including his third child, who was born in July, two CMA award nominations, one for the Horizon Award, the other for Top Male Vocalist, and a new Christmas album, *O Holy Night*.

"I've finally found, musically speaking, what I do best and what I need to be doing," he explains. "That is: songs that really say something and which, technically and emotionally, challenge me with their range. I'm also planning on spending a whole lot more time writing. I just feel like I have a whole lot of things I want to say. And this sure seems like the right time to try and say 'em."

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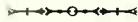
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*With a steadily building career, a happy baby
and a supportive husband...*

Martina McBride's Time Has Come



by Bob Allen

Despite what the TV commercials would have us believe, ain't none of us really gets to "have it all."

Yet, these days, Martina McBride, who's not only fresh off of hits like "Independence Day" and "My Baby Loves Me" from her million-selling second album, *The Way I Am*, but is also a new mother, sure seems to come close.

One factor that enables this farmer's daughter from Sharon, Kansas, to strike such an enviously healthy balance between career and family is undoubtedly the nature of her success. Since Martina made her 1992 major label debut with *The Time Has Come*, a fine, tradition-flavored album (that unfortunately got lost in the shuffle), success for her has been a sort of quiet explosion. Martina has not been



blessed—or cursed—with meteoric rise of a Trisha Yearwood, or the flashfire popularity of a considerably more one-dimensional artist like Faith Hill. For her it's been, in her own words, "a slow build."

"I could come up with a lot of reasons," she shrugs. "Like all the changes at my record label. But to be honest, I think it all comes down to the music. My music's just better now."

It's fascinating that right when her marquee value as a singer began heating up with the above-mentioned hits off her second album and a Number One video ("My Baby Loves Me"), along with Grammy and Country Music Association Award nominations, Martina and her husband John were hit with yet another wonderful new complication in their lives. Their first child, a daughter named Delaney Katharine McBride, arrived late last December, just a few days before Christmas.

Thus it's no surprise that when Martina's traveling show comes through my part of the country, it's very much a family affair. Her brother Marty is in her band. Her husband John, on leave from his regular job work-

ing sound for Garth Brooks, is running her sound production. And baby Delaney Katharine is, of course, along for the ride.

"Delaney travels wonderful," the proud mother coos as she dandles her daughter inside her tour bus after a rousing show at the Tangier Sound Country Music Festival, an annual bayside extravaganza that brings two days of country music to the lower Delmarva Peninsula. Delaney indeed looks placid as she chews on her pacifier and stares at a visitor with wide-eyed curiosity.

"You can see the bus, how we have it all fixed up for her," Martina adds brightly. "She has a baby bed in there. She actually sleeps better on the bus than she does at home. She loves it. At this point she's very adaptable. She's not walking yet; she just wants to

be with us, wherever we are. I don't think she really knows the difference yet."

After Martina has finished her spirited early evening show in the blistering heat, she wastes no time dressing down from the black suit and black heels she wore on stage to blue jeans, a blue work shirt and loafers. A few minutes later she's mixing easily with the small local contingent from her fan club. These devotees have gathered quietly in the backstage parking area near her bus, while a Maryland state trooper, part of the extensive backstage security, looks on. (Her fans seem like a polite, laid-back bunch of folks, but in this day and age you can never be too careful.) Martina just sort of blends in with the crowd, cracking jokes, making small talk and satisfying all autograph requests. John, standing inside the bus, proudly holds Delaney up to the window for everyone to see.

Garth Brooks was, of course, a big factor in Martina's early career. After John signed on as Big Brooky's sound production manager, Martina, then working as a waitress in Nashville and pitching demo tapes, took a job with Brooks' organization as a T-shirt



vendor in order to be with John on the road. When Martina landed her own record deal with RCA, Garth “promoted” her from T-shirt saleslady to opening act. “It was such a great experience,” she recalls. “I got to play for over a million people. It really forced me to get my act together in terms of being an entertainer.” Garth, a Liberty (now Capitol) Records artist, very graciously took it upon himself to personally pay a visit to RCA, introduce himself to everybody there and let it be known that, “If there’s anything I can do...”

Now, ironically, Brooks has given Martina and John another big break by taking a year’s hiatus from the concert trail. “It’s a brilliant stroke of luck for John and me that Garth is off the road, and this entire year John has been able to come out on the road with me and run the house sound and be my production manager,” Martina smiles as she glances out the bus window at her husband. She is now back on board while he’s busy loading gear into the luggage compartment in preparation for the all-night drive back to Nashville.

“Traveling together hasn’t been an adjustment for us at all,” adds the singer, who moved from south-central Kansas to Nashville with her husband in 1990—she to seek a record deal, he to start his now very successful sound company. “We’ve always made an effort to travel together, to try and get together whenever we can. It’s always been a priority....But even with the family out here, I’ve got to admit that after a couple of weeks, I do start to miss my own house,” she laughs softly. “My own washer and dryer.”

Looking back, Martina insists that those very first shows she opened for Brooks back in ’92 were just about the hardest thing she’s ever done in her life. Despite years of working clubs back in Kansas—on her own and also with a family band headed by her father—she felt unschooled and awkward in front of crowds so huge. But, as her Tangier Sound Festival appearance before thousands demonstrates, she’s obviously grown into the role. Her performance is top-notch—tight, spirited, well-paced. She seems utterly poised and in control as she commands the stage with her lithe, fluid yet tightly controlled upper body movements which are more ethereal than sensual.

One of the real high points is when she launches into “Independence Day,” which ends with a small volley of fireworks and a rousing ovation from the immense crowd. “Independence Day”—both the hit song and the hit video—really helped define Martina as a singer and a public personality. The single was not a charttopper, by any means—the subject matter, spousal abuse, was a little bit too real and too timely for country radio, the arch-enforcer of musical blandness. (Really, who knows what their logic was for not wanting to play the song. Perhaps they didn’t want to alienate all the wife-beaters of the world.)

Yet “Independence Day’s” undeniable power—its righteous anger and its morality play themes of empowerment and retribution—proved irrepressible. Both the single and the video brought Martina, who up until then was just another pretty face with an even prettier voice, into sharp focus. The video, shot in black and white, features an almost severe-looking Martina, shorn of the long, lovely tresses she’d worn in publicity photos up till then. Its visceral power and unabashed message—that abused women can fight back—gave her new credibility and connected



In her current video, "Safe in the Arms of Love," Martina co-stars with the performers of Cirque de Soleil. For her "Independence Day" video, she won TNN's Best Video of the Year award.



her to a whole new audience.

Martina can clearly recall the first time she heard a demo of "Independence Day," which was written by Gretchen Peters. Her own reaction was much the same as the one thousands of other listeners would eventually have when they got to hear her version of the song. Martina's co-producer Paul Worley played it for her, and, as she recalls, "I was completely blown away! I just thought, 'That's my song! I want a record that song!' It just really moved

me. I knew that it would touch somebody's life. I never really thought, 'Will this be a big hit? Will this be a single?' I just recorded it because I wanted it to be part of my body of work.

"In the beginning there was certainly an element of 'Wow, this is really heavy!'" she adds. "But I was just so committed to that song by then, and to making that statement, that it overrode any doubts or second thoughts....But I would guess there's a certain fear of putting a single out like that, because it's a risky move. It doesn't fit radio's format. They don't want to offend their listeners by playing a song that's controversial, which 'Independence Day' certainly is.

"And some of them were not willing to take that risk," she emphasizes. "There were some stations that never played it, and a lot of others that didn't play it at first. So you take the risk of being accepted or not accepted. But for me it was worth it. And I take pride that I stood up for what I believe in, that I didn't necessarily play it safe."

Despite the fact that it barely crawled into the Top Ten, "Independence Day" proved nonetheless to be what the industry calls an "impact song" for Martina. And it positioned her smack in the middle of a burning social issue and struck a resounding chord out in grassroots America. Her ultimate "award" was the slew of letters she received from around the nation. Like this one from Moscow, Idaho: *I am an attorney....I just finished a case where I was asked to represent a woman who was charged with murdering her husband as he slept. I learned that she and her family were subjected to horrible sadistic abuse for 16 years. They lived in terror of a man who beat them, whipped them with a bullwhip, chained one in a shed like some animal and caused them to suffer in ways you don't want to know. Thankfully, a jury found her not guilty about a week ago. One comment from a juror was telling regarding their general feelings: "We agreed the deceased had declared war on his family, and in wartime you can sneak up on the enemy." Your song "Independence Day" provided great inspiration for me throughout this case. So in a very real way you had a part in finally setting this family free.*

Martina admits that these kinds of reactions to the song from listeners made her far more aware of the issue of abuse and convinced her that, "I wanted to take it a step further and do something that would maybe help. That awareness in my heart really came through the song."

In the months since "Independence Day's" release, she has co-chaired a YMCA celebrity auction in Nashville that raised \$30,000 for a shelter for abused women. Nowadays when she's on the road, she'll often visit local middle schools and talk to girls about "self-respect and self-esteem, and about what they don't deserve and do deserve, and how to look for a healthy relationship...

"You see," she adds, "nobody sets out to fall in love with the school bully. I feel that a lot of times women are nurturers, and we have this 'We can save them' kind of approach. And it gets us into trouble sometimes. Especially when you're a young girl. And some of these girls have never seen a healthy relationship. They come from a home where there's violence, and they don't even know that there's any different way. So this is just a way to get them to stop and think before they find themselves in a situation they can't get out of."

Such fervent involvement may come as a surprise to those who've never been able to see past Martina's almost too perfect looks. As one writer, a woman, aptly put it in a recent profile: "Martina McBride's got a problem: she's a beautiful woman. It may not sound like a problem, but it is. It gets in the way, and it may keep people from understanding what lies beneath her visage."

Yet those who know Martina aren't at all surprised by the ferocity of her commitments. Keep in mind, this is a singer who, when putting together *The Time Has Come*, her first album, was determined to become "a female Alan

Jackson," and to avoid "stereotypical women's songs." Before setting foot in the studio she resolved to make a hard-core country album that her father, a Kansas farmer and devoted country fan and musician (who recently got the thrill of his life when performed with his daughter on the Opry), would be proud of.

"Even back on the first album I was there for everything," explains Martina who served as co-producer on both *The Way That I Am* and the new *Wild Angels*. "For me, it feels very unnatural to go in and sing the songs and have everybody else create all the music, and then go back in and say, 'Well, let me hear what you've done with my music.' From the beginning I've always had my own ideas, and I've always had a sense of what I wanted to do with my music.

"It does take a lot of extra time in the studio when I could be on the road," she admits. "But I'm in there for every piece of everything that goes on that record—from my vocals, to the fiddle overdubs and background vocals, to the mixing and mastering. Everything. It's the only way that works for me. Nobody else knows exactly what I want but me. With each album I've gotten more and more involved. And, as a result, I think *Wild Angels* is even more me than any of the others.

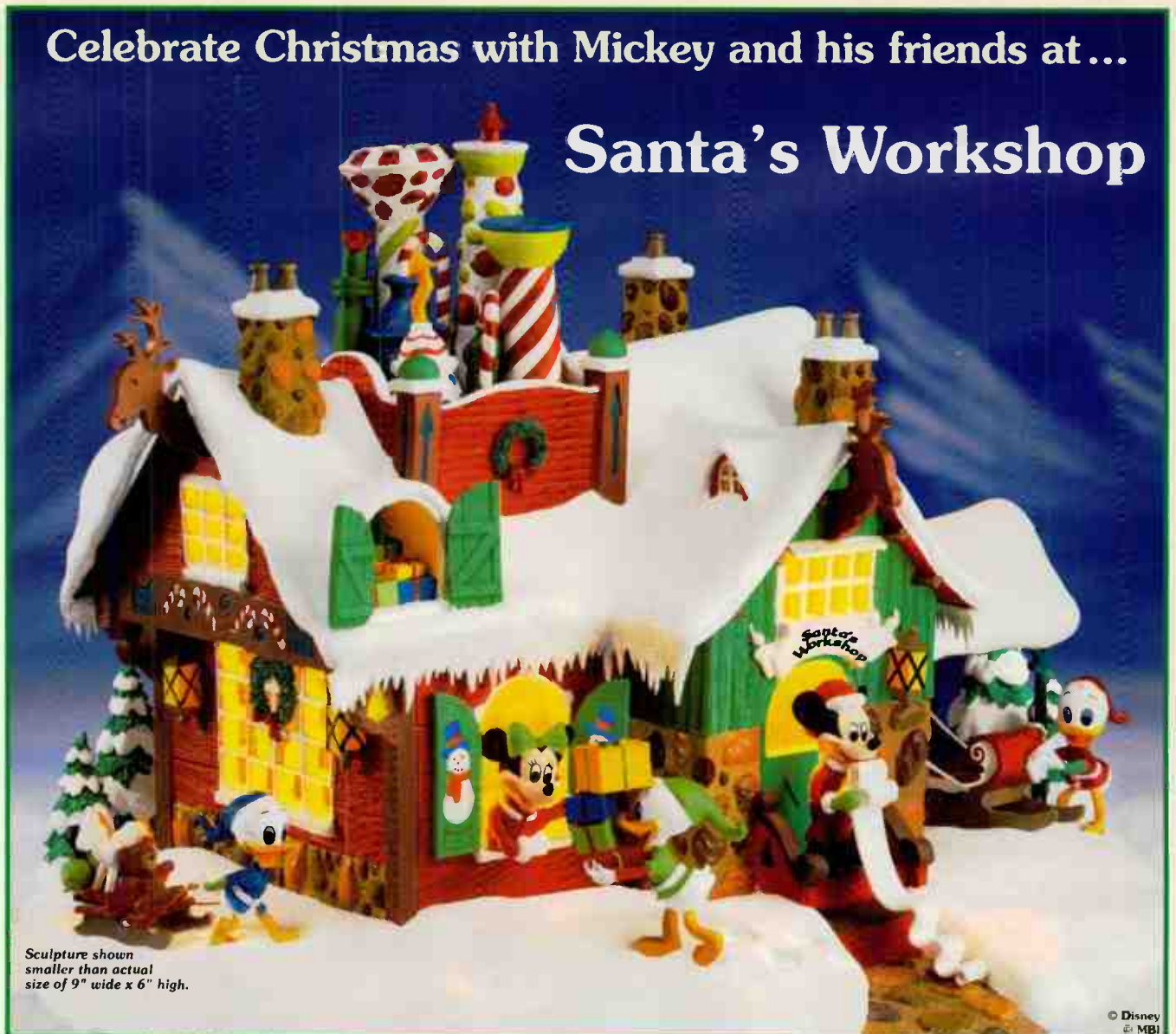
"This time around, the songs, a lot of them, are really positive songs, songs that fit my life," she explains, glancing down at Delaney, who's still chewing on her pacifier and seems to be drifting off to sleep.

"The songs before, like 'Independence Day,' were often about characters. You know: people that I could feel compassion for," Martina adds with a wistful smile as the bus engine roars to life and last-minute good-byes are said before her all-night ride back to Nashville and my three-hour drive back home. "But this time the songs are about my life.

"I've just put an incredible amount of myself into the new record," she smiles softly as she shakes hands good-bye and goes off to put Delaney to bed. "And that's why I'm really anxious to get it out and see how people like it." ■

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Doug Supernaw's Raisin' Hell & Havin' A Great Time

◆ By Bob Allen ◆

After a while one grows weary of staring into the unrelentingly cheerful, clean cut, and ultimately boring facade of the industry-driven 90's "Young Country" movement. After a while it's like one big cliché that all runs together as you listen to yet another baby-faced 19- or 20-year-old George Strait/Garth Brooks wannabe with a black cowboy hat and business degree chirp confidently about his five-year career plan, his daily workout routine and how much he loves God, his country, his manager, his record label, his C.P.A. and all the devoted fans out there who've "helped make my dreams come true."

That's why it's so refreshing when you stumble upon an unregenerate wild man like Doug Supernaw: a great big, gawky, square-jawed, politically incorrect, 34-year-old college drop-out and Texas singer/songwriter who readily admits that his major influences are wild-ass 70's bad boys like Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker and Gary Stewart.

Heck, Supernaw will even tell you, flat out, that it was those ol' boys' nutty, over-the-edge lifestyle, as much as their music, that really motivated him to follow his present career path.

"I went to a *jillion* concerts when I was in high school and college," Supernaw—best known for recent Number Ones like "I Don't Call Him Daddy" and the self-written "Reno," from his critically acclaimed 1993 debut album, *Red and Rio Grande*—reveals with a goofy, lopsided grin that conveys equal measures of sheepishness and devilment. "Sad as it is, the things that stick out in my mind are the really rowdy things. Like when Jerry Jeff Walker would play on Richmond Street in Houston, Texas, and I had a fake ID and got in the club. It was Jerry Jeff's birthday, and they had a stripper up on stage. I don't remember any of the songs Jerry Jeff sang that night. I just remember I was with a

bunch of my friends, and when they sent that stripper on stage, we thought it was hilarious. Nowadays, we do all kinds of stuff like that at shows when we can get away with it. We have fun.

"I guess we're a lot like the rock 'n' roll bands used to be on the road," adds the Houston-born-and-raised singer whose singles and videos have garnered award nominations from *Billboard* (Best New Country Artist Video, for "I Don't Call Him Daddy") and the Academy of Country Music (Top New Male Vocalist and Song of the Year—also for "I Don't Call Him Daddy"). "We all got a good heart, and we're all pretty decent people, and we love to do benefits and stuff. But we get in a lot of trouble, too," Supernaw rolls his eyes. "Not any bad trouble, but we definitely have our share of gettin' kicked outa motels, stuff like that."

For all his redneck rowdyism, Supernaw comes from a surprisingly staid background. He's a product of Houston's upper crust northern suburbs. "My dad's a very smart, creative man. He's got doctorates in chemistry and physics, and he's got lots of patents in his name. He works as head of research for Texaco—been there forever."

Neither of his parents, or his grandparents (whose farm in southern Illinois was a second home during his early years), were particularly musically inclined. And though he didn't take up any instruments as a kid, he began writing songs early on. "It's just something I've always done, I don't know why," he muses. "I can remember the first two songs I ever wrote, when I was eight years old, on a family vacation. They were called 'Hurricanes and Window Panes' and 'Virginia.' After that, it just became a hobby. I never stopped."

In high school, Supernaw sang with local garage bands occasionally. "But mainly I was just a back seat radio singer—which is what I still am, to





some people! I don't think that back in those days anyone could have ever known I'd be doing what I'm doing for a living today."

At 18, he enrolled in Houston's St. Thomas University on a golf scholarship. ("I've always been athletic, but after gettin' a little older and a few broken bones, I'm slowin' down a little bit.") But his focus changed after he entered and sang in a city-wide talent contest and made it all the way to the final round. "I finished second, much to my horror," he recalls. "The guy who won was a truck driver who sang 'Roll On, Big Mama' and did a back flip off the stage."

Not long afterward, he answered an advertisement in a music trade magazine and ended up auditioning for an East Coast beach music band called The Occasions. "The bandleader gave me a tape of about a hundred beach songs and said, 'Learn these by next week and you've got a job.' So I laid around by the mo-

tel pool with headphones on for seven days and learned 'em all."

Later, back in Texas, Supernaw worked for a while on oil rigs, briefly re-entered college (Texas Tech this time) and even made his living as a concert promoter for a while. "It was a crash course in the music business," he remembers. "I booked Reba, Willie, Ricky Van Shelton's first Texas tour, The Beastie Boys, even Jay Leno. It was a great experience for what I do now. I don't get screwed very often."

In the late 1980's he spent a couple of years in Nashville, but the timing wasn't right. "The biggest problem I faced was everybody wanted me to sing like somebody else. Randy Travis, or George Strait. I finally decided to move back to Texas and sing like Doug Supernaw."

A big turning point came when he put his own band together, The Possum Eatin' Cowboys, and began developing a following around southeast Texas. Supernaw's band stood



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COUNTRY MUSIC
QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the January/February 1996 issue.

1. Dwight Yoakam maintains his offices on what famous Los Angeles street.
2. John Berry's wife is also a member of his band. Name her.
3. What is the name of Doug Supernaw's band?
4. What was Martina McBride's breakthrough hit single?
5. Emmylou Harris worked with which noted rock producer on her latest album?
6. Chevy's Full-Size Pickup has an all-new interior, including form fitting seats and an easy-to-use instrument panel. What safety feature is included as standard equipment?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. *Is There Life Our There*
2. Her father
3. Aaron Tippin
4. Seven
5. Female Vocalist of the Year
6. Chevy's new S-Series ZR2 Extended Cab Pickup gives you 191 horsepower in its powerful V6 engine.

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out, not only for its good-natured outlandishness, but for its unusual repertoire. "We were kind of a cross between George Strait and The Grateful Dead," he chuckles.

"We really got started in Houston, at some of the college bars there, and in San Marcus, Austin and Bay City. We didn't play that many dance halls. The dance halls didn't like us, because I banter too much and I mess with the crowd, and we play such a strange mix of music. In a Texas dance hall you just gotta play the Top Ten hits just as they sound on the radio—period. But we'd always play half original music in our shows, and that didn't go over in the dance halls. They'd be throwin' beer bottles and hollerin', 'We don't wanna hear that crap!' But we never wanted to be a cover band.

"My band has been with me since 1991, since before I got a record deal. We never go up on stage with a song set. We do something different every night. We don't just play my hits; we've got a version of Pearl Jam's 'Better Man' worked up for special occasions. And in a normal night we'll do a Cajun tune with a squeeze box and wash board, and maybe a Charlie Daniels tune, and 'Sweet Home Alabama' with four guitars across the stage." Supernaw pauses, then adds with another rumbling guffaw: "We are a rolling tragedy.... We're like beautiful snowflakes: No two shows are the same.

"The real difference with me and The Possum Eatin' Cowboys is—it's not like I got a record deal and had to slap together a band," he points out. "I already had my band, and we had been playin' rowdy, rowdy clubs, doin' all kinds of rodeo songs and cussing during the shows and whatever. Well, some people think that all of a sudden when you get a record deal, you're supposed to become this brand-new, nice, calm, hit-singing person." He laughs that rumbling laugh again. "But I can guarantee you that just never has happened with us. In fact, we played a couple of clubs on this last run where we really showed our ass!"

Even if the Texas dance hall cowboys greeted The Possum Eatin' Cowboys' music with brickbats, beer bottles and derision, the band's high-energy, good-hearted irreverence went over like gangbusters in southeast Texas' college bars. Eventually Supernaw and The Cowboys attracted the attention of his first label, BNA Records,

which had sent scouts to Texas, looking for new acts to sign.

Listening to Supernaw's casual portrayal of his long history of musical rowdiness, it's easy to overlook what's apparent on both of his BNA releases, *Red and Rio Grande* and *Deep Thoughts from a Shallow Mind*. The title of the latter album sort of says it all: Supernaw co-wrote a half dozen of the songs on *Deep Thoughts* (which, incidentally, also includes a delightful tongue-in-cheek revival of the old Steve Goodman/David Allan Coe hit, "You Never Even Call Me by My Name," featuring guest vocals from Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings, Charley Pride and Coe). As a song-

writer, he, more often than not, tends toward introspective themes, seemingly at variance with his occasionally outrageous stage persona.

"This isn't an album to put in the tape deck when you're heading to the bar with your buddies," Supernaw notes of *Deep Thoughts from a Shallow Mind*. "It's what you'd want to listen to during more quiet, contemplative times—times when you can listen to what the songs are saying."

Last month, Supernaw released *You Still*

Got Me, his third album, and his first for Giant Records. Richard Landis, head of A&R at Giant Records/Nashville, who produced the singer's first two albums, also produced this one. Here Supernaw co-wrote three of the 11 cuts. He says that *You Still Got Me* is "probably best described as the album where I learned to compromise. When you work with such great talents as Richard Landis and James Stroud"—Giant Records/Nashville president—"you have to pay attention. There are songs on this album that I truly love, and songs on this album that are okay in my mind, but I've learned that different people like different things. It might be a real step for me to release an album that has more collaborative effort in it than my first two."

He is also happy at the new label, citing that "things are great at Giant Records." He goes on to say, "Giant knew what they were getting when they signed me, the good stuff and the bad. Oh sure, they shake their heads a lot at some of the things I do and say, but it's in an accepting kind of way. It feels so good to be accepted for who I am and respected for what me and my band have built. I hope that this album will make us all very happy."



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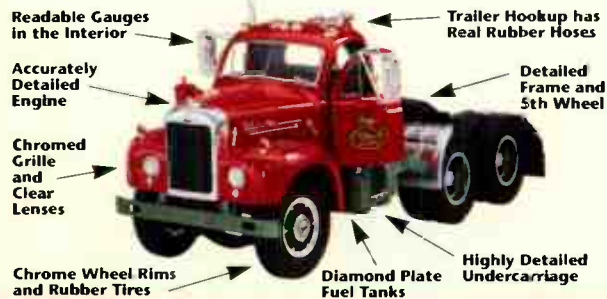
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COUNTRY MUSIC

HIGHWAYMEN LIVE

On the Road Again - 60 mins.

Cash, Nelson, Kristofferson and Jennings are together on this European Tour. You'll meet them backstage, talking candidly about their lives and their music. Then you'll see them on stage from the opening bars of their theme song, "Highwayman," until the final chord of "On the Road Again." Item No. V2S - \$14.95

MARTY ROBBINS & ERNEST TUBB

- 60 mins.

Catch these two legends in the early days of their careers. There are 26 songs including "Walkin' the Floor Over You," "Singin' the Blues," "So Many Times," "Time Goes By," "So Doggone Lonesome," "Tomorrow Never Comes," "I Can't Quit," "Pretty Words," "They'll Do It Every Time" AND MORE! Item No. V2G - Was \$39.95 - NOW \$29.95

THE OSBORNE BROTHERS

In Concert - 42 mins.

Taped on August 6, 1992, at the barn in Renfro Valley, Kentucky, this video features nine songs including "Fastest Grass Alive," "Doin' My Time," "Me and My Old Banjo," "Foggy Mountain Rock," "Kentucky," "Rocky Top," "Bluegrass Melodies" and a medley of "My Favorite Memory," "You Win Again" and "Today I Started Lovin' You Again." Item No. V7G - \$29.95



LORRIE MORGAN (NEW)

War Paint - 31 mins.

This new release features both her #1 video hits "Something in Red" and "Watch Me." It also features "I Guess You Had To Be There," "Half Enough," "My Favorite Things," "My Night To Howl" and "If You Came Back From Heaven." Item No. V2Y - \$16.95

COLORADO COWBOY (NEW)

The Bruce Ford Story - 78 mins.

Hailed as one of the greatest films about rodeo ever made, this is the story of five-time world champion bareback rider Bruce Ford with music by Bob Wills, Johnny Horton, Doc and Merle Watson, Chris L. Doux, The Judds and others. Item No. V3S - \$29.95

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON

Kris Kristofferson - 90 mins.

Here is the extraordinary career and life of the actor, songwriter and performer. It includes interviews with such notables as Willie Nelson, Dennis Hopper and Johnny Cash and features such songs as "Me and Bobby McGee," "Sunday Morning Coming Down," "The Pilgrim," "Beat the Devil" AND LOTS MORE! Item No. V6H - \$19.95

COUNTRY ON BROADWAY

Filed in New York - 96 mins.

See Hank Williams in his only filmed appearance, uncut. Enjoy 30 full songs by Hank and headliners like George Jones, Hank Snow and Porter Wagoner. Includes: Hank Sr. - "Hey Good Looking"/George Jones - "White Lightning"/Hank Snow - "Moving On"/Porter Wagoner - "Satisfied Mind" AND MORE! Item No. G8F - \$39.95

COUNTRY OUTLAWS

LIVE (NEW) - 23 mins.

Here is a rare look at eight of country music's best, live in concert, with such hits as "I Always Get Lucky With You"/George Jones, "Louisiana Saturday Night"/Porter Wagoner, "You're Out Doin' (What I'm Here Doin' Without)/Gene Watson, "Behind Closed Doors"/Charlie Rich, "It's a Cheatin' Situation"/Moe Bandy, "Don't The Girls All Get Prettier at Closing Time"/Mickey Gilley AND MORE! Item No. V3W - \$14.95

HAL KETCHUM (NEW)

Past The Point of Rescue - 24 mins.

Don't miss Hal Ketchum's latest video release featuring "Small Town Saturday Night," "I Know Where Love Lives," "Past the Point of Rescue" and a live performance of "Some Place Far Away" plus interview footage. Item No. V4Z - \$14.95

TIM MCGRAW

An Hour With Tim - 60 mins.

Here are interviews, behind the scenes footage and background information, plus all five videos from *Not a Moment Too Soon* including "Refried Dreams." Item No. V7R - \$19.95

TIM MCGRAW (NEW)

Indian Outlaw - 17 mins.

Tim's fans won't want to miss this newest release either. It features three versions of "Indian Outlaw" including the original, extended dance and instrumental dance. There's also "Welcome to the Club" and "Memory Lane." Item No. V5A - \$14.95

HANK WILLIAMS

Hank Williams Tradition - 60 mins.

In the *Hank Williams Tradition* traces Hank's life story through rare film clips, music and revealing interviews with friends and fellow performers such as Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl and Chet Atkins. Included are performances of many of Hank's greatest songs by today's top country artists, who also tell how Hank inspired their careers. There are also five hit songs performed by Hank himself. Item No. V2M - \$19.95

HANK WILLIAMS SR.

The Show He

Never Gave - 86 mins.

This movie permits the haunted singer to play one final show, during which all his fears and passions—all his genius—tumble out for us to see. "Sneezzy" Waters plays the self-destructive superstar and admirably performs 23 songs. Adding to the authenticity of the project is the audience of supporting characters who populate the mythical roadhouse where Hank confronts his life, just as it is ending. Item No. V2L - \$19.95

BILL MONROE

Father of Bluegrass - 90 mins.

With the cooperation of Bill Monroe, ex-Blue Grass Boys and other performers he influenced, this documentary clearly defines Bill Monroe's unique role in American music. It covers his early years in Kentucky with great footage. The era of The Monroe Brothers, his early years on the Opry, the Flatt-Scruggs-Wise version of The Bluegrass Boys—all are covered. Item No. V2K - \$19.95

HUNKS WITH HATS (NEW)

G. Books, A. Jackson, C. Black - 30 mins.

Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson and Clint Black, three of country music's biggest headliners give you a rare look at what they're all about. They reveal their innermost feelings about their music, lives, families and fans. It is not often that you get a chance to get this close to a reigning star. Item No. V5K - \$19.95

REBA MCENTIRE

In Concert - 71 mins.

Enjoy all the excitement and charisma of Reba McEntire on stage. Included are "Love Will Find Its Way to You," "Can't Even Get the Blues," "Somebody Should Leave," "One Promise Too Late," "Let the Music Lift You Up," "Whoever's in New England," "Sweet Dreams," "You Lie," "Cathy's Clown," "Oklahoma Swing," "Rumor Has It" AND MORE! Item No. V3E - \$19.95

NEAL MCCOY

You Gotta Love - 45 mins.

This young star's career really took off with his RIAA gold *No Doubt About It*, which yielded two Number One country singles (the title track and "Wink") and the top five "The City Put the Country Back in Me." This video includes "You Gotta Love," "For a Change," "Y-O-U," "Plain Jane," "If I Was a Drinkin' Man" and six more. Item No. V4N - \$19.95



GEORGE JONES

Same Ole Me - 60 mins.

They call him "Possum." They also call him "Country Music's Living Legend." *Same Ole Me* is the story of George Jones, finally told his way with the help of such great stars as Roy Acuff, Loretta Lynn and Johnny Cash. It includes hits like "He Stopped Loving Her Today," "Bartender's Blues," "The Race Is On," "She Thinks I Still Care," "White Lightning," "Why Baby Why?" and "Some Day My Day Will Come." Item No. G4Z - \$19.95

GEORGE JONES

Live in Tennessee - 54 mins.

Taped live from the Knoxville Civic Coliseum, you'll see George thrill the audience with 15 of his biggest hits including "I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair" and the #1 country song of all time, "He Stopped Loving Her Today." There's also "The Race Is On," "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?" "Bartender's Blues," "One Woman Man" AND 7 MORE! Item No. V1X - \$24.95

MERLE HAGGARD

The Best of - 60 mins.

"I have selected some of my favorite songs for this video...and I hope they will be your favorites too."—Merle Haggard. You'll be the judge: "My Favorite Memory," "Mama's Hungry Eyes," "Today I Started Loving You Again," "When Times Were Good," "Okie from Muskogee" AND 12 MORE! Item No. G3F - \$19.95

WAYLON JENNINGS

Waylon - 60 mins.

From his early days as Buddy Holly's protege to his battles with the Nashville system, good times and bad, *Waylon: Renegade, Outlaw, Legend* features never-before-seen footage and over 20 songs and performances. Songs include "Honky Tonk Heroes," "Good Hearted Woman," "Luchembach, Texas" and "Amanda." Item No. V3Q - \$29.95

GARTH BROOKS

Live TV Special - 85 mins.

Here is Garth's first NBC special complete with additional interview and backstage footage. There are 15 hit songs, including "Not Counting You," "Two of a Kind," "The Dance," "Rodeo," "We Bury the Hatchet," "The Thunder Rolls," "The River," "Papa Loved Mama," "Friends in Low Places" AND MORE! Item No. V311 - \$29.95

LORETTA LYNN

Honky Tonk Girl - 60 mins.

Here is a lively and personal portrait of Loretta Lynn, an entertainer who has truly lived the American Dream. You'll follow Loretta from rural Kentucky to the clubs of the Northwest, from her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry to the 1970's Country Music Entertainer of the Decade. This acclaimed video features rare never-before-seen home movies and photos and over 20 classic songs and performances. There are also guest appearances by Conway Twitty, Minnie Pearl and others. Item No. V8A - \$24.95

COUNTRY MUSIC STARS IN THE MOVIES - Three Movie Video Releases - Each at a Special Low Price!

The Gambler Returns:

The Luck of the Draw

This 180-minute movie stars Kenny Rogers, Reba McEntire and Rick Kossovich. Hawkes, Jones and Cassidy are on their way to the biggest game in history, but a few folks want to see them fold before they arrive. Heroes and villains, sharpshooters and card sharks. Fistfights, shootouts, dusty trails and wild saloons. That's right. The Gambler's back! Item No. V7O - \$14.95

Rio Diablo

This 93-minute movie also stars Kenny Rogers along with Travis Tritt and Naomi Judd. They team up with Stacy Keach to bring you a classic action-packed Western. One's out for blood, the other's out for money. Together, they're in for an unforgettable adventure you won't want to miss. Item No. V7P - \$14.95

Pure Country

After 25 chart-topping hits, the singing star has become a movie star! George Strait makes his film debut in this entertaining look into the heart and soul of country music from *Young Guns* director Christopher Cain. This 113-minute full-length movie is every bit as good as the critics claim. Item No. V5V - \$25.95



MARTY ROBBINS

Super Legend - 120 mins.

Here is the best-selling home video on Marty Robbins ever released. And it's no wonder when you consider that it features 18 performances including "El Paso," "White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Ribbon of Darkness," "Don't Worry 'Bout Me," "This Time You Gave Me a Mountain" plus Marty's Grammy-winning song, "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife." It also includes rare appearances from early television shows and movies. Item No. G2A - \$39.95

VIDEO BONANZA

DWIGHT YOAKAM

Just Lookin' for a Hit - 30 mins.
Dwight's first video features "Honky Tonk Man," "Guitars, Cadillacs," "Streets of Bakersfield," "Long White Cadillac" and more. There's an interview and performance footage from the I.R.S. label production "The Cutting Edge." Item No. G1E - \$19.95

DWIGHT YOAKAM

Pieces of Time - 40 mins.
Dwight's latest video features eleven songs, including "Suspicious Minds," "The Heart That You Own," "Turn It on, Turn It up, Turn Me Loose," "Takes a Lot to Rock You," "You're the One," "Ain't That Lonely Yet" AND MORE! Item No. V9P - \$19.95

RICKY VAN SHELTON

To Be Continued... - 35 mins.
To Be Continued... features many of Ricky's early videos plus two live performances and an interview. Included are "Crime of Passion," "Life Turned Her That Way," "I'll Leave This World Loving You," "Hole in My Pocket" (Live), "Living Proof" (Live) AND MORE! Item No. G5W - \$24.95

PORTER WAGONER

Life and Legend - 60 mins.
This video opens Porter's life to you on a personal level seldom seen in documentaries. He talks about his ups and downs, his struggles and triumphs, his laughter and tears. He talks frankly about his relationship with Dolly Parton. And he shares anecdotes from his life on the road that will make you laugh as you watch. Item No. V2Q - \$19.95

SUPERSTAR COUNTRY VIDEOS (NEW) - 28 mins.

Don't miss this multi-artist home video featuring: "No One Else On Earth"/Wynonna Judd, "Are The Good Times Really Over"/Merle Haggard, "Help Me Make It Through The Night"/Ray Stevens, "Cafe on the Corner"/Sawyer Brown, "All My Rowdy Friends Are Comin' Over Tonight"/Hank Williams, Jr., "Mama Knows The Highway"/Hal Ketchum AND MORE! Item No. V5Z - \$14.95



RANDY TRAVIS

This Is Me - 40 mins.
This is Randy Travis' newest home video release and it's a must for every fan. It features eight of his best hit songs including "Heroes and Friends," "Better Class of Losers," "If I Didn't Have You," "Look Heart, No Hands," "An Old Pair of Shoes," "Cowboy Boogie," "Wind in the Wire" and "Before You Kill Us All." Item No. V9T - \$19.95

ERNEST TUBB

Thanks Troubadour - 62 mins.
Here's the story of "America's Troubadour," from his birth in depression-era Texas, the early influence of Jimmie Rodgers, the first recording sessions and early radio shows, to the Grand Ole Opry. This unique video features classic performances and his top hits. Told by Skeeter Davis and others whose lives he touched. Item No. V2N - \$19.95

BILLY RAY CYRUS

Oae on One - 25 mins.
If you are a Billy Ray fan you won't want to miss this video. It gives you an inside look at the artist and offers insight into the everyday life of Billy Ray. You'll get exclusive private footage, clips from concert tours, plenty of songs and more! Item No. V4L - \$14.95

LAST MINUTE ADDITIONS!



JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

Life's A Dance (NEW BOOK)
Journalists Paul Prather takes you along on John Michael's astounding rise, from a childhood on the wrong side of the tracks to years of paying dues as a barroom picker to an incredible surge to fame. This book includes over 100 photos, including never-published, behind-the-scenes shots of John Michael as a toddler, a teenager, a blond-haired young singer looking for a hit, and a national heartthrob. Item No. B2V - \$14.95

1996 PHOTO CALENDAR (NEW)
John Michael's fans are going to love this fabulous new 1996 Calendar. It's not out yet so we don't have a cover to show you but it will feature twelve great photos and it comes to you from Landmark, the leader when it comes to high quality calendars. Item No. G6G - \$10.99

VINCE GILL

I Still Believe in You - 24 mins.
Recently named 1994 CMA Entertainer of the Year, Vince Gill has joined the esteemed ranks as one of country music's premier entertainers. Here's your chance to enjoy this popular star on his only home video performing: "When I Call Your Name," "Never Knew Lonely," "Pocket Full of Gold," "Liza Jane," "Look at Us" and "I Still Believe in You." Item No. V1M - \$19.95

TAMMY WYNETTE

In Concert - 60 mins.
This re-release is the only Tammy Wynette video available. It features 24 hits including the classic "Stand By Your Man" and "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," "Take Me to Your World," "Til I Can Make It on My Own," "I Don't Want to Play House," "Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad" and 18 more. Item No. G1F - \$19.95

TRAVIS TRITT

10 Feet Tall... - 40 mins.
Travis' brand new video features nine songs including "t-r-o-u-b-l-e," "The Whiskey Ain't Workin'," "Outlaws Like Us," "Foolish Pride," "Take It Easy," "Anymore," "Lord Have Mercy on the Working Man," "Can I Trust You With My Heart" and "Ten Feet Tall and Bulletproof." Item No. V3W - \$19.95

MINNIE PEARL

The Life and Legend - 60 mins.
This is the only authorized life story video of Sarah Ophelia Cannon. Never before has her story been told in such remarkable detail with hilarious excerpts from her best performances. The story of her childhood and her harrowing experiences on the road are truly astounding. Item No. V2O - \$19.95

JIM REEVES

Golden Memories - 50 mins.
Here are some of Jim's biggest hits in a never before released collection of his most memorable television performances. Each song is performed in its entirety. This video is the most requested item by Jim Reeves fans and collectors. Item No. V4G - \$29.95

JIM REEVES

The Story of a Legend - 50 mins.
This is the Jim Reeves story from his deep rural roots and his years as an aspiring baseball player, to his years as one of the most universally popular singers of the late 50's and early 60's. This program also features Jim singing hit songs like "Four Walls," "Am I Losing You," "He'll Have to Go" and "Welcome to My World." Item No. V2P - \$19.95

HEARTWORN HIGHWAYS (NEW) - 92 mins.

This acclaimed documentary of the down home, sometimes chaotic scene around Austin and Nashville in 1975, is a haunting and heart-felt view of the daily lives of a group of legendary country music performers. From recording sessions and concerts, to the bars and kitchen table jam sessions, the camera unobtrusively captures performances by The Charlie Daniels Band, Steve Young, Larry Jon Wilson, Rodney Crowell and Steve Young. Also featured are David Allan Coe, Guy Clark and others. Item No. V6F - \$24.95

THE STATLER BROS.

What We Love To Do - 40 mins.
Celebrating their 30th anniversary this year, this is their first video release in over a decade. It features "Elizabeth," "My Only Love," "What We Love to Do," "Atlanta Blue," "Maple Street Memories," "Sweeter & Sweeter," "You've Been Like a Mother to Me," "Let's Get Started" AND MUCH MORE! Item No. V6A - \$19.95



ALAN JACKSON (NEW)

Linin', Lovin', And Rockin' That Jukebox - 28 mins.
Here are seven #1 videos from two Double Platinum albums including "Don't Rock The Jailhouse," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "She's Got The Rhythm (And I Got The Blues)," "Tonight I Climbed The Wall," "Chatahoochee" and "Mercury Blues." Also included is candid footage never before available. Item No. V6K - \$19.95

MARTY STUART (NEW)

Hillbilly Rock - 25 mins.
Marty's new home video features six songs including "Cry, Cry, Cry," "Hillbilly Rock," "Little Things," "Temped," "Now That's Country," "Hey Baby," and "Kiss Me, I'm Gone." Item No. V6M - \$14.95

SHEB WOOLEY/BEN COLDER

Greatest Hits - 60 mins.
Here is classic country humor from one of the best, including "Shakey Breaky Car," "Fifteen Beers Ago," "Almost Persuaded," "Running Bare," "Hello Walls," "Purple People Eater," "Folsom Prison Blues," and "That's My Pa." Item No. V8S - \$19.95

WEBB PIERCE

Greatest Hits - 52 mins.
Shortly before his death Webb personally created, from rare filmed performances, a compilation of his greatest hits, narrating and providing background on the songs, their writers and their origins. This program contains 17 of Webb's greatest hits including "Wandering," "More and More" and "There Stands the Glass." Item No. V2R - \$19.95

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TOP 25

Singles

1. Tim McGraw *I Like It I Love It*
2. Tracy Lawrence *If the World Had a Front Porch*
3. Collin Raye *One Boy, One Girl*
4. Garth Brooks *She's Every Woman*
5. Terri Clark *Better Things to Do*
6. Patty Loveless *Halfway Down*
7. Blackhawk *I'm Not Strong Enough to Say No*
8. Faith Hill *Let's Go to Vegas*
9. John Berry *I Think About It All the Time*
10. David Lee Murphy *Dust on the Bottle*
11. Wade Hayes *Don't Stop*
12. John Michael Montgomery *No Man's Land*
13. Sawyer Brown *(This Thing Called) Wantin' and Havin' It All*
14. Martina McBride *Safe in the Arms of Love*
15. Kenny Chesney *All I Need to Know*
16. Travis Tritt *Sometimes She Forgets*
17. Trisha Yearwood *I Wanna Go too Far*
18. Daryle Singletary *I Let Her Lie*
19. Shania Twain *The Woman in Me (Needs the Man in You)*
20. Ty England *Should've Asked Her Faster*
21. Clint Black *One Emotion*
22. Neal McCoy *If I Was a Drinkin' Man*
23. George Strait *Check Yes or No*
24. Reba McEntire *On My Own*
25. Brooks & Dunn *Whiskey Under the Bridge*

Albums

1. Tim McGraw *All I Want*
2. Shania Twain *The Woman in Me*
3. Jeff Foxworthy *Games Rednecks Play*
4. Travis Tritt *Greatest Hits—From the Beginning*
5. Blackhawk *Strong Enough*
6. Garth Brooks *The Hits*
7. John Michael Montgomery *John Michael Montgomery*
8. Collin Raye *I Think About You*
9. Faith Hill *It Matters to Me*
10. Alison Krauss *Now That I've Found You: A Collection*
11. George Strait *Strait Out of the Box*
12. David Lee Murphy *Out With a Bang*
13. Tim McGraw *Not a Moment Too Soon*
14. Lorrie Morgan *Greatest Hits*
15. Jeff Foxworthy *You Might Be a Redneck If...*
16. Dolly Parton *Something Special*
17. Sawyer Brown *This Thing Called Wantin' and Havin' It All*
18. Vince Gill *When Love Finds You*
19. Sammy Kershaw *The Hits: Chapter 1*
20. Perfect Stranger *You Have the Right to Remain Silent*
21. Tracy Byrd *Love Lessons*
22. Alabama *In Pictures*
23. Brooks & Dunn *Waitin' on Sundown*
24. Tracy Lawrence *Tracy Lawrence Live*
25. Reba McEntire *Read My Mind*

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Figurine Collection
by Priscilla Hillman



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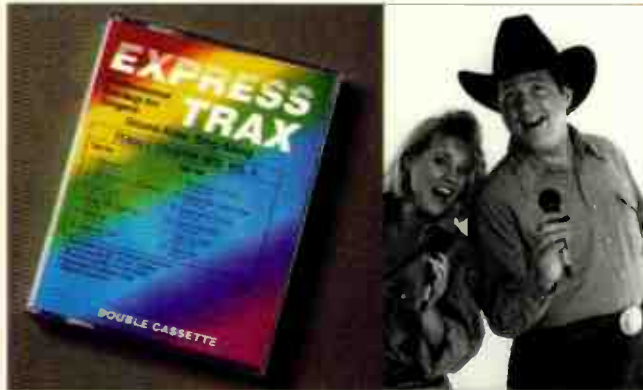
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EDITOR'S CHOICE



SING ALONG COUNTRY MUSIC TAPES

Step into the country music spotlight with the *Express Trax Sing-a-Long* tapes. These high quality, chrome tapes are recorded by top studio musicians in the songs' original keys. The background band plays real instruments, no synthesizers! One side of the tape is all instrumental, the other side both instruments and vocals. One of the brand new releases, **Package #131** (country male hits), includes: "I Can Love You Like That," "I Swear," "I Love the Way You Love Me"/John Michael Montgomery, "Man in Love With You," "I Cross My Heart"/George Strait, "Forever's as Far as I'll Go"/Alabama, "My Love"/Little Texas and **FIVE MORE!** The other new release, **Package 143** (country music female hits), includes: "I Didn't Know My Own Strength"/Lorrie Morgan, "And Still," "Til You Love Me"/Reba McEntire, "Between the Two of

Them"/Tanya Tucker, "I Try to Think About Elvis"/Patty Loveless, "Any Man of Mine," "Whose Bed Has Your Boots"/Shania Twain, "Let's Go to Vegas," "Take Me as I Am"/Faith Hill and **THREE MORE!** Don't miss those original Express Trax bestsellers either! **Package #17** (more country music male hits) includes: "Shameless"/Garth Brooks, "Dallas"/

Alan Jackson, "Born Country"/Alabama, "Forever Together"/Randy Travis, "Lovin' Blind"/Clint Black, "Keep It Between the Lines"/Ricky Van Shelton, "Anymore," "Here's a Quarter (Call Someone Who Cares)"/Travis Tritt, "Look at Us"/Vince Gill, "Somewhere in My Heart"/Billy Dean and **TWO MORE!** **Package #29** (more country music female hits) includes "Except for Monday"/Lorrie Morgan, "Is There Life Out There"/Reba McEntire, "Eagle When She Flies"/Dolly Parton, "What Do I Do With Me"/Tanya Tucker, "She Is His Only Need"/Wynonna Judd, "Down at The Twist & Shout"/Mary-Chapin Carpenter, "I Can't Make You Love Me"/Bonnie Raitt, "Jealous Bone"/Patty Loveless and **FOUR MORE!** Order by package number, #PKG131, #PKG143, #PKG17 and #PKG29, \$19.95 each. Order any two and pay just \$37.90—**SAVE \$2.00!**



THE I LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC CAP

The "I Love Country Music" baseball cap comes in navy blue with a guitar and banjo design in puffed white. It has a foam lining and mesh in the back for ventilation. One size fits all. Ask for Item #G2N, \$8.95.



THE COUNTRY MUSIC WATCH

This 24-karat, gold-layered watch contains a genuine diamond chip. The logo is gold on a black background. Ask for #G4L, \$19.95.

CHET ATKINS VIDEO INSTRUCTION COURSE: GET STARTED ON GUITAR



Here is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn to play the guitar (or sharpen your existing skills) with one of the grandmasters of guitar pickin'. With the acclaimed Chet Atkins Instruction Course, *Get Started on Guitar*, beginners can have fun learning the basics, and advanced players will discover a goldmine of helpful hints and ideas. The set includes a one-hour video cassette, a 112-

page instruction book and a 40-minute audio cassette—all three components cross-referenced to each other and packaged in a sturdy plastic case for convenient carrying and access. The instruction book will guide you through the music Chet plays in the video. Each tune has its own chapter complete with advanced tips and basic information. There are also special easy-to-read reference sections

titled "Playing Chords," "Finger-Picking Chords," "Playing Melodies" and "Playing by Ear." The video shows split-screen close-ups so you can see exactly how the techniques are done. You receive the video, audio cassette, instruction booklet and the binder case all for only \$69.95. It's a great gift idea. When ordering ask for Item #B2G.



THE COUNTRY MUSIC BELT BUCKLES

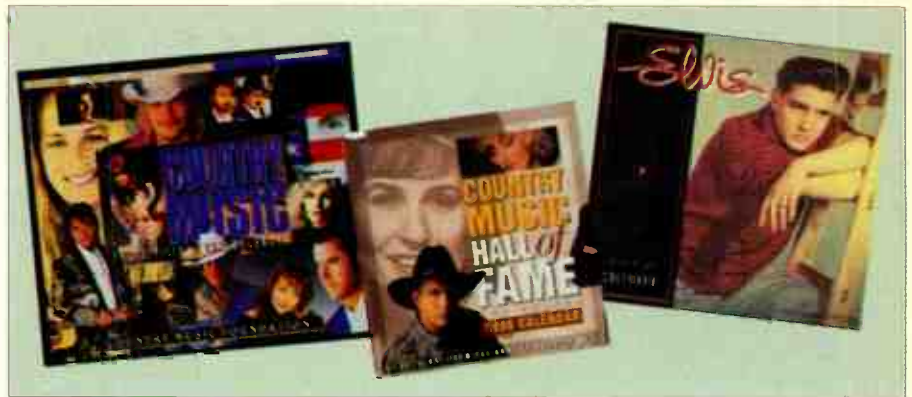
These buckles are made of high-quality pewter. The "I Love Country Music" features two small fiddles with the words enameled in red, white and blue. The "Country Music" buckle features a fiddle and banjo inlaid over a USA outline. The "I Love" buckle is #G6J, "Country Music" is #G7L. Each is \$9.95; buy both for \$17.90.



Nashville Warehouse Country Christmas

VERNON DALHART ON FOUR SEPARATE ALBUMS!

Vernon Dalhart was the first million-selling country music artist. The only Dalhart music available now is on this series of four cassettes. The first, *Ballads and Railroad Songs* (#OHCS129), has 18 recordings including: "The Little Green Valley," "Jim Blake," "Wanderin'" and more. The second album, *On the Lighter Side, Early Country Comedy Songs with Novelty Accompaniment* (#OHCS166), also has 18 songs. Included are: "The Farm Relief Song," "The Crow Song," "The Mule Song" and more. The third in this collection, *The Wreck of the Old 97 and Other Early Country Hits* (#OHCS167), contains 18 of Dalhart's best-known songs such as "Little Marian Parker" and the million-selling "Prisoner's Song." Finally, there's *That Good Old Country Town* (#OHCS198). This album, also with 18 songs, features backing from Carson Robison and such songs as "My Blue Ridge Mountain Home" and "Golden Slippers." Each album is \$9.98. Buy all 4 and take \$3.00 off. Cassette only.



HOT NEW CALENDARS FOR 1996!

First, there's the always popular, official 1996 **Elvis Presley Wall Calendar**, featuring twelve high-gloss photos of "The King." Each picture measures 12" x 12", and the entire calendar opens to a big 12" x 24". Ask for Item #G6F for only \$10.99. Next, we're offering the all new **Country Music Hall of Fame Day-By-Day Desktop Calendar** with fascinating country music trivia for each day of the new year. That's Item #G1H, \$9.95. And finally there's the official **Country Music Foundation Wall Calendar** with color photos of stars like George Strait, Alan Jackson and Garth Brooks. Ask for Item #G1B, \$8.95.

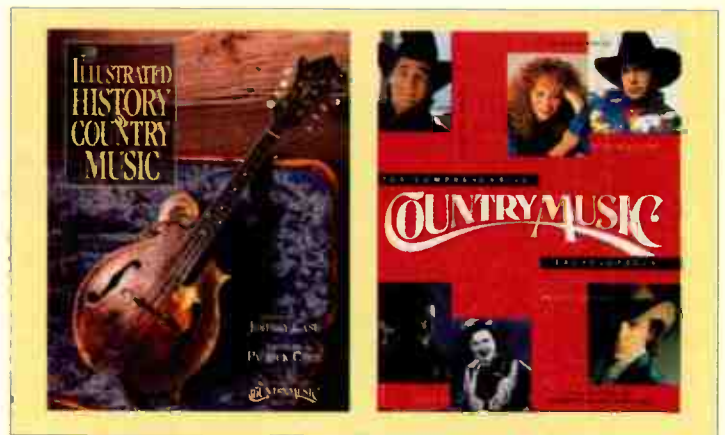
NEW TWO ALBUM SET! BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

Fans of those great old Western classics won't want to miss this ultimate 28-song collection featuring Gene Autry, Ken Maynard, Patsy Montana, Sons of the Pioneers, Bob Wills & The Texas Playboys, Jimmie Rodgers and others. Just some of the classic songs included are "The Old Chisholm Trail," "Streets of Laredo," "The Dying Cowboy," "Whoopee-Ti-Yi-Yo," "A-Ridin' Old Paint," "Back in the Saddle Again," "Cowboy Song," "Rusty Spurs," "Cowboy Stomp," "Strawberry Roan" and "Cattle Call." There's also a fascinating insert that discusses each song as well as the cowboy phenomenon. Cassette #CA803144, \$24.95; CD #CD803144, \$34.95.



PRE-PUBLICATION SPECIAL! COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE'S OWN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF COUNTRY MUSIC

This highly-anticipated edition is an unparalleled look at country music—the music of America's rural working people. And who better to tell this colorful story than the people who have brought you America's favorite country music magazine for over 20 years? With over 650 photographs, some rare and never seen, some so familiar they've become classics, this account traces the music from its origins through to its present blossoming into a billion-dollar industry. The Editors of *Country Music Magazine* bring to life the voices, sounds and feelings evoked by the music of each era, from the Great Depression through the World War II boom to the Nashville Sound. They revisit the folk revival of the 60's, the Outlaw movement, the Urban Cowboy craze and beyond. Hundreds of artists are here, from The Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, Porter Wagoner and Hank Snow, to today's stars like Dwight Yoakam and Garth Brooks. In the foreword Johnny Cash says, "To me, *The Illustrated History* is a valuable document. Through it I touch my roots and, in doing so, find a strong kinship with the minstrels and troubadours of old." This brand new volume is absolutely essential for any fan of country music, whether their taste runs to the traditional or today's modern country sound. Reserve your copy now and **YOU SAVE OVER 10%**. Pay \$19.85, Item #B2T.

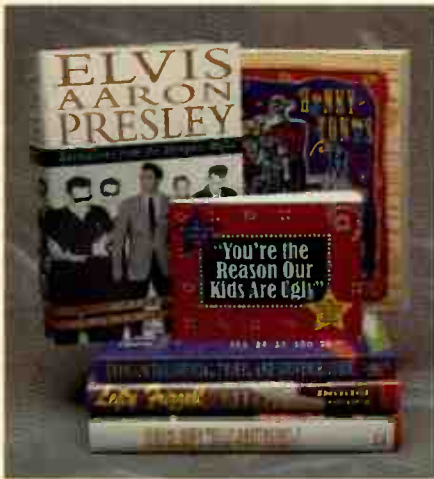


AND DON'T MISS OUR BESTSELLING ENCYCLOPEDIA!

Also published by the Editors of *Country Music Magazine*, the *Comprehensive Country Music Encyclopedia* is the best country music reference you'll find anywhere. This bestselling answer book gives you over 600 alphabetically arranged entries—from Acuff to Zydeco—covering the people, places and events that have made country music what it is today. With more than 600 photographs, this hardcover edition usually sells for \$25.00. You pay just \$21.95. You **SAVE OVER \$3.00!** Item #B1S.



Nashville Warehouse Country Christmas



THE COUNTRY MUSIC BOOK CORNER

Elvis Aaron Presley: Revelations from the Memphis Mafia

Billy Smith, Marty Lacker and Lamar Fike, Mafia insiders interviewed for this book, were not just Elvis' closest friends, they were protectors and rescuers. They were with Elvis from his teens to his last day and they tell all, most of it never on record. Hardcover, illustrated. Item #B8F, \$25.

NEW! Honky Tonks

Here is a colorful history of Honky Tonks as well as a comprehensive directory of these country clubs—right down to what to wear, house etiquette, dance styles and everything in between. Item #B1X, \$15.

NEW! You're the Reason Our Kids Are Ugly

...and other gems of country music wisdom can be found in this collection of the best song titles, lyrics and quotes from such country music greats as Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Naomi Judd and George Jones. Item #B1Y, \$7.50.

NEW! Branson: The First Official Travel and Souvenir Guide

This guide helps visitors plan their trip, zero in on the shows that interest them most and navigate the area (and traffic). The heart of the guide is devoted to the theaters and their stars, but the guide is also a complete souvenir book including interviews with the top stars. Item #B1Z, \$16.

Lefty Frizzell: The Honky Tonk Life...

Lefty Frizzell, like Hank Williams, was one of country music's greats. While Williams died young, Frizzell survived the wild honky tonk lifestyle with excesses that accompany life on the road. Even when his career seemed headed for decline, new hits managed to bring him back on top. This biography is the first to trace Frizzell's life and career. Item No. B4I, \$22.95.

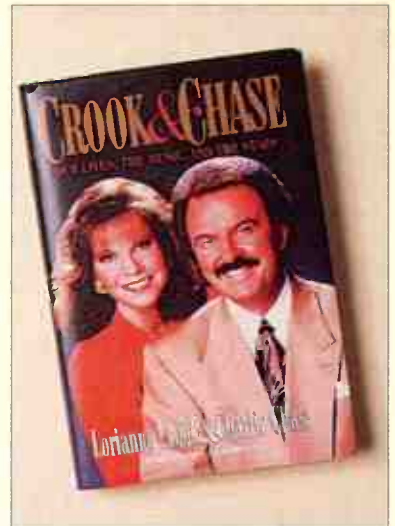
George Jones: Life and Times of a Honky Tonk Legend

This recently revised book explores all sides of this complex man. It brings you up to date as Jones marries his current wife, stays clean and sober, and achieves the status of Grand Old Man of country music. Hardcover, illustrated. Item #B2Y, \$19.95.

NEW BOOK RELEASE!

CROOK AND CHASE: OUR LIVES, THE MUSIC, AND STARS

Lorianne and Charlie, the popular and controversial former hosts of *Music City Tonight*, The Nashville Network's nightly prime-time show, talk about their careers and share their favorite anecdotes about the biggest stars in country music. Following in the tradition of such bestsellers as Ralph Emery's *Memories*, and the Reba and Dolly autobiographies, *Crook and Chase* is a first-hand look at the most popular music in the world by way of up-close and personal stories about Vince Gill, Wynonna, Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire, Billy Ray Cyrus, and the many country stars who regularly appeared with Crook and Chase on the show. This is a book that country music fans and the millions of viewers of *Music City Tonight* will find of great interest. For Rich Kienzle's review, see page 79 of this issue. Hardcover, 6 1/8" x 9 1/4", two 8-page black and white photo inserts. Item #B7T, \$22.



Country Music's Finest Hour

"SECOND FIDDLE TO A STEEL GUITAR"



NEW VIDEO! SECOND FIDDLE TO A STEEL GUITAR—107 MIN.

Audrey Williams, widow of Hank Williams Sr., and entrepreneur Victor Lewis merged talents and interests to bring you *Second Fiddle to a Steel Guitar*. This rare production features 17 old-time artists and 30 of the best country songs including "Born to Lose,"

"Jambalaya," "Hello Walls," "Don't Let Me Cross Over" and "Two Worlds Collide." You'll see stars like Lefty Frizzell, Dottie West, Bill Monroe, Webb Pierce, Faron Young, Pete Drake, Homer and Jethro, Old Joe Clark, Little Jimmy Dickens and more. Minnie Pearl and others are shown in zany backstage antics between songs. Item V7E, only \$29.95.

TOOTSIES ORCHID LOUNGE—60 MIN.

Willie Nelson hosts this all-star program celebrating Nashville's famous Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, where a group of songwriters hung out together 30 years ago and penned some of America's most popular songs. Included is footage of Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, Mel Tillis, Ray Price and a host of others. Item V1N, \$19.95.

NEW VIDEO! LOUISIANA HAYRIDE—62 MIN.

During its heyday the *Louisiana Hayride* rivaled the *Grand Ole Opry* in the number of careers that it spawned. Hank Williams Jr. narrates this documentary, which explores the Shreveport, Louisiana, musical roots of some of country music's most venerable stars—such as Hank Williams Sr., Johnny Cash, Johnny Horton and George Jones. This unique program uses old photographs, film clips and live transcriptions of radio show recordings to tell its story. Item V8W, \$14.95.

COUNTRY MUSIC T-SHIRTS

The holiday season is the perfect time to get the widely recognized *Country Music* logo on a 100% cotton Champion t-shirt in navy blue or red. The logo is in white. Or pick our other bestselling "*I Love Country Music*" T-shirt. This navy blue shirt features a guitar and banjo with red and white lettering. They are \$10 each. For the *Country Music Logo T-shirt* in navy blue, ask for Item #G2P. For red, ask for Item #G2Q. The "*I Love Country Music*" is Item #G2O. Order sizes S, M, L, XL and now, XXL.

NEW! COUNTRY MUSIC KEY CHAIN

This new pewter and enamel accessory (not shown) has the same design and coloring as the popular pewter and enamel "Country Music" buckle advertised on page 60 of this issue. Ask for Item #G1K, \$5.95.





Nashville Warehouse Country Christmas



**FREE DOLLY ALBUM
WHEN YOU ORDER ANY
DOLLY PRODUCT!**

DOLLY PARTON DOLL

This replica of Dolly Parton stands one-and-a-half feet tall. She's wearing a red leatherette dress accented with gold and white lace. In her gold-toned belt is a red, ruby-like stone, and the whole ensemble is topped with a gold-tone necklace. Of course, it wouldn't be complete without Dolly's trademark big, beautiful blonde locks, decorated with a red lace bow. The Dolly Parton Doll makes a great gift for both young and old—plus it's an invaluable collector's item! And if you order right away, we'll give you an early Dolly album, *Just the Way I Am...* **FREE!** You'll receive this Dolly favorite on cassette. The Dolly Doll costs \$49.95, Item #D1A, and includes a stand. The **FREE** cassette is Item #R4A. When ordering, include both codes.

NEW VIDEOS!

THE WOMEN OF COUNTRY MUSIC

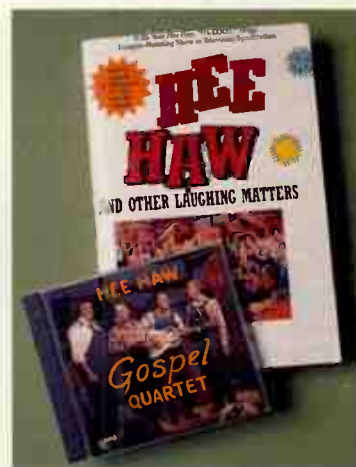
Celebrate country music's sisterhood with performances by today's top female artists and interviews with the legendary women who blazed the country trail. Filmed on location in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, this once-in-a-lifetime gathering is a veritable who's-who of *The Women of Country*. Each video is \$14.95. Order both for only \$27.90. **YOU SAVE \$2.00!**

VOLUME ONE—45 MIN.

Performances include: "He Thinks He'll Keep Her"/Mary Chapin Carpenter, "Hello Stranger"/Emmylou Harris, "Something in Red"/Lorrie Morgan, "It's a Little Too Late"/Tanya Tucker, "Nearest Distant Shore"/Trisha Yearwood, and **MORE!** Other artists featured include: The Carters, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Kitty Wells and a lot **MORE!** Ask for Item #V1Y.

VOLUME TWO—45 MIN.

Performances include: "Standing Knee Deep in a River"/Kathy Mattea, "Cryin' in the Rain"/Tammy Wynette, "It's Never Easy to Say Goodbye"/Wynonna Judd, "Hurt Me Bad"/Patty Loveless and **MORE!** Other artists featured include: Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton, Barbara Mandrell, Rose Maddox and a lot **MORE!** Ask for Item #V2Y.



BRAND NEW BOOK! HEE HAW AND OTHER LAUGHING MATTERS

Get the real story behind Roy Clark and Buck Owens, Minnie Pearl, Junior Samples, Grandpa Jones, Lulu Raman, The Wonder Dog, The Hee Haw Honeys, the music, the big-name guest stars, the jokes and more! Don't miss this 25-year tribute to the longest-running show in syndicated TV history. (Over 50 behind-the-scenes photos!) Item B4Z, \$15.

THE BEST OF THE HEE HAW GOSPEL QUARTET

Roy Clark, Buck Owens, Grandpa Jones and Kenny Price brought their good old-fashioned harmonies into millions of homes. This compilation of 24 of their most cherished songs includes such classics as "Dust on the Bible," "Love Lifted Me," "Amazing Grace" and "Shall We Gather at the River." Two LP's, Item HL3162; Two Cassettes, Item HC3162; or One CD, Item HD3162. Only \$11.95 each.

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TN residents add 8.25% Sales Tax/Canadian orders add \$3.00 extra.					
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Letters

Reba a Riot

Thanks so much for the outstanding Reba story. I loved it. I, and millions of others, think she's Number One. I'm a photographer, and I use her in many photos. She is by far the queen of country music. I've met her, and have her autograph. Ya know what? I consider country stars jewels. Reba, by far, is the most expensive one, does that make any sense to anyone? She's such a riot this year. Go, Reba, don't stop now. Thanks again for the great story and photos.

Tim McDaniel
Batavia, Ohio

One Up for Reba

Thank you so very much for the wonderful article on Reba McEntire while helping her celebrate her 20th year as an entertainer in your September/October 1995 edition. I am one of the biggest Reba fans around and collect absolutely everything. It is so great to see her finally get what she so truly deserves. Gorgeous cover—Great interview—Great magazine! Thank you again for helping me add to my collection.

Robyn Wood
Rockport, Indiana

Entertainer Forever

I'm writing to say "Thanks" for the beautiful coverage of Reba McEntire in your September/October issue. I must congratulate you on making the article truly unique. I thought that it would surely be like other articles I've read on Reba—a pleasure to read, but containing nothing I didn't already know. I'm Reba's biggest fan, and as a member of her fan club, and one who seeks any information I can find on her, it is truly unusual for me to run into an article like yours—one with interesting bits of information I didn't previously know. It was thrilling to read! I loved getting a sneak preview of her new album. Thanks so much for covering my "entertainer forever" so beautifully!

Elizabeth Mathews
Denver, Colorado

Reba Astray

In 1984, Reba McEntire recorded her landmark back-to-basics album, *My Kind of Country*, and became one of the most vocal critics of country music artists who tried to record crossover music and trick the fans into believing it was really country. Today, in 1995, Reba is guilty of trying to pull off the same sort of scam.



It is a shame that one of country music's most remarkable performers is wasting her incredible talent on the mediocre material that Reba has released during the past few years. Her current single, "On My Own," can make no claim to being country. Reba seems more concerned about making more money and winning more awards than she is about the quality of her music. In the pursuit of new fans, she has abandoned the true country fans who made her the star she is today.

Rob Horgan
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

George 'n' Tammy Down Under

I have just finished reading the July/August 1995 issue and have thoroughly enjoyed every bit of it, especially the George and Tammy story. I look forward to getting this magazine in the future.

Maureen Frazer
Sydney, Australia

Thrown to the Wolves

I would like to complain about the July/August 1995 issue. George Jones is quoted about new country music: "This so-called country is nothing but rock stuff for kids to dance by...and to hell with the older people that helped country music to get established to start with. They've thrown them to the wolves." By the looks of it, George didn't go to school to learn to spell worth a crap. "Thrown" is not in the dictionary. I think George may be throwing himself to the wolves! He is insulting to

the younger generation of country music. This is the 90's, for crying out loud, it's not the 70's and the 80's.

Shannon E. Wooten
Liecester, North Carolina
If George Jones says "thrown," we're proud to print it.—Ed.

George Jones Is Country Music

I really enjoyed reading your interviews with George and Tammy in the July/August issue of *Country Music*. I am 60 years old, and have talent for judging music, and more honky tonk experience than I care to mention. George Jones is country music. His combination of voice and unique style allows him to sing around, over, under and straight through a country song and into the heart of a genuine country music lover. To me, he's the greatest country singer of all time. If you love real country music, you gotta love George Jones.

Bob Carrigan
Blacksburg, South Carolina

George 'n' Paddy

Patrick Carr is to *Country Music Magazine* what George Jones is to country music itself. So the results of the July/August issue could hardly have been less than definitive. Many thanks!

Also, in reviewing the new Jerry Lee Lewis CD, Bob Allen refers to "It Was the Whiskey Talkin'" as "the old honky tonk chestnut" when it is, in fact, a relatively new song co-written by the album's producer, Andy Paley. Best to all!

Bill Randall
Los Angeles, California

Reba, Aaron, Joy 'n'...Garth

I just wanted to say thank you for your interviews with Reba, Aaron and Joy in your September/October issue. They were all great, and I love your magazine. But I have a request—could you please have an interview with Garth Brooks? I have his centerfold from November/December '94. But lately I haven't heard much.

Jestina Burgess
Rustburg, Virginia

Paddy 'n' Joy

I always enjoy reading whatever Patrick Carr writes. But the September/October article on Joy Lynn White was where I turned first. I'm a big time fan of Joy Lynn's too, so it's a stumper (and irritating!) as to why radio turns her music

away. I'm wondering if it isn't partly because she just doesn't fit the mold, either in dress or voice. No blouse cut down to there, or skirt up to there, and she's not blonde! She just gets up there and sings. Her music is in a different vein, too. It's fully from a woman's point of view. Or maybe it's like Marty Stuart says: "It takes a little longer to make it if you're different!"

Roxanne Johnston
Hibbing, Minnesota

Dial a Song from Aaron

Thank you, thank you, thank you, for the article on Aaron Tippin in the September/October issue. I'm a fan club member and very proud. I'm so proud I drive around with an "I love Aaron Tippin" bumper sticker on my car. My only gripe is the radio stations in my area play very little of Aaron. I've called and requested and requested yet no Aaron. They play the same people over and over. I've got nothing against the rest of the country music stars, but it just doesn't seem fair. All I can say is, all you Aaron fans call up and request more often. My 10-15 calls a day are not doing it. I need help and Aaron deserves it. He's great!

Cindy Ruffins
Spring, Texas

Cars for Kershaw Fans

How many more times is everyone who interviews Sammy Kershaw going to bring up the same old questions and comparisons to George Jones (July/August issue)? Anyone who has heard Sammy knows that he sometimes sounds like George, but he also has a sound all his own. If that question and comparison were currency and it were given to all his fans, we would all be driving Cadillacs.

Robyn Kimberling
Lewisville, Texas

Aggie Touts Trevino

I've never written a letter like this before, but after reading your article on Rick Trevino (July/August), I had to say thank you. Rick truly is one of today's hottest singers, and his distinct Tejano twang really makes him stand out. Thanks for giving this Texas Ag some long overdue praise. Some of us down here at Texas A&M have known for a long time how good he is. Thanks for telling everyone else.

Randy Keith
College Station, Texas

Doggone Dimples

Although I am a longtime subscriber to *Country Music Magazine*, I have not written before, for mostly everything was rather satisfactory. Then the September/October issue arrived with that terrible picture of John Michael Montgomery for centerfold. On one wall, I have pictures from the magazine, even though I am not a young fan. At age 67, I am hoping that I don't expire before my subscription, which

is paid until November 1999. JMM has such fantastic dimples, which do not show in this picture. It is the absolute worst you have ever printed and a disservice to him. It stays in the magazine, instead of in my "Rogues Gallery." Please do better next time.

Sara E. Janes
Cameron, West Virginia

McGraw 'n' JMM

I really enjoyed the 20 Questions with Tim McGraw in the July/August issue. Thanks a lot. But it would be really neat to see a centerfold on him. I'm a big fan of his, along with John Michael Montgomery. Thanks for the centerfold on him.

K. Brown
Fairfield, Virginia

George 'n' Tammy's Latest

I just finished listening to *One* for the third time. What a joy it is to hear traditional country again. My only problem is that I can't pick a favorite song from the album. They are all great. I have been a George Jones fan for 35 years or more. As for Tammy, she may have had a lot of ill health, but she still has that voice. The lady can sing up a storm. If today's disc jockeys don't play this album, it'll be a crying shame.

Glenn M. Taylor
Lomita, California

George 'n' Tammy Again

In response to Bob Millard's review of George and Tammy's new album, *One*, in the September/October issue: Loretta Lynn, the spirit of Conway Twitty and I do *not* forgive you! You stated that George Jones and Tammy Wynette were the Number One duet team of the 1970's—wrong! Loretta and Conway were the top duet team of the 1970's and are the "Most Awarded Male/Female Duet in the History of Country Music." Loretta and Conway also released more albums, and charted more Number One and Top Ten singles than George and Tammy.

A failed five-year marriage did not make George and Tammy the Number One duet team of the 1970's, it only made them the most talked and written about. While I like and respect George and Tammy, and I bought and love their new album, *One*, they were not the Number One duet team. Loretta and Conway's track record stands there for itself.

Rick Cornett
Toledo, Ohio

Bob Has a Bad Day

Is it possible that Mr. Bob Allen was just having a terribly bad day when he wrote the record reviews for John Michael Montgomery's self-titled album and Tracy Byrd's *Love Lessons* album in the September/October issue? Or maybe he has been listening to too much Thelonious Monk, Chesapeake and Barry Manilow, and it has trashed his brain. I purchased both the



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above mentioned albums when they were released, and I think that they are two of the better albums so far this year.

Paul W. Thompson
Statesville, North Carolina
Big bad Bob.—Ed.

Slammin' 'n' Jammin' with JMM

I just received my September/October issue. The centerfold of John Michael Montgomery is fantastic and long overdue, but as far as I'm concerned, you blew it by letting Bob Allen review John Michael's new album. From all that I have read, Mr. Allen is very prejudiced in his "reviews." He is all for slamming most of the newer artists while singing praises of some other people we have hardly heard of. By your own fact sheet, John Michael's last seven out of nine singles have been Number One, so obviously someone out there likes him.

Sherry Goins
Mt. Vernon, Ohio
Good old Bob.—Ed.

Millard Makes the Grade

Bob Millard has just become one of my favorite people! His review of Gail Davies' new album in the September/October issue is nothing short of brilliant! The only fault I find with Mr. Millard's review is that he doesn't mention once my favorite song on the album, "Heat It Up," in which Ms. Davies proves assertiveness and femininity are *not* mutually exclusive. Mr. Millard is right in that Gail Davies has obviously been knocked down a time or two, but that is no reason to count her out. In closing, please let me echo his own words, "Are you listening, Mr. Country Radio?" Also, CMM would do its readers a great service if it would do an extensive article on Gail Davies.

Ronald V. Bicknell
Waycross, Georgia

Miley not Molly

Just got my September/October issue of *Country Music*, and had to drop a line to thank you for the great photo of Billy Ray Cyrus and his daughter in the People section. However, his daughter's nickname is 'Miley, not Molly, and am sure you will be hearing from BRC fans about this one. (Maybe it's that Kentucky accent?) When he says it, it nearly does sound like Molly, but it *is* 'Miley. Thanks again for the great photo.

Sue Schriener
Seattle, Washington

Real Name Is...

You goofed! Billy Ray's daughter's name is not "Molly," as you have it—"Billy and Molly, Meet Shamu." Her nickname is Miley. Her given name is Destiny Hope. The articles you've had on BRC are fantastic. Please feature him more often!

Nancy Micol
Canton, Michigan

Nickname Is...

Gentlepersons: Have Billy Ray Cyrus and Tish changed the name of their daughter? The last I knew her nickname was "Miley," short for "Smiley."

Martha Selbert
Powhatan, Virginia
Everybody, including us, got it?—Ed.

Up There with the Eagles

Thanks for a great magazine. I enjoy every issue. I do however, feel the need to write concerning the "Save the Eagles" story in the July/August 1995 People section: Mention was made of video and song having been produced to benefit the preservation of eagles. As longtime friends and fans of the writer of that song, my family would appreciate credit being given to him. James Rogers is a very talented singer and songwriter, and has been involved with preserving eagles for over 20 years. James has contributed much of his time and talent, including that beautiful song, for that very deserving cause.

Freda Shepherd
Cordova, Alabama

Thank You, Tom T.

I would like to thank Rich Kienzle for the wonderful article on my hero, Mr. Tom T. Hall, in *Legends* in the September/October CMSA Newsletter. I haven't seen that many articles about Mr. Hall, but when I take what I have read over the years and put it all together, I find him to be someone who never forgot where he came from, loves God, cares about his fellow man and never let success go to his head. I think we can all learn something from that.

Lise Bigl
Milford, New Hampshire

Merle Kilgore Then

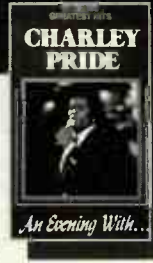
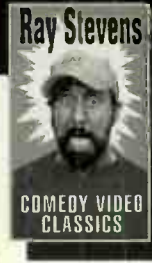
First off, I read and love your magazine! Now, about Merle: The first time I saw him, I was a member of the "Twin City Jamboree" in West Monroe, Louisiana, when this tall guy dressed in black stepped up and performed a song he wrote called "Dear Mama," a song he'd recorded on a small label, and he stole the show! They said he was from Springhill, Louisiana, and was on his way to Nashville! Let me tell you, he was really great. The next I heard about him was a song called "42 in Chicago" which he sang. (I don't recall if he had written "Ring of Fire" for Johnny Cash and "Wolverton Mountain" for Claude King or not at this time.) I later found out he was Hank Jr.'s manager. Just wanted everyone to know what a talent he is and was.

Dick Works
West Monroe, Louisiana

Carlene Carter Now

Your magazine is the best there is on country music. It offers something for all fans, both new listeners like me and longtime listeners. And, although I think Sep-

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tember/October's "I lost my film" letter was quite ridiculous, I do enjoy reading what we ordinary fans think. While you usually do a good job getting around to all my favorite stars, couldn't you afford at least one feature on Carlene Carter?

Omari Norman
Denver, Colorado

Stay tuned.—Ed.

Paddy 'n' Paulette

I have noticed that Patrick Carr never fails to mention Paulette Carlson when describing Joy Lynn White's voice. Joy Lynn should certainly be flattered; there is no better voice than Paulette's. Which brings me to my question: What is Paulette Carlson up to these days? Highway 101, with her at the helm, is the act that got me interested in country music. When she struck out on her own, I had no doubts that she'd make it big. After all, no one is more deserving. Unfortunately though, she seems to have disappeared after one album.

Adrian Stuart
Bassfield, Mississippi

See Final Note. Paddy has news.—Ed.

BRC 'n' Elvis

Please, one final word on Billy Ray Cyrus and the Elvis Tribute concert from those who were there in Memphis and aren't relying on a CD or video. The minute he walked on stage, the audience went wild. We clapped, cheered and whistled and gave him a standing ovation. He did a bang-up job and we loved it! We might also add that he was *the only* performer who took the time after the show to stay on stage and sign autographs. The only thing wrong with the Elvis Tribute is that Ronnie McDowell wasn't included. Otherwise, it was a magical evening.

Linda Shahangian & Friends
Jefferson City, Missouri

The Sound of Shelby (Lynne)

I would like to know anything and everything you can tell me about Shelby Lynne. I think that she is the greatest sound since Elvis Presley (male) and Dinah Washington (female). She has the gift that few have. Many attain stardom, but few have that special something that she does.

Katie Walker
New Orleans, Louisiana

Update coming soon. Meanwhile, see Record Reviews this issue.—Ed.

BRC Rocks Ft. Campbell

What a blast—(I'm his biggest fan)—just ask him. He was fantastic even though it was the hottest night of the summer. The moon was full, and his jeans were right. I was blessed with BRC's drinking water as were a lot of handicapped children and grownups on the first few rows as he sprayed a couple of bottles of his drinking water at us. It was all in fun, and the chil-

dren on their dads' shoulders loved it. Billy Ray is all heart. You can call him country or he could be rock, but unless you have seen him live—you're missing someone special.

Debbie K. Davis
Clarksville, Tennessee

Sawyer Brown and True Colors

My father died March 27, 1993, and I've wanted to write someone that could get Sawyer Brown's attention and thank them for the song, "The Walk." It was played at my father's funeral. He was only 51 years old and died with cancer leaving behind six children. I'm the oldest at 33, and the youngest is 19. This song was very important since the only boy is 20, and it was very hard for him because we come from a small town and my dad was like his only male friend on our road. My father was born on that road, and we all attended the same school our father attended. Our family came to Splendora, Texas, in the late 1800's and we have never left. Sawyer Brown has a way of revealing life's true colors. I hope that they are blessed with real happiness for a long time.

Deborah Duke
Splendora, Texas

Fan Casts Vote for Connie Smith

I have been a subscriber of your magazine for many years. I'm always happy to see it in the mailbox. It's very informative about what's going on with some of the older artists, while it also keeps us up to date on the new group of talent. Many thanks for a good magazine. I would love to see a nice article on Connie Smith. To me she is a truly talented lady, that seems to have been overlooked an awful lot. She sings great, she looks great, she's always a lady, so graceful when she is on the Opry. I've just never felt like she has received the awards she so richly deserves.

Carma Lee Peters
Mt. Hope, West Virginia

See Final Note. There is hope.—Ed.

Cat Casts Vote for Yoakam's Fanny

My cat, Puddin' n' Paws, is up in ears about Dwight's rear end being a distraction instead of an attraction (Letters, September/October). She agrees with me that everything about him is perfect. His new CD, *Dwight Live*, is great, and the video "Please Please Baby" really shows off his perfect fanny. So please print more of Dwight instead of Garth, Vince, Reba and Alan. They're good too, but Dwight's the best. He's a perfect country gentleman who just keeps on getting better and better. All I have to say or pud it: "I don't want Puss 'n' Boots/I want Dwight 'n' Boots!" She couldn't "pud" that a better way, now could she?

Flo Eyestone
Urbana, Illinois

For another side of Dwight, see Patrick Carr's cover story.—Ed.

Hats Off to Carr 'n' Classics

Although I'm not a huge fan of George and Tammy, I was glad to see that they were on the cover of the first issue of the magazine that I received (July/August). To me this cover states that despite the possibility of increased sales of a cover that a hot new artist might bring, *Country Music* has not and will not forget its past. It seems a shame that we tend to let artists become memories before we take notice. Now, a lot of people pay lip service to the likes of Dwight Yoakam, Lyle Lovett, Marty Brown, Junior Brown and Steve Earle, proclaiming their genius, but how often do we see feature articles on them? At a time when many are kicking themselves for letting Merle Haggard slip through the cracks, we're doing the same to the Lovetts and Browns.

Hats off to Patrick Carr for his Final Note columns. Also, your record reviews are wonderful, pointing me to artists I might otherwise have missed, and your reviews aren't afraid to step on toes. With all the new talent coming in, we need to step on more toes. Maybe then country music would have less artists who would rather sit home and listen to their Eagles' records.

Eric Burton
LeRoy, Illinois

Truth 'n' Garbage—and Bob 'n' Rich

I'm getting tired of all these people writing in whining about how so-and-so is so great and he deserved a better review. The fact is, the truth hurts. All these people saying what a "cute" song this or that is. Country music didn't get its integrity by making this garbage. The industry would have been in deep trouble in Hank Williams Sr. would have recorded songs like "Achy Breaky Heart," "Indian Outlaw" and the like. Artists like Steve Earle, Marty Brown, Kevin Welch and Joe Ely don't need or want these cutesy, hookline lyrics. Steve Earle, whose new album should get Album of the Year, is the best damn songwriter to hit the scene in the last decade. Most people have never heard of him because he hasn't sold his soul. Same for all the other artists I've mentioned. Steve has more talent in his little finger than five of these new hunk hat acts. The only artist that I like who has had any continuous chart success is Dwight Yoakam. He is about the only one who has any roots that he is holding onto.

Let me finish by saying that your two most griped about critics, Rich Kienzle and Bob Allen, tell it like it is, and are the best in the industry. (Betcha never thought you'd hear that.) Larry Bush
Montreal, Missouri

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PAYMENT: All classified advertising must be prepaid with order. Make check or money order payable to *Country Music Magazine*. For credit card orders (Visa/MasterCard only), include account number, expiration date and the amount you authorize *Country Music Magazine* to charge your account.

CLOSING DATE: *Country Music Magazine* is published 6 times per year. The next available issue is January/February which closes November 20; the March/April issue closes January 19th.

Mail advertising copy, payments and production materials for display ads to: *Country Music Magazine*, Classified Department, P.O. Box 570, Clearwater, Florida 34617-0570. For overnight courier service send to: 1510 Barry Street, Suite D, Clearwater, Florida 34616. Telephones: 1-(800) 762-3555; Canada (813) 449-1775; Fax (813) 442-2567.

FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY

VOTE

MEMBERS POLL/NOVEMBER 1995

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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No
How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____

2. In the boxes below, write the numbers of any of the albums on the Top 25 list in this issue which you bought in the last month.

3. For any albums you bought in the last month not on the Top 25 list, write performer's name and album titles in the space below. (Attach a separate sheet if you need more room.)

Your Choice for Album of the Month

4. List numbers of your five favorites from Top 25 in this issue.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Travel By Boat

5. Have you ever been on a cruise vacation?

Yes No

6. a. Do you plan to go on a cruise vacation?

Yes No

b. If yes, where do you plan to travel?

Caribbean Alaska
 Europe Other

7. What type of vessel have you traveled on, or do you plan to travel on?

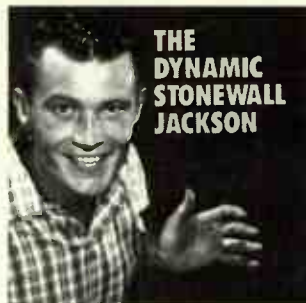
Cruise ship River boat

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, write your membership number here _____

If you are not a CMSA member but would like to join and vote immediately, enclose your check for \$16 for a one-year CMSA membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too).

Fill out poll and mail to: November Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880.



Stonewall Jackson Special

This issue of the CMSA Newsletter features Stonewall Jackson in Legends. Far too little of his classic Columbia material remains in print today. One exception, however, is the album that remains the best one he ever made: his Columbia debut, *The Dynamic Stonewall Jackson*. Reissued by Sony Special Products (Sony 24297), it includes many of his early hits: "Waterloo," "Smoke Along the Track," "Life to Go," "Run," "Carpet on the Floor," "Man Has Cried," "Uncle Sam & Big John Bull," "Mary Don't You Weep," "Ward of Broken Hearts," "Why I'm Walkin'," "Let's Call It a Day" and "Black Sheep." Available on cassette or CD. Regular price \$9.95 cassette, \$13.95 CD. Members' price \$7.95 cassette, \$11.95 CD.

Classic Photo

Relaxing backstage between shows in the mid-70's—in the new Opry House at Opryland—are Stonewall Jackson and members of his band, including his son Turp at left. Jackson's first Opry performance was in 1956; he's been a member since 1969.

Buried Treasures Special

Rich Kienzle's Buried Treasures column in this issue includes fine reissues on Wynn Stewart, Faron Young, Hank Locklin, Willie, Waylon and more. Members may deduct \$2.00 off the price of any item in this issue's Buried Treasures column, except the Hank Locklin boxed set on Bear Family—deduct \$20.00 off that item. Include membership number if taking discount. See ordering instructions in Buried Treasures.

Essential Collector Special
CMSA members also get a discount on all items in Essential Collector. Deduct \$2.00 off regular price of each item featured, except the George Strait boxed set and the Waylon discography—take \$10.00 off the price of these items. In addition to George, look for items on Darrell McCall, Billy Joe Shaver, John Hartford, Jerry Reed, Crook & Chase and more. Include membership number and see ordering details on the Essential Collector page.

10 Years Ago in CMM

In the November/December 1985 issue of *Country Music Magazine*: Cover stars Alabama give Bob Allen the scoop on what makes them tick. As bass player Teddy Gentry said: "The best is yet to come." From People: Loretta Lynn performs at the Kennedy Center in Washington, then-Vice President George Bush attends; Marty Stuart signs with CBS Records; Dolly Parton plans a theme park; and Tootsie's Orchid Lounge is saved from closing down. The Number One album was *Highwayman*, by Willie, Waylon, Johnny and Kris, of course. Number One single was Ronnie Milsap's "Lost in the 50's Tonight." CMSA members' favorite album was *Why Not Me* by The Judds, and favorite single was "Dixie Road" by Lee Greenwood.

How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111295N, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Include \$3.00 postage/handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional.



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by Cindy Shafer

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Oh, Susannah!

by Cindy Shafer

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December 31, 1995

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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Wynn Stewart: Even though Wynn Stewart was a West Coast star before Buck and Merle ever had recording contracts, he still has become the forgotten man of the Bakersfield scene. After first recording for tiny Intro Records in 1954, he had one minor hit on Capitol in 1955. His first significant success, however, came when he started recording for Gene Autry's independent Challenge label in the late 50's and early 60's. The generous, 29-track *California Country: The Best of Challenge Masters* (AVI CD 5013) summarizes Stewart's best recordings for Challenge and its subsidiary Jackpot label.

Like Ray Price and Buck Owens, Stewart's early forté was the honky tonk shuffle beat that propelled his first Top Ten hit, "Wishful Thinking." He had other hits, among them "Wrong Company," his duet with Jan Howard (at the time married to master composer Harlan Howard), and such solo fare as "Big Big Love," "Another Day, Another Dollar" and "Half of This, Half



of That." He also recorded non-hits that became Bakersfield country standards such as "Above and Beyond" (a 1960 hit for Buck Owens), "Playboy" and "Heartaches for a Dime," all of which wear well today. Less impressive, yet worth hearing are the dubious attempts to fit Stewart into rock 'n' roll, a problem faced by many hard country singers of the 50's. Stewart later resurfaced at Capitol with a stronger line of hits, yet the

Challenge era gave him his real start. With an excellent, Bear Family-quality booklet by Colin Escott and rare photos, this is a top-notch look at Stewart's career, giving L.A.-based AVI an impressive debut in the country reissue field.

Hank Locklin: For several decades, Hank Locklin, best known for his hit singles, "Send Me the Pillow That You Dream On" (1958) and "Please Help Me, I'm Falling" (1960), has been another forgotten man in the business. Not only are his early Four Star recordings out of print, his RCA hits have long been unavailable. His first nine years at RCA (123 songs from 1955 through 1964) are covered on the four-CD boxed set, *Please Help Me I'm Falling* (Bear Family BCD 15730). Locklin's earliest RCA material was generic hard country fare. His first hit at the label was a credible, but unimpressive 1956 cover of George Jones' hit, "Why Baby Why." Some of his non-hits at the time were better, such as his 1956 recordings of two Luke McDaniel songs: the gambling ballad, "Seven or Eleven," and "You Can't Never Tell," sung Hank Williams-style. While some raw singers of the 50's didn't take well to the slick Nashville Sound production in vogue after 1957, RCA producer Chet Atkins, one of the sound's founders, used it to give Don Gibson, Jim Reeves and Locklin the music that made them stars.

The June 28, 1957, Locklin session that produced "Geisha Girl" and "Send Me the Pillow That You Dream On," Top Five hits in 1957 and 1958 respectively, proved the success of that sound. A number of other songs recorded during this period, including "Filipino Baby" and "Mexicali Rose," which were part of his excellent 1958 LP, *Foreign Love*, are all here too. The classic "Please Help Me, I'm Falling" was not

only a Locklin high point, it marked Floyd Cramer's debut playing the "pedal piano" style invented by "Please Help Me" composer, Don Robertson. Other Locklin hits, among them "From Here to There to You," "Happy Birthday to Me," the schmaltzy "Happy Journey" and "We're Gonna Go Fishin'" are covered here as well, as are all his LP's, including *Irish Songs*, *Country Style*, the *Tribute to Roy Acuff* and *The Ways of Life*. The set has no unreleased sides; every Locklin RCA recording of this era was issued.



Faron Young: Capitol Records' now-defunct Collectors' Series never did a Faron Young collection, though Curb Records issued a very basic set of his Capitol hits a few years back. Now comes the Country Music Foundation's generously programmed, 24-track *Faron Young: Live Fast, Love Hard* (CMF-020D), focusing on the Capitol hits, with a rarity or two thrown in. It begins at the beginning with Faron's first Capitol side: the non-hit, "Tattle Tale Tears." From there, it's a virtual litany of hits: "Goin' Steady," "Just Out of Reach," "Just Married," "If That's the Fashion," "If You Ain't Lovin' (You Ain't Livin)," "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young" and so on. Faron's versatility has seldom been noted, yet songs like "Goin' Steady" and "In the Chapel in the Moonlight" prove he could easily have become a teen pop idol had he so desired. One welcome rarity is a burning live version of Willie

Nelson's "Three Days," taken from the Air Force Recruiting program, *Country Music Time*. The CMF might consider compiling an entire Faron set from such shows. My sole criticism involves including an alternate version of "I've Got Five Dollars and It's Saturday Night," instead of the hit. This version, released only on Bear Family's Faron box, is neither significant, nor superior to the original. On a hit-oriented package, alternate takes are rarely worth including unless they're earth-shakingly different from the hit version.

Nashville at Newport: The Newport Folk Festivals may have been dominated by folk stars like Pete Seeger, Judy Collins, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan and other great blues and gospel performers. Yet some traditional and modern country stars also performed at Newport in the 60's, some of them recorded live by Vanguard Records. *Nashville at Newport* (Vanguard 77016-2) brings together, for the first time, 31 of these live performances, only one ever previously released and most of excellent quality. While the Ramblin' Jack Elliott performance is of dubious value, Jimmie Driftwood's version of his "Battle of New Orleans" and Maybelle Carter's "Cannonball Blues" are both sublime. The remaining artists perform multiple songs. The 1966 Hazel Dickens/Alice Gerrard performances, with David Grisman on mandolin, reflect their pioneering efforts among female bluegrassers. Early Opry favorites Fiddlin' Arthur Smith and Sam and Kirk McGee, reuniting as The Dixieliners, were older only in body, not in spirit. Along with three traditional numbers, they added a charming version of Tennessee Ernie's "Milk 'Em in the Morning Blues."

Six Ike Everly guitar recordings, with son Don accompanying him, feature the au-

thentic Mulhenberg County, Kentucky, fingerpicking that Merle Travis absorbed from both Ike and Mose Rager. Acuff, seldom heard on any live recording, began his set with "Wabash Cannonball" and ended with Brother Oswald's taut solo version of "Steel Guitar Chimes." Cash's eight songs, recorded in 1964 with Luther Perkins and Marshall Grant (drummer Fluke Holland wasn't present), begin with "Big River" and end with "Keep on the Sunny Side." Just before performing "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," he pays tribute to the song's composer: his friend Bob Dylan.

Producer Mary Katherine Aldin's notes don't do the set justice. Rarely does she provide any insight, just poorly written, cookie-cutter artist biographies. Only three performances are identified by the year they took place, and she never even noticed that Roy Acuff Jr., then playing guitar in his father's band, sang "I Washed My Hands in Muddy Water." Such important recordings deserve more insightful explanation and analysis than Aldin, an acknowledged folk and blues authority, provides.

Willie Nelson: Willie Nelson's RCA catalog has also been mistreated in the past by the label. Various collections haven't come close to assembling his RCA high points. While *The Essential Willie Nelson* (RCA 66590) brings forth nothing new, it compiles material recorded from the beginning to the end of his time with the label: 1965 to 1971. The set doesn't emphasize hits and understandably so, since most of his RCA chart entries during those years were, at best, modest successes. The emphasis is on RCA versions of "Hello Walls," "Night Life," "December Day" and the original versions of songs like "Bloody Mary Morning" and "Me and Paul" that hinted at his future direction. Among these are several songs from the *Yesterday's Wine* album, his first concept album, done three years before *Phases and Stages*. Likewise, the original RCA version of that album's

centerpiece, "Phases, Stages Circles and Cycles," appears on this collection.

Waylon Jennings: Waylon's early recording career hasn't gotten its due, though some years ago, Bear Family did reissue nearly all his early, pre-Outlaw RCA Victor recordings on a series of LP's. He first recorded in 1958 in Clovis, New Mexico, his producer none other than his pal Buddy Holly. Waylon, at the time a Lubbock, Texas, disc jockey, would go on to play bass on Holly's final (and fatal) 1959 tour. In the early 60's, Waylon recorded two singles at Floyd Ramsey's legendary Audio Recorders studio in Phoenix, the Sun studio of the Southwest. Zuzazz Records, a subsidiary of



Bear Family, has assembled 23 early Waylon recordings, including rarities and alternate takes, onto *Clovis to Phoenix: The Early Years* (ZCD 2021).

Both sides of Waylon's first, Holly-produced rock single are here. There's little in his vocals on "Jole Blon" and two takes of the flipside, "When

Sin Stops" (with saxophone from R&B legend King Curtis), that hint at Waylon's future. His voice sounded tentative and, at times, a bit Hollyesque. The same problem dogged him on his two early 60's singles for the Phoenix-based Trend label. Two years (1963-64) of recording for the L.A.-based A&M Records (material not included on this set) made a difference, for his voice improved tremendously.

This was obvious in 1964 when he was performing as the house act at JD's Club in Phoenix and recorded 12 songs (one sung by guitarist Jerry Gropp) from his stage show on the locally-distributed and now ultra-rare LP, *Waylon Jennings at JD's*. Though heavy on covers (Ray Price's "Burning Memories" and Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" among them), the album reflected the variety of material Waylon admired. The latest release here, "My World," comes from 1965. Despite being signed to RCA, he overdubbed a new vocal on this recording, which he had originally made several years earlier. Since it reflects the Waylon we know today, it's a measure of how far he had come. The fine audio on this set can be credited to Bear Family using original master tapes. For fans wanting to hear Waylon's beginnings, it's essential.

Jim Reeves: RCA's *The Essential Jim Reeves* (RCA 66589), issued on CD and cassette, adds nothing new to the vast

amount of Reeves material already available. Still, it's an improvement over the haphazard way RCA's handled their older material in the past, and, realistically, Bear Family's encyclopedic Reeves boxed set is not for everyone's budget. This collection covers



only 20 bare essentials of Reeves' RCA period (the Abbott material, unfortunately, isn't sampled here). The obvious hits are here, among them "Four Walls" and "He'll Have to Go" as well as "Home," "The Blizzard," "Welcome to My World" and the final hit of his life, "I Guess I'm Crazy." The gospel number, "Supper Time," a non-hit but a fine performance, closes the collection. Posthumous successes, such as "Is It Really Over" and "Distant Drums," make the point that Reeves' appeal continued long after the 1964 plane crash which killed him.

Liner Note Corrections: While citing stupid factual errors, let me cite two doozies I made in my notes on recent reissues. On the Merle Haggard *I Love Dixie Blues*, I mentioned the song "The Fugitive" as a Haggard original, an unbelievable gaffe, since Liz Anderson wrote it. In addition, on the Ernie Ford-Glen Campbell CD, *Ernie Sings and Glen Picks*, Willie Nelson's "Crazy" was mentioned as a Harlan Howard tune. We caught and corrected this one, but the correction never got into print. Changes in Capitol Nashville's proofreading process should prevent future mistakes from me (or anyone else). But, a screwup is a screwup no matter who makes it.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Wynn Stewart, *California Country: The Best of The Challenge Masters* (AVI 5013), CD only \$21.95/Hank Locklin, *Please Help Me I'm Falling* (BCD 15730), a four-CD boxed set, \$119.95/Waylon Jennings, *Clovis to Phoenix: The Early Years* (ZCD 2021), CD only \$24.95/Jim Reeves, *The Essential Jim Reeves* (RCA 66589), cassette or CD, \$13.95 cassette, \$19.95 CD/Willie Nelson, *The Essential Willie Nelson* (RCA 66590), cassette or CD, \$13.95 cassette, \$19.95 CD/Faron Young, *Live Fast, Love Hard* (CMF 020), cassette or CD, \$11.95 cassette, \$21.95 CD/Various Artists, *Nashville at Newport* (Vanguard 77016), cassette or CD, \$12.95 cassette, \$21.95 CD. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111295, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling. Canadian orders, add an additional \$3.00 postage. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

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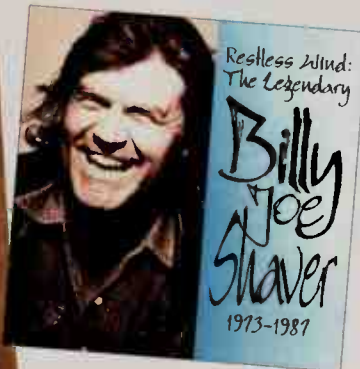
Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

▪ Recordings ▪

George Strait: As the boxed set boom continues, not only are the veteran artists covered in Buried Treasures getting boxed set treatment, extensive anthologies by stars of the present are being fancily packaged, such as the Emmylou Harris box due for release early next year. George Strait, one of the few New Traditionalists who's stayed true to his roots, is represented by *Strait Out of the Box* (MCA 11263). Though not sporting much of a title, the set contains 72 songs on four CD's or cassettes encompassing more than just the obvious hits, including recordings from the start of his career, before anyone outside Texas knew him.

Those first three selections are the A-sides of mid-to-late 1970's singles he recorded for Houston-based D Records. These songs reveal a younger Strait, but one whose honky tonk direction was pretty well set. There's no sense going track by track—42 of the selections here make up his hit singles, 31 of them Number Ones. Another 19 were taken from Strait albums. Eight others are duet recordings, and unissued tracks, with a couple of new recordings thrown in. Taken as a whole, I find his weakest material was the early MCA output. He was in an awkward position in those days, trying to hold onto his traditional bent while satisfying the Urban Cowboy market with watery fare like "Any Old Love Won't Do." It was his own swing composition, "I Can't See Texas From Here," that hinted at the future.

That future kicks in—in high gear—on disc/cassette two, where Strait found a blend of honky tonk and swing that caught on with fans. The first track, the Bob Wills favorite "Right or Wrong," symbolizes that new sound. "Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind" was built on that sound. Adding his duet on "A Six Pack to Go"



with Hank Thompson was a wise choice, since, in the 1950's, Thompson pioneered the swing-honky tonk formula Strait uses today. Disc/cassette three heads even deeper into swing, past and present, with his sterling remake of Faron Young's "If You Ain't Lovin' (You Ain't Livin')," "Lovesick Blues" and one of my own favorite Strait swingers, "Ace in the Hole." Disc four includes later masterpieces such as his flawless versions of Jim Lauderdale's "King of Broken Hearts" and "Where the Sidwalk Ends." The duets include "Big Ball's in Cowtown," which he sang on *Asleep at the Wheel's* Bob Wills tribute album. He steals the duet version of "Fly Me to the Moon" right out from under an aging Frank Sinatra, whose voice simply couldn't keep up.

The packaging for this set is the best I've seen on any boxed set covering a contemporary artist, even if 18 songs per disc is skimpy, considering a CD can hold 20-25 songs. The photo-laden booklet also contains hard information of the sort found in historical sets. A fine Paul Kingsbury essay comes complete with Strait's comments about each track and a fine dis-

cography by Dee Henry Jenkins, which erred only in omitting single release numbers with each selection. Other labels contemplating a box on one of their stars should take their cues from this one.

Darrell McCall: George Strait fans will love Darrell McCall. Though he's dedicated his life to the same style of honky tonk as Strait, McCall never achieved the same level of stardom. His biggest hit came 32 years ago with the Top 20 single, "A Stranger Was Here," recorded at a time when he was playing bass and singing backup harmony with Ray Price's Cherokee Cowboys. He quit that band as he saw Price heading in a more pop direction. Over the years, McCall has recorded for Columbia (including a single with Willie) and smaller labels, continuing the honky tonk shuffle style that Price abandoned in the mid-60's. His voice fits that music like a glove. His latest, *A Way to Survive*, is the sleeper of 1995.

At a young age 54, McCall sings with as much passion as Price or Strait. Another former Cherokee Cowboy, steel guitarist Buddy Emmons, co-produced the album and knows just the right licks to complement his old bandmate. McCall's powerful delivery of "Hide and Go Cheat" is a good indicator of his vocal power, while his wry humor is center-stage on "If It Ain't Broke Don't Fix It." Equally formidable are "Reconsider Leaving Me" and his remake of Price's 1966 hit, "A Way to Survive."

McCall, the subject of an upcoming Bear Family historical boxed set, deserves far wider recognition, and this album deserves wider distribution.

John Hartford: John Hartford was primarily known as composer of Glen Campbell's 1967 hit, "Gentle on My Mind," and as a regular on the old *Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*. After leaving that show, he took a decidedly non-commercial direction with his innovative 1971 Warner Brothers album, *Aero-Plain*. Recording with fiddler Vassar Clements, dobroist Tut Taylor and guitarist Norman Blake, his was a new voice in the earliest days of progressive bluegrass, hip yet proudly traditional. Few understood what Hartford was doing, and the album's sales were modest.

In 1972, came the followup: *Morning Bugle*. Though done with a different group of musicians, the results were every bit as good. It went out of print within a year, but has just been reissued by Rounder. Blake remained from the *Aero-Plain* band, but joining in was British-born jazz bassist Dave Holland, who'd worked with modern jazzman Miles Davis. Hartford, as before, put his own spin on various traditional tunes like "Ole Joe Clark" and created such wry, witty originals as "Howard Hughes' Blues" and "Nobody Eats at Linebaugh's Anymore," a salute to the downtown Nashville cafeteria/restaurant that was a music business hangout in the 50's and 60's. Hartford was lamenting Nashville's homogenized direction even before Opryland opened. Still active today, Hartford, who maintains close ties to traditional music legends like Bill Monroe and Earl Scruggs, should consider revisiting this earlier concept. His acerbic wit could find much to skewer in today's music.

Time-Warp Tophands: A thank you letter arrived after the last issue hit the stands from Tom Morrell, whose Time-Warp Tophands cassettes and CD's

I'd reviewed. With it was a copy of the group's newest effort: a steel guitar instrumental collection titled *No Peddlers Allowed*. Morrell is joined here by other steel greats including Bobby Koefler, who formerly worked with Bob Wills and Pee Wee King. Also present is legendary Bob Wills/Hank Penny steel player Herb Remington. They've remade several steel instrumental classics, among them Jerry Byrd's "Steelin' the Blues" and Ted Daffan's "Blue Steel Blues." In addition, Remington went way back in his repertoire to revive "Station Break," a terrific instrumental he originally recorded for Starday Records in the 1950's. The original material is jazzier, exemplified by the complex number, "Captain Weir'd Goes Shopping." Steel guitar fans will love it, and the musicianship's as awesome as on the early sets.

Billy Joe Shaver: It took the masses 20 years to catch up with Billy Joe Shaver. Everyone knew he wrote great songs when Waylon built his classic 1973 LP, *Honky Tonk Heroes*, around Shaver songs. And his songs were hits for Bobby Bare, Willie and, later, John Anderson. Shaver's own singing career never took off until the acclaimed 1992 album, *Tramp on Your Street*, featuring a grayer but no less gnarly Shaver singing with a band led by his guitar virtuoso son, Eddy. Suddenly his genius was validated. With that in mind, Razor & Tie has wisely decided to revisit Shaver's early material in the 18-song *Restless Wind: The Legendary Billy Joe Shaver 1973-1987* (RE 2082).

It begins with three songs from Shaver's 1973 Monument LP, *Old Five and Dimers Like Me*, including "Black Rose," the title song and "Bottom Dollar." "Lately I Been Leavin' T'ward the Blues" was a 1974 MGM single. Four numbers, "Texas Uphere Tennessee," the classic "Ride Me Down Easy," "When I Get My Wings" and "A Restless Wind," were selections from his 1976 Capricorn LP, *When I Get My Wings*. "You Asked Me To" is from the 1977 followup, *Gypsy Boy*. The nine remaining tracks come from his

three Columbia albums. "Fit to Kill and Going Out in Style," "Ragged Old Truck" and "I'm Just an Old Chunk of Coal" were on his first Columbia LP, titled for the latter song, in 1981. The delightful "Amtrak (Ain't Coming Back)" and "I Been to Georgia on a Fast Train" were on the *Billy Joe Shaver* LP in 1982. The last three, including the Blue Yodel-inspired "Good News Blues," were part of his 1987 *Salt of the Earth* album. All underscore Shaver's enduring earthiness and wit, yet reflect uneven production. His recent recordings, thanks in part to Eddy Shaver's musicianship, seem freer and more compelling.

Jerry Reed: Frankly, I've always found Jerry Reed's guitar more listenable than most of his hit singles. He'd been recording since the 1950's, and his early RCA singles, like "Guitar Man," and "U.S. Male," better known in the hit versions by Elvis, remain the best vocal performances Reed ever recorded. His own fame, of course, didn't come through his dazzling fingerstyle guitar work, but through "Amos Moses," "When You're Hot, You're Hot" and other screaming novelty songs. Understandably, these selections dominate the 20-song compilation, *The Essential Jerry Reed* (RCA 66592). In many ways, Reed's hits weren't that different from the kinds of talking blues Tex Williams did in the 1940's. The audiences loved "Ko-Ko Joe," "Lord, Mr. Ford," "The Bird," "East Bound and Down" and

the rest. One 1966 instrumental, "The Claw," now a standard among fingerpickers, did make the cut. Now that they've issued the obvious, perhaps they can do everyone a favor and reissue Reed's incredible *Nashville Underground* album, and maybe *Jerry Reed Explores Guitar Country*.

■ Books ■

Crook & Chase: Lorianne Crook and Charlie Chase were undoubtedly working on *Crook & Chase: Our Lives, The Music and The Stars* before TNN booted them from their airwaves. The book is part autobiography, as each details their pre-TNN life. Among the few interesting revelations are the fact that the intellectual, middle-class Crook was nearly recruited by the CIA. Chase had tougher beginnings, including a physical handicap and hard-drinking parents, before he found his calling working in radio. Though they discuss their experiences working together, much of the book focuses on backstage gossip, rehashing the various woes, triumphs and marital ups and downs of your favorites. Among other "insights" are the fact that the *Crook and Chase* show, produced by Lorianne's husband, Jim Owens, was conceived as a Nashvilleized *Entertainment Tonight*. Gee, who'd have ever thought?

C & C also firmly believe that today's country music, even the homogenized, characterless music of Garth 'N' Reba, is the greatest thing since anti-lock

brakes, a predictable view from less than unbiased observers. As good a team as they are, their commitment to country seems secondary. One suspects they'd be equally content interviewing athletes or doing infomercials. The final chapter about their ouster from TNN contains predictable sour grapes. One anecdote speaks volumes. Crook, discussing her early TV days, mentions how many TV news reporters considered entertainment reporting "fluff." For her, she says, "nothing could have been meatier" than interviewing Stella Parton. 'Nuff said.

Waylon Jennings: John L. Smith has been chronicling the recording activities of both Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings for over 20 years, publishing exhaustively researched discographies covering all the recording information he can find, with the artistic assistance of both artists. Smith's revised *Waylon Jennings Discography*, published by Greenwood Press, covers every recording. A total of 850 recording sessions—from his first single, produced by Buddy Holly in 1958 (see *Buried Treasures*), up through his RCA, Columbia and MCA material, including his most recent triumph, *Waymore's Blues Part II*—form the centerpiece. But Smith goes further. Nearly everything Waylon appeared on, including the Highwaymen sessions (right through the recent *The Road Goes on Forever*), is chronicled to the last detail in this 366-page book.

Smith's session information includes recording dates, times, musicians, overdub sessions and complete information on the 600-plus Waylon releases. That encompasses his albums (including the children's music he's recorded), greatest hits packages, concept albums like *White Mansions*, and guest appearances on albums by The Chipmunks (!), Emmylou Harris, Billy Joe Shaver, Doug Supernaw and others. *Billboard Magazine* chart information details Waylon's chart success as well. Want to know what time of day he and Willie recorded "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay"? Check page 153.

How to Get These Collectibles

Recordings: George Strait, *Strait Out of the Box* (MCA 11263), a four-CD or four-cassette boxed set, \$54.95 cassette, \$64.95 CD's/Darrell McCall, *A Way to Survive* (Artap 086), available on cassette or CD, \$11.95 cassette, \$21.95 CD/John Hartford, *Morning Bugle* (Rouner 0356), cassette or CD, \$13.95 cassette, \$19.95 CD/Time Warp Tophands, *No Peddlers Allowed* (WRR 8), CD only, \$19.95/Billy Joe Shaver, *Restless Wind: The Legendary Billy Joe Shaver 1973-1987* (RE 2082), cassette or CD, \$13.95 cassette, \$21.95 CD/Jerry Reed, *The Essential Jerry Reed* (RCA 66592), cassette or CD, \$13.95 cassette, \$19.95 CD. **Books:** Lorianne Crook & Charlie Chase, *Crook & Chase: Our Lives, The Music and The Stars* (B7T), \$22.00/John L. Smith, *Waylon Jennings Discography* (B1W), \$69.50. Send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111295EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.** Offer expires March 31, 1996



It Was a Very Good Year

Everyone else does it, so I guess I will. Herewith the official Final Note Highlights of 1995.

Focusing on the music rather than the show, I'd have to say it was a pretty fine year. The mainstream, of course, was awful—the industry mad and mean from ever tighter radio playlists demanding ever greater doses of sex and scoot, the creative community ravaged by the self-doubt and secret depression of people constantly compromising their music for money—but out on the fringes, up those tributaries where I float *my* boat, I really can't remember a better 12 months. Those lovely little discs came thick and fast.

Here they are, then, listed in the approximate order they came at me, which might not be the order they came at you, if indeed they came at all; the overwhelming problem with a mainstream-stinking/tributaries-thriving scenario, of course, is that most of you fans never get to hear the good stuff without paying for it. The days of buying a radio and getting decent free music till it breaks are gone, as I know *you* know all too well.

Enough from the dark side, though: now just the highest points and the best music.

The Alison Krauss collection, *Now That I've Found You* (Rounder CD 0325), was a *tour de force* of gentle nouveau-bluegrass beauty, and so was an album she produced and arranged, The Cox Family's *Beyond the City* (Rounder CD 0327). And while The Highwaymen scrambled back up to par with *The Road Goes on Forever* (Liberty CD-28091), Trisha Yearwood just plain bettered herself on *Thinkin' About You* (MCA MCAD-11201). She also proved that music with brains and heart, not just brass and booty, could still make it in the mainstream. Blackhawk did likewise with *Blackhawk* (Arista 18708).

On the other side of the street, Steve Earle's all-acoustic *Train a Comin'* (Winter Harvest WH 3302) was ragged, right and wonderful. There's nobody better; he's it. Please, God, keep him with us. Joe Ely, meanwhile, didn't match the brilliance of his first albums way back when, but with *Letter to Laredo* (MCAD-11222) he came awful close. Fellow Austinite Don Walser's *The Archive Series Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* (Watermelon CD's 1041 and 1042) were sterling examples of the 'real country' revival building out there.

Made entirely in Nashville for a paltry \$12,000, Kieran Kane's *Dead Reckoning*

(Dead Reckoning 001) was a very appealing example of the other extreme, the point where country meets smart folk/pop/rock and gets called—what? (It used to be “progressive country”). Fellow Dead Reckoner Kevin Welch also did rather well in that vein with *Life Down Here on Earth* (Dead Reckoning 0003), and The Mavericks' *Music for All Occasions* (MCA MCAD-11257) was very smooth, very



Patrick pins some of his high hopes for 1996 on a reunited Highway 101 and a rejuvenated Jann Browne.



swinging, very stylish. Oh, that Raul, the only country singer (???) who's ever made me want a velvet tuxedo!

Buddy Miller, on the other hand, makes me want to soak my duds in suds, blood and tears. His thoroughly hard-core honky tonk *Your Love and Other Lies* (Hightone HCD 8063) was his first full album. Dale Watson's debut, also released in '95, was *Cheatin' Heart Attack* (Hightone HCD 8061), and it was tonk, too; it even had a cover photo of ol' Dale with a beer bottle and a shot glass and headful of hair oil. Willie Nelson also went back to the communal root in '95. *Just One Love* (Justice Records JR 1606-2) was, of all things, a country album. His friend Shelby Lynne's *Restless* (Magnatone MGT 102) wasn't, but who cares? She's not country in exactly the same way Charlie Rich wasn't, which is just fine with me, and I'll buy anything she records, anytime. I wish I could say that about Rodney Crowell, too, but I can't; he's been slumming the last few years. *Jewel of*

the South (MCA MCAD-11223) redeems him, though. It's very, very cool, or should I say “hot?” Yes, I should. It's got fire. Please do *that* again, Rodney.

There were three really fine live albums in '95, one widely distributed and two not: Dwight Yoakam's 17-song *Dwight Live* (Reprise 9 45907), Billy Joe Shaver's *Unshaven* (Zoo/Praxis 72445-11104), and the long-missed Ms. Marshall Chapman's *It's About Time...Recorded Live at the Tennessee State Prison For Women* (Margaritaville 165-535011). Good luck finding that last one, and don't bother trying if you like your women sweet and stupid. Don't bother with any of these three if twang ain't your thang or rock makes you hock. They're all strong.

Other notable women's albums in '95 were Carlene Carter's *Little Acts of Treason* (Giant 2-24581) and Rosie Flores' *Rockabilly Filly* (Hightone HCD 8067), the former featuring a duet between Carlene and her dad, Carl Smith, and the latter guest-starring Rosie's rockabilly heroines, Wanda Jackson and Janis Martin. People similarly unafraid of singers more mature than George Strait (currently the oldest artist allowed on mainstream country radio) might also check out *One* by George Jones & Tammy Wynette (MCA MCAD-11248) and *Traveling Through* (Rounder CD 3137) from Dick Curless. My old friend Peter Guralnick rescued Curless from recording oblivion, just as he did Sleepy LaBeef and Charlie Rich, and served him well indeed in the studio. My old friend Rob Patterson, meanwhile, co-produced a dandy compilation of tunes by semi-unknown artists in the land of Ely *et al* called *Austin Country Nights* (Watermelon CD 1039). It's also an economical way to check out Don Walser and Dale Watson.

That about does it. The big disappointments of '95, I think, were Pam Tillis, Mark Chesnutt and Patty Loveless, who coulda been great if they'd quit trying to be contenders. My brightest hopes for '96 center on three women: Jann Browne, who is recording again after far too long away from the studio; Paulette Carlson and the original Highway 101, ditto; and (this just in from Marty Stuart) Connie Smith. Yup, *the* Connie Smith—the great, the wonderful, the fabulous, the best there ever was. She may just be coming back. Hallelujah.

Editor-at-Large Patrick Carr has been with CMM since September 1972.

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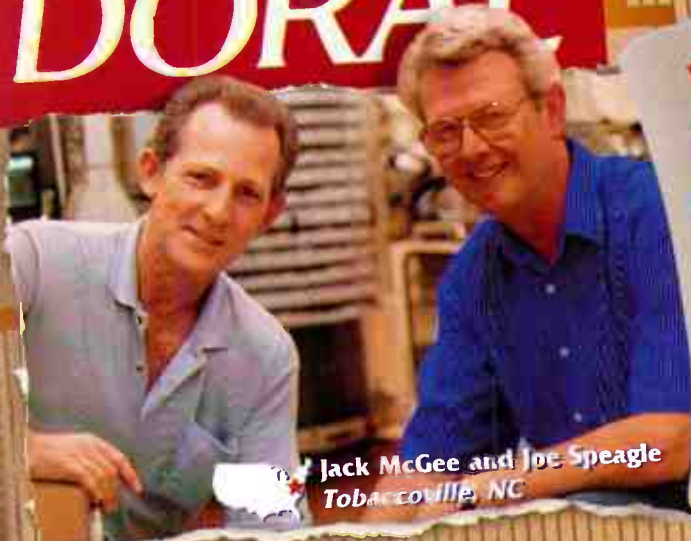
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