

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998

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**JOHN MICHAEL
MONTGOMERY**
Pull-Out Poster

THE DERAILERS
On The Right Track

plus:

DON WALSER

RANDY SCRUGGS

DOLLY PARTON
Talks With Hazel

GARY ALLAN
Honky Tonk Surfin'

**PAM
TILLIS**
No Excuses

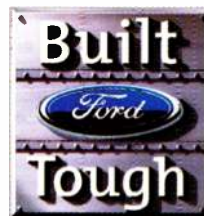




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COUNTRY MUSIC

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DEPARTMENTS

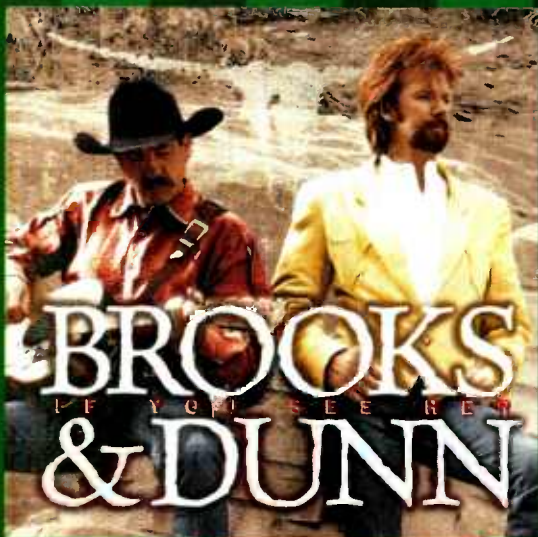
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CURTIS W. HIBLUN

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brooks & dunn if you see her
featuring "husbands & wives,"
"how long gone" and
"if you see him/if you see her"



SO...
WHAT
ELSE
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YOU
GIVING
THIS
CHRISTMAS?

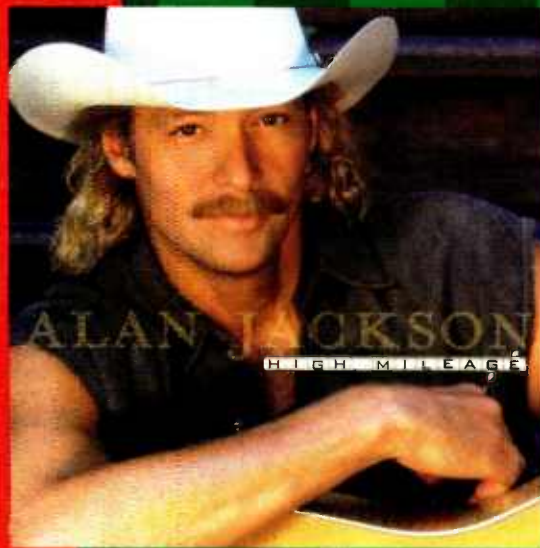
ultimate country party
featuring 18 ultimate country hits



the tractors *farmers in a changing world*
the band who brought you
"baby likes to rock it" delivers 10 new songs



alan jackson *high mileage*
featuring the hits "i'll go on loving you"
and "right on the money"



People

JONES AND MCA HISTORY

After seven years, **George Jones** and MCA Records have called it quits. George recorded seven albums for the label and says he's not about to retire. According to SoundScan, he sold about a million and a half records for MCA, an average of almost a quarter of a million per record. Radio, country music's lifeline, would no longer play George's records, and many of his fans don't shop in record stores. George felt his music should be sold on TV via direct response, but that is expensive. I felt bad for the label, but I felt worse for the great George Jones. Matter of fact, for days after I heard that George was no longer on a label, I was afraid to go outside for fear the sky would fall on my head. Not to worry. **Evelyn Shriver** came through like a champ. George Jones has signed a new record deal with Asylum Records, where Shriver is president, so I reckon the sky is safe after all.

PARTY TIME

Took myself down to BMI to celebrate with three superstars, **Reba McEntire** and CMA Vocal Duo **Brooks & Dunn**. The do honored the marvelous single, "If You See Him/If You See Her," which could not help going through the ceiling with all that star power. Arista and MCA got together for the celebration. Men in white coats were pouring another and another, slicing tender, rare, succulent roasts, and making on-the-spot pasta to die for. Reba wore a smart white suit like the star she is. We won't talk about Kix and Ronnie's attire except to say Ronnie had on one of his ever-present black somethings, and Kix wore his perennial hat, jeans, shirt and boots.

WELL, PAT A CAKE

Since **Pat Quigley** took over the reins at Capitol Records, I've heard mixed reviews on the man. In my opinion, however, he's done at least one decent thing: Pat allowed employee **Sheri Kennedy** to bring her three-month old son, **Gavin**, with her to work. Nursing mothers need to work, and nursing babies need to dine.

TINSEL TOWN HONORS REBA



The red-headed wonder, **Reba McEntire**, now has her own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The multi-talented superstar was honored for her work in music, film and television. She has five triple platinum albums and has sold over 35 million records, has won multiple CMA and ACM awards and has appeared in three films, five TV movies and an TV specials galore. Ga, girl!

This is a first for Music Row, and Mr. Quigley is the pioneer. I believe I speak for all women when I say thanks, Pat. A thoughtful act of kindness that will hopefully catch on elsewhere on the Row.

RODRIGUEZ CHARGED WITH MURDER

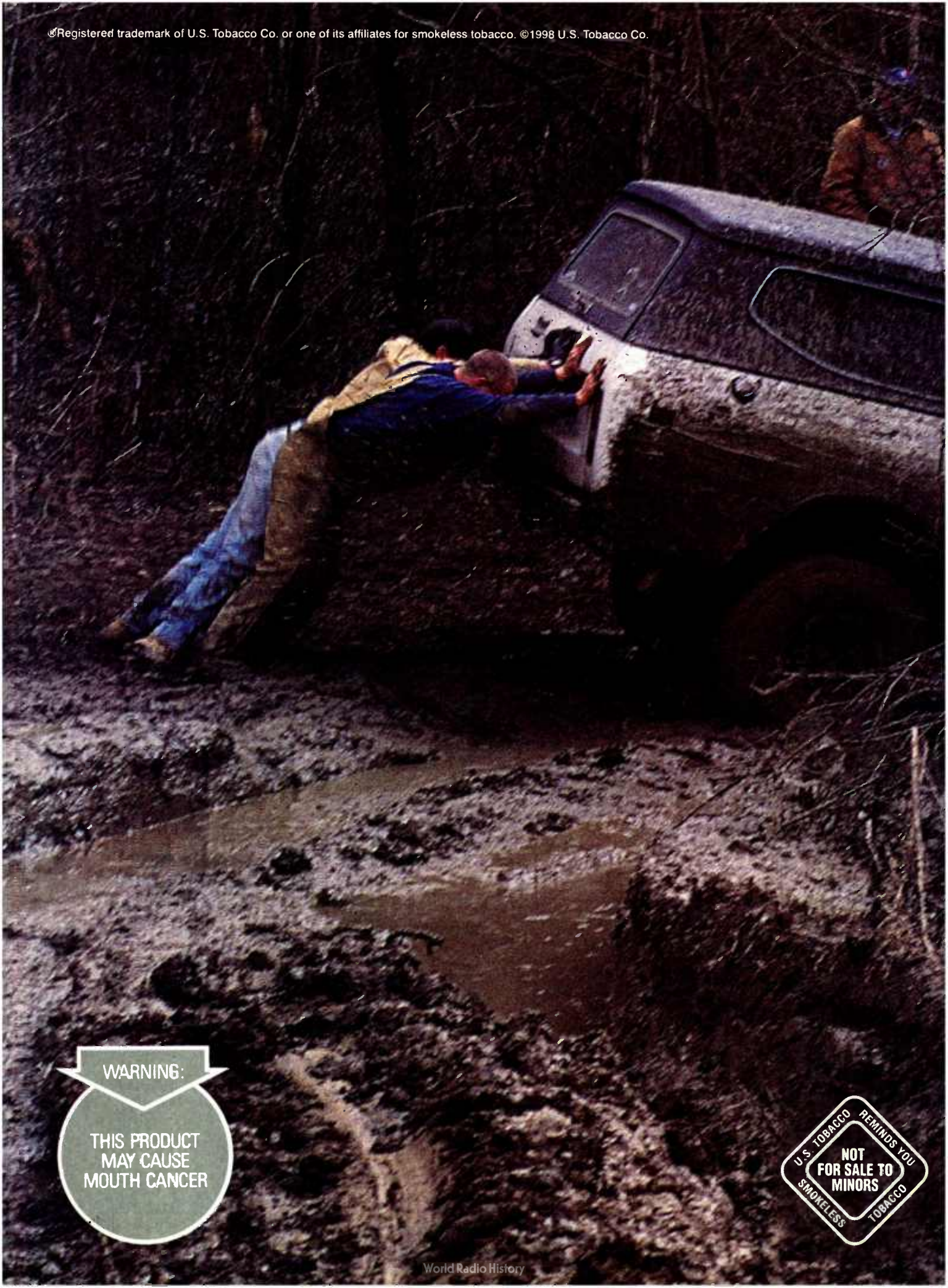
Johnny Rodriguez was charged with the murder of acquaintance **Israel Borrego** following a 4:15 A.M. shooting at Rodriguez's residence in Sabinal, Texas. Bond was set at a quarter of a million dollars. Rodriguez's attorney said the shooting was accidental: There had been break-ins in the area, and when Borrego entered Rodriguez's home uninvited, Johnny mistook him for an intruder. Borrego's brother reported that Israel had been hanging out regularly with Johnny over the past few months, playing music and partying. Borrego was unemployed.

SORRY, GUYS

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, fellows, but the last of **The Dixie Chicks** is now engaged. Yes, **Emily "Chick"** is engaged to marry country singer **Charlie Robison**, who is signed to Lucky Dog Records. **Bruce Robison**, who is also signed to Lucky Dog, is brother to Charlie. Bruce is married to the sensual **Kelly Willis**, so it seems that both brothers have something to crow about. Meanwhile, **Natalie "Chick"** and **Martie "Chick"** have already flown the coop with their very own personal roosters. The threesome are the chicks who laid the golden CD, *Wide Open Spaces*, which quickly went from Gold to platinum. So, of course, we celebrated. What a soiree. What a celebration. Held at the Stadium Club, the schmooze-fest attracted everybody who was anybody.

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editors: Rochelle Friedman/George Fletcher



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People



Celebrating The Dixie Chicks then-Gold album are Sony's Mike Kraski, Chicks Emily Erwin and Martie Seidel, Sony Prez Allen Butler, Sony's Blake Chancey, Chick Natalie Maines and Sony's Paul Worley. And before you knew it, Gold had turned to platinum, and another do was held. Two CMA awards were just icing on the cake.

There was drinking like prohibition was returning directly, and eating like it was the Last Supper. Much as anything, I was impressed with the gold-painted men with bare feet and muscles who surrounded The Chicks as they strolled into the premises. Sony execs like **Mike Kraski**, **Blake Chancey**, **Paul Worley** and **Margie Hunt** were beside themselves, as they should have been.

WELCOME, TREVOR

Let's get down to earth and welcome **Trevor Collie Smith** to Music Town. The grandson of the late DJ Hall of Fame; **Biff Collie**, the perfect baby weighed in at a whopping nine pounds, six ounces. Parents are **Terry** and **Sharon Collie Smith**. Siblings are **Tyler Thomas Smith**, who is six-and-a-half, and **Tara Rose Smith**, who is five. Uncle is **Billy Smith**, cousins **Adam** and **Jeremy Smith**, and yours truly is Grandma. God has blessed me with five beautiful grandkids.

FINE WINE AND GEORGIA

I say "fine wine" because **Steve Wariner**, who took home two CMA awards, has produced the new record of that title on **Bill Anderson**. Recorded on Reprise, the 11-song CD contains mostly new material, with one exception: a new version of Anderson's most recorded hit, "The Tips of My Fingers." This song climbed the charts in 1960

for Anderson, and was also a hit for **Roy Clark**, **Eddy Arnold** and **Jean Shepard** as well as a chart-topper for Wariner in 1991. The foursome joined Anderson, the writer of the song, on the current recording. Reprise threw a record release party honoring Anderson at their fancy Music Row digs. Busy **Bill Anderson** also recently hosted the 20th annual Georgia Music Hall of Fame Awards Show in Atlanta. A member of the Georgia Hall of Fame since 1985, Anderson was joined by **Roy Stevens** and **Billy Joe Royal** to entertain the guests in concert. The festivities were shown all over the State of Georgia via PBS.

Speaking of Georgia, congratulations to retiring Governor **Zell Miller**—a man who has given much toward the furtherance of country music in his home state, and all over the nation. Governor Miller's love for the music and those who sing it is legendary. We would be so lucky if every governor in every state gave half the attention and good will to country music that Miller has given. It is my hope that the governor will continue to visit the Opry and Music City often. God bless Zell Miller. Georgia will miss The Gov.

POP GO MAVS

Country radio will not play **The Mavericks**, so MCA will promote the group pop instead of country. They're now being worked out of the label's L.A. offices, and have found themselves big stars in Europe.

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People

IN CONCERT

Those grand old men of the Grand Ole Opry are on the concert trail. Eighty-nine-year-old **Bill Carlisle** and 84-year-old **Pete "Oswald" Kirby** trekked to East Tennessee, where they performed at the Museum of Appalachia. If you don't think that's cool, then you are just into show biz for money. Now, you groupies stay home and leave them boys alone...

JERRY CLOWER: 1926-1998

The voice of the funnyman in the bright red suit is silenced. Marcell, Udell, Odell, Clovis and the rest of the Ledbetters were laid to rest with the passing of **Jerry Clower**. The former fertilizer salesman made his brags for 32 years that he'd never missed a performance. Little did Jerry know when he felt tired before a performance not long ago in Hiwassee, Georgia, that he'd never walk on stage again. On August 24th, five days after six-bypass surgery in Jacksonville, Mississippi, he went into cardiac arrest. The 71-year-old Clower's funeral was held at East Fork Baptist Church, where he served as deacon and lay minister. He was buried in the church cemetery. America lost a funnyman, and the Grand Ole Opry lost the man who was most honored to be a part of its legacy. Jerry's pride in his association with the Opry and his nearly 30 years with MCA Records

HENDRICKS FLYING HIGH



Seen taking to the skies with the Blue Angels flying squad before taking his chair at Virgin Records-Nashville is the head of the new label, **Scott Hendricks**. He survived the flight and has the new label up and running in the former Rising Tide building on Music Row. Hendricks previously held the top spot at Capitol-Nashville.

were legendary. From his first album, *Jerry Clower Live From Yazoo City—Mississippi Talking*, to his most recent, the posthumously released *Peaches and Possums*, there was no one who could tell a story like Clower. His unique, down-

home style and his beloved characters, the fictional Ledbetter clan, will be missed. Donations can be made to the church's building fund in Jerry's memory (44675 South Newman Rd., Liberty, MS 39645). The weekend after Clower's death, he was honored by the entire Opry cast in various ways. Perhaps the most memorable was when **Stonewall Jackson** walked up to the mike and said, "I want to dedicate this song to Jerry Clower," and sang "Jesus Is My Lifeline." There was not a dry eye in the building.

COLLIN GOES NUMBER ONE

ASCAP hosted a Number One party for **Collin Raye** following the success of his single, the chart-topping "I Can Still Feel You." There is a story worth telling behind this song. When Collin heard the song, he didn't know who wrote it, but said he liked what the song said and could relate to the lyrics. Turns out his ex-girlfriend (for five years!), **Tammy Hyler**, wrote the song with **Kim Tribble**. What's more, she wrote the words about the break-up between herself and Collin! Collin must have shared some of her feelings, because he recorded the song and made it believable, and it went Number One. It just goes to show you that a Music City songwriter will share a broken heart to get a Number One song.



Honoring Collin Raye's Number One, "I Can Still Feel You," at the fancy ASCAP digs are, left to right: publisher **Woody Bomar**, Sony's **Jack Lameier**, songwriter **Tammy Hyler**, **Collin Raye**, songwriter **Kim Tribble**, publisher **Tom Long**, ASCAP's little ole party giver-executive **Connie Bradley**, Sony's **Paul Worley** and **Rob Dalton**.

If horsepower the IRS would

If horsepower were taxable, our 8 liter Magnum® V-10 alone would be an auditor's dream. At 310 horsepower, we'd have to declare it the most powerful gasoline pickup engine available. A fitting title, indeed, for what was the very first 10-cylinder pickup engine the world had ever seen.

Dodge Ram's 5.9 liter Magnum V-8 is not easily overlooked, either. Put it down as a very substantial contribution of 245 horsepower. And while we're at it, we



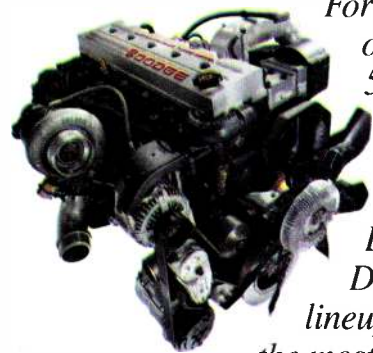
mustn't forget to account for the other Magnum V-8, the 5.2 liter. That adds another 230 horsepower to the Dodge Ram Magnum engine lineup.

File away another 175 horsepower for the standard 3.9 liter V-6, and we're totaling close to a thousand horsepower. Impressive.

Then there's the matter of the Ram Cummins Turbo Diesel. That's an additional 235 horsepower.



were taxable, be all over us.



For you torque-crunchers out there, the 24-valve, 5.9 liter Cummins tops out at 460 lb-ft.

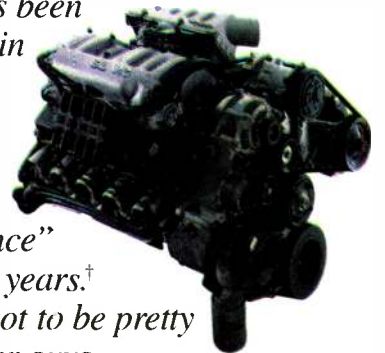
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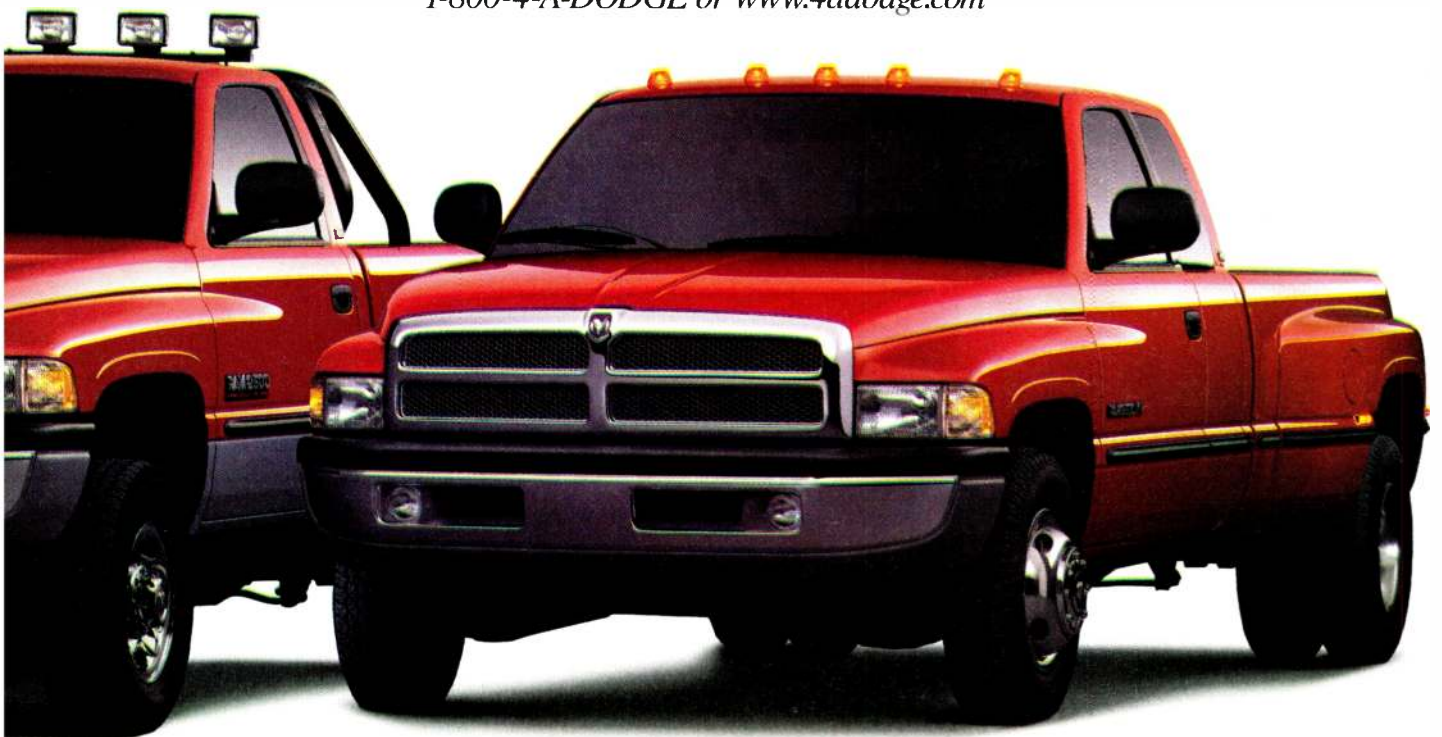
You know, that's got to be pretty taxing for those other guys.



*Based on percentage of 7/88-7/97 new pickup registrations still registered on 7/1/97. Data source: The Polk Company. †Winner of Strategic Vision's 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 Total Quality Award™ for "Best Ownership Experience" in the Full-Size Pickup class. 1998 Vehicle Experience Study™ surveyed 32,191 Oct.-Nov. new vehicle buyers of 200+ models after the first 90 days of ownership. Always use seat belts. Remember a backseat is the safest place for children.

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Partying for "Now That I Found You" are publishers Tim Wipperman and Jody Williams, ASCAP's Ralph Murphy, the star Miss Terri Clark, and songwriters Vanessa Corish and Paul Begaud.

NUMBER ONE FUN WITH T.C.

The Cat in the Hat, aka **Terri Clark**, celebrated her first Number One record at ASCAP, titled "Now That I Found You." With all her hits, and her Gold and platinum success, I was truly surprised that this was her first Number One single. Terri shows up, arm in sling. What happened this time? She decided she wanted a Harley. Up the road went Terri, laughing all the way, when lo and behold, she hit a patch of grass, lost the bike and slid belly first all the way across the grass in her yard! Three bones were broken in her arm, and a slightly used Harley went up for sale. Thought you'd like to know that Terri, arm out of sling, gave herself a 30th birthday party. Her publicist, **Ben Payne**, brought along his best friend, Vandy football coach **Woody Widenhofer**. Next thing I hear is Terri, at the coach's invitation, is watching the Vandy team practice, and the coach presents the star with a team jersey complete with her name. Friends, I am watching this. Stay tuned.

ALAN JACKSON GROOVING AGAIN

When the cynically opinionated **Rich Kienzle** and the cynically opinionated **Hazel Smith** agree on music, you know it's slightly shy of being a miracle. Such is the case with **Alan Jackson's** newest music, *High Mileage*. Me and Rich, we understand and agree that each song included on the record belongs there. Not a throw-

away in the bunch. No waste, not a dull subject. It's an attention-getter from the opener, "Right On the Money," plumb through "Amarillo," the last track. Arista invited a few movers and shakers to a chips 'n' dip listening party where the

overall-clad star dropped by, sans hat—a ball cap will do. "Maybe it's good to have a lot of miles," said Alan, referring to the title, *High Mileage*. "You get rusty setting around," he added with a shy Jackson grin. He ain't rusty, pal. I looked long at Alan and thought, shoot, if I had any Hollywood pull, I'd have Alan Jackson's butt in the movies before you could say he's as tall as John Wayne. Can Alan act? Well, when he gives interviews, he smiles. That's Alan acting!

NO KISSING

Word we get from **Randy Travis**, he's on location in Arkansas on the film *White River Kid* with **Antonio Banderas** and **Ellen Barkin**. Playing the role of a mean sheriff, Randy gets flirted with by Ellen Barkin's character. "But I didn't get to kiss her," allowed Randy.

THREE GOOD OLD BOYS

Why would three good old boys like **John Anderson**, **Lee Roy Parnell** and **Mark Collie** spend a week in Park City, Utah? To film an episode of CBS-TV's Saturday night program, *Walker, Texas Ranger*, that's why. The threesome play bad guy brothers from the 1800's.

1998 CMA AWARD WINNERS

Entertainer of the Year	Garth Brooks
Song of the Year	"Holes in the Floor of Heaven"
Songwriter	Billy Kirsch, Steve Wariner
Single of the Year	"Holes in the Floor of Heaven"
Artist and record company	Steve Wariner/Capitol-Nashville
Album of the Year	<i>Everywhere</i>
Artist and record company	Tim McGraw/Curb Records
Female Vocalist of the Year	Trisha Yearwood
Male Vocalist of the Year	George Strait
Vocal Duo of the Year	Brooks & Dunn
Vocal Group of the Year	The Dixie Chicks
Vocal Event of the Year	Patty Loveless with George Jones
	"You Don't Seem to Miss Me"
Musician of the Year	Brent Mason
Horizon Award	The Dixie Chicks
Music Video of the Year	"This Kiss"
Artist and director	Faith Hill/Steven Goldmann
Hall of Fame	George Morgan, Elvis Presley, E.W. "Bud" Wendell, Tammy Wynette

People

MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS

The above is the request our very own **Deana Carter** received from actor **Bruce Willis** of Hollywood fame. "Yes," she answered, before you could hum a chorus of "Strawberry Wine." The occasion was the grand opening of yet another Planet Hollywood. Deana joined Willis and **John Goodman** onstage for a rousing version of "Hanky Panky." Others there for the celebrating: **Melanie Griffith**, **Chuck Berry**, **Luke Perry** and **James Caan**.

AARON COVERS PLAYGIRL

Didja see **Aaron Tippin**'s picture on the cover of the September issue of *Playgirl Magazine*? I did, and I whistled. I didn't dare look inside for fear Aaron would be flexing his muscles, or something. Actually, Aaron didn't remove a stitch of clothing for the magazine. His mama made sure of that...she reportedly attended the photo shoot. They say Aaron is the first country star on a *Playgirl* cover. Aaron has a new album out too, titled *What This Country Needs*, which he co-produced.

THERE ARE STARS, AND THERE'S DOLLY

Dolly Parton is by far the biggest star I ever met. When BMI sent out the invitation that they were honoring Dolly upon



Deana Carter joined Hollywooders **John Goodman** (left) and **Bruce Willis** at the opening of a Planet Hollywood in St. Louis.

the release of her new record, *Hungry Again*, I knew everybody and their brother would show up, and they did. Wearing a short frock of many colors and mauve stiletto heels, Dolly was every inch the legend one would expect her to be. First off, **Frances Preston**, CEO/President of BMI, came down from her New York City digs to Twang Town to introduce Dolly. Frances said when she moved

to New York 12 years ago to run BMI worldwide, she expected the curious to ask about Music Row, the Grand Ole Opry, the Hall of Fame, etc., and they did. But what they really wanted to know, and the most asked question, was, "Do you really know Dolly Parton?" **Terri Clark** showed up for the party and got to meet Dolly for the first time, and, like everybody else, Terri became a child again who had met a hero. Dolly is the kind of special that makes others feel special.

FAMILY MATTERS



Hank Jr. and half-sister **Jett Williams** join sculptor **Bill Rains** in honoring the entertainers' father, **Hank Williams**, at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville. The sculpture of Hank is the centerpiece of a new Hank exhibit at the Hall of Fame. Word is, this is the first time Junior and Jett have met face-to-face.

JMM CHANGED SOMETHING BESIDES DIAPERS

John Michael Montgomery says fatherhood has made him a better man. Since **Madi-son Caroline** came into his life, John Michael says he is better to everybody and everything. JMM says he's changed. It's been my experience that changing diapers tends to change a boy into a man. And sometimes a boy is 40 when he finally reaches manhood.... This isn't being a feminist, it's being a realist.

TO THE RYMAN

Stop a minute and thank Chevrolet for sponsoring this year's bluegrass series at the Ryman Auditorium. Now finish reading this wonderful information. Yes, I went to the powerful **Osborne Brothers** show, and, yes, they still have the finest band in country music. They also have a fine new CD in the marketplace titled *From Hyden to The Ryman*. This is first in a four-part series of CD's featuring them singing songs that fit them as they

People

cut their show biz trail. I hear that this music is like their early stuff that was so marvelous. You can order the CD from their web site at www.osbornebros.com.

NO D-I-V-O-R-C-E, E!

At the very time that cable channel E! Entertainment Television reported **Shania Twain** and her hubby/co-writer/producer **Mutt Lange** had separated, she was on the road in concert, and he was on the road with her, mixing sound for her concerts. Mutt produces many other pop acts and does travel quite a bit in his work; however, his top priority is his wife.

JIM & JESSE HAD A PARTY

The 11:30 A.M. luncheon at the fancy Merchants Restaurant was a far piece from a can of vienna sausage and soda crackers cramped in the back seat of a car going down or up some mountainous blacktop with a bass fiddle tied on top of the vehicle. **Jim & Jesse** put lots of mileage on their bodies traveling the bluegrass road map pre-interstate. Rib-eye served on a china plate

ELDON SHAMBLIN: 1916-1998

Guitarist-arranger Eldon Shamblin, whose arranging skills and free-flowing rhythm guitar work with Bob Wills' Texas Playboys became a pillar of Western swing, died on August 5th in Tulsa of heart failure. He was 81. Born in Weatherford, Oklahoma, in 1916, he was a self-taught guitarist who sang and played over KTUL radio in Tulsa before Bob Wills hired him in 1937. While his arranging skills (also self-taught) and guitar talents gave The Playboys greater sophistication, it was his revolutionary guitar-steel duets with Leon McAuliffe that launched the guitar ensemble sound still used in country and rock. A Texas Playboy before and after World War II, he finally left in the 1950's to tune pianos and repair electric organs in Tulsa. After appearing on the 1970 Bob Wills tribute LP that started the Western swing revival, he returned to fulltime playing with Merle Haggard's Strangers in 1975, remaining with Hag until the 1980's. He actively recorded, performed and taught music until diabetes and heart trouble slowed him in the mid-90's. In late August, a Shamblin tribute show in Tulsa featured longtime friend Lee Roy Parnell and a number of former Texas Playboys. —RICH KIENZLE

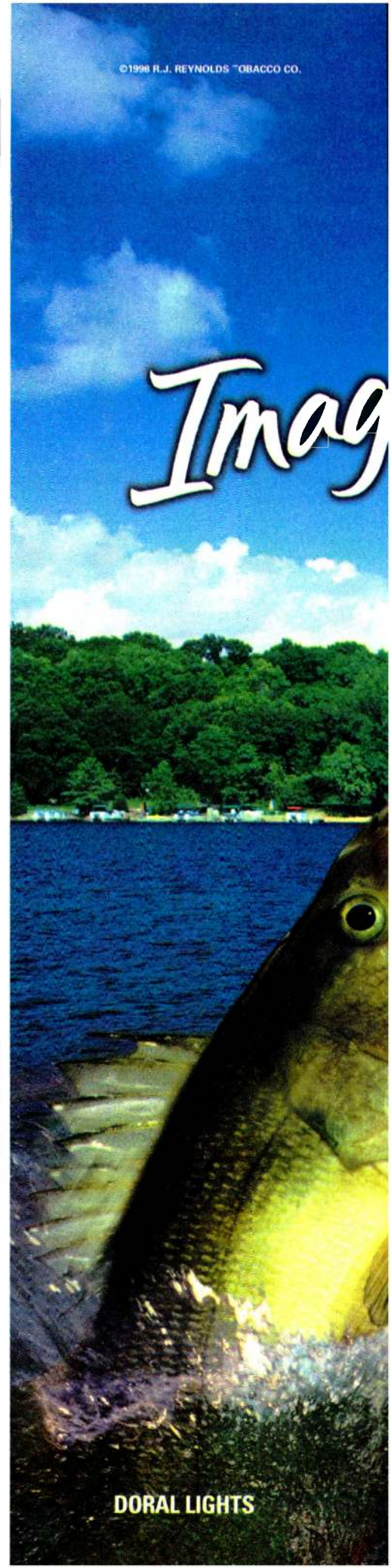
and linen tablecloths with napkins followed by live bluegrass is about as close to heaven as I expect to get on this earth. Jesse announced, "This is our 51st year in show business and our 50th album.....guess they call 'em CD's now, and this is our first record release party." Titled *Songs From the Homeplace*, it needs to be in your collection. You know, those bluegrassers will sing about home, mountains, cabins, dining, mama, heaven and little darlings.

TENNESSEE SONSHINE

There's only one Tennessee Sonshine, and it is East Tennessee's own **Kenny Chesney**, who happens to be my friend. Wonderful Kenny celebrated his proudest Number One with "That's Why I'm Here." During the festivities at BMI, Kenny explained what the song meant to him. Even though it was a great song, he was afraid at first to record it since it was about an alcoholic who was attending AA. It's always difficult to get radio to play a controversial song. I personally want to thank Kenny and labelhead **Joe Galante**. They took a chance with this song, and it turned out to be the right decision. Kenny's fan club, his web site, and the record label have all received virtually thousands of letters from parents, spouses and children of alcoholics saying how the song had made a difference in their lives, or the lives of their loved one. Kenny told me about a little girl around eight years old who ran up to him outside a concert, threw her arms around him and said, "Thank you for that song. My daddy has come back home." Kenny also told me that he would be giving up bachelorhood in November when he marries hometown girl **Mandy Weal**. Congrats to my friend, Kenny.

AS THE STORK FLIES AND LANDS

Maggie Elizabeth McGraw was born on August 12th to **Faith Hill** and **Tim McGraw**, who also did well at the CMA Awards. Maggie joins sister **Gracie**, who is two years old. Hope these girls favor their pretty mama. That's not to say Tim is not pretty, but Faith is prettier. **Richie** and **Lorie McDonald** are the proud parents of a daughter, **Hollie Ann**. Daddy is a member of **Lonestar**. Born to **Mark Wills** and his wife, **Kelly**, is a daughter, **Mally Ann**. They tell me the "m-a" is for Mark and the "l-l-y" is from Kelly, therefore Mally. Cute, and a country-sounding name. **Lee Greenwood**, age 56, and his wife have named their new son **Parker**. Parker was born in Nashville at Baptist Hospital. The family spends most of its time in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, where Daddy-o performs at the theater bearing his name.



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SOMETHING THAT THEY DID



Skip Ewing and Clint Black were honored by the Nashville Songwriters Association International with the Song of the Year Award for their co-written song, "Something That We Do." The song, a Number One hit for Clint, became the theme of Skip's recent 3,741-mile bicycle ride across America to raise awareness for Habitat for Humanity. It's also included on Black's current album.

AT THE CHURCH

James Monroe, son of the late Bill Monroe, had a stained glass window designed and installed at Holiday Heights Baptist Church in Hendersonville where his father attended. Bill would have loved this.

I REMEMBER DICK HEARD

Several years ago, when Dick Heard was presented the media award by the CMA, I was reminded of how this man had quietly, almost singlehandedly, snuck *Entertainment Tonight* into town without noise or fanfare. Thereafter, our music was on national TV almost every night. I met Dick about the time he and Eddie Rabbitt wrote "Kentucky Rain" for Elvis Presley. He wrote and produced many memorable songs, and was president and general manager of GRT Records, where he was associated with Freddy Fender, Jimmy Dean, Ronnie McDowell and Johnny Lee. He produced TV shows, owned a publishing company and wrote a book titled *Elvis Up Close: In the Words of Those Who Knew Him Best*. Richard Martin "Dick" Heard died at Summitt Medical Center after losing a battle with cancer. He was 61 years old.

HANSON

You kids who are fans of Hanson need to know the group appeared in Nashville for a sell-out crowd at Starwood. You also need to know that Ricky Skaggs treated the Hanson family, band and crew to a barbeque at his Hendersonville home. There was steak, hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill, along with tossed salad and dessert. The entire family of seven kids, plus mama and daddy, travel on the bus with all the other help, totaling about 20 people. Ricky's wife, Sharon, was on the road with her family band, The Whites, when Ricky realized he didn't even know how to make iced tea. Not to worry, Ricky called his mama-in-law, that iced-tea-making Pat White, who came to the rescue and also made a tossed salad to die for. Mama Pat deserved flowers for saving the day, and of course she got roses from R.S.

VINCE NEWS

I took myself down to Golf House Tennessee, located in Franklin, for the unveiling and dedication of a sculpture titled "Judge's Court" in memory of the late Judge J. Stanley Gill, father of superstar Vince Gill. Located in the courtyard, the sculpture depicts the judge in golfing clothes, with eight-year-old Vince all smiles with iron in air and frog in pocket.

When the senior Gill passed away, donations received in his memory were used toward the statue. An emotional Vince explained "Judge's Court" represents the relationship between a father and son, or a teacher and pupil, and has nothing to do with his celebrity. Among the many guests in attendance were Vince's daughter, Jenny, his sister, Gina, his record producer Tony Brown, and his friend, Guy Clark, who performed "The Randall Knife." Guy penned the song after his dad passed away some years back, and Vince played guitar on the session. When Judge Gill died, Vince sang the song at his funeral—and on the CMA Awards Show.

Vince, the golfer who sings for his supper, hosted the annual Vinny, the celeb tourney that benefits junior golfers in the state of Tennessee. I hear they netted over \$300,000. The Vinny is Vince's favorite charity. More Vince...let's talk about his new CD titled *The Key*. It's not only the countryest, but the finest record of his career. Vince-man said he'd been missing *real* country music lately, so he decided he'd go in the studio and record some, so he could hear some again. Since the record release, Vince has been hearing "me too's" all over the country. This is the second album in this issue that cynical Rich Kienzle and cynical me agree on. All you upstarts, go get yourself a copy of *The Key* and learn what country music is supposed to sound like.

FIDLING AROUND



Roy Clark, who has been fiddling around more years than he has fingers and toes, is shown here with Drew Carey on the set of ABC-TV's *The Drew Carey Show*. The episode Clark appeared in was scheduled for September 30. Catch the reruns!

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 - The Mavericks—What A Crying Shame (MCA Nashville) 474403
 - Faith Hill—Take Me As I Am (Warner Bros.) 473728
 - John Michael Montgomery—Kickin' It Up (Atlantic) 473157
 - Blackhawk (Arista) 473397
 - Collin Raye—Extremes (Epic) 473025
 - Common Thread: Songs Of The Eagles—Clint Black, Trisha Yearwood, Alan Jackson, more. (Giant) 469999
 - Trisha Yearwood—The Song Remembers When (MCA Nashville) 469924
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 - Billy Ray Cyrus—It Won't Be The Last (Mercury Nashville) 463240
 - Shania Twain (Mercury Nashville) 458273
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- Brooks & Dunn—Brand New Man (Arista) 429969
- Trisha Yearwood (MCA) 426148
- George Strait—Chill Of An Early Fall (MCA) 417634
- Reba McEntire—Rumor Has It (MCA) 411538
- Alan Jackson—Here In The Real World (Arista) 406785
- Reba McEntire—Live (MCA) 400739
- Dwight Yoakam—Just Lookin' For A Hit (Reprise) 389718
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 - Chris Cummings (Warner Bros.) 235903
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 - "Switchback"—Martina McBride, Vince Gill, Alison Krauss, more. (RCA Nashville) 226787
 - Mark Chesnut—Thank God For Believers (Decca) 221341
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 - Patsy Cline—Live At The Cimarron Ballroom (MCA Nashville) 216861
 - James Bonamy—Roots And Wings (Epic) 214718
 - John Anderson—Takin' The Country Back (Mercury Nashville) 214569
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 - Dwight Yoakam—Under The Covers (Reprise) 214528
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 - Daryle Singletary—All Because Of You (Giant) 169078
 - Trisha Yearwood—Everybody Knows (MCA Nashville) 168591
 - Vince Gill—High Lonesome Sound (MCA Nashville) 168567
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The Bellamy Brothers <i>Greatest Hits Vol. Two</i> (MCA/Curb)	349738
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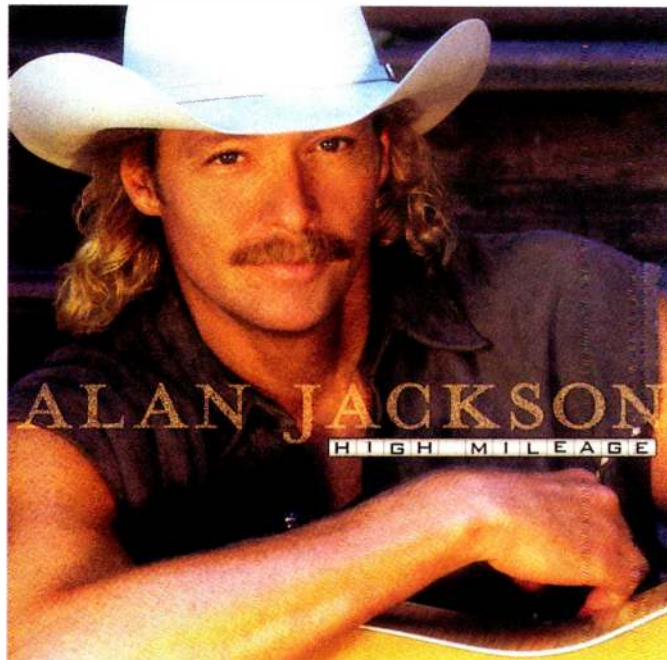
Record Reviews

Alan Jackson
High Mileage
Arista 18864

Why is it that, except for an odd track here and there, I've liked every Alan Jackson album starting with his debut, *Here in the Real World*? Three reasons. Where some artists hit extremes of good and awful on a single album, Jackson's consistency means that even the tracks not issued as singles equal (and sometimes surpass) those that are. Second, he retains the ability to be creative within his sound and his style, not easily done. Third, beneath Jackson's relaxed confidence are tough, uncompromising musical standards and the highly capable production of Keith Stegall, who was there from the start.

From the promise of that first album eight years ago, Jackson has taken forward steps of increasing confidence, never stepping back. He's developed maturity and a low-keyed musical vision all but oblivious to the demands of the marketplace. His growth from newcomer to commodity has not adversely affected his music. As a vocalist, he retains the resounding understatement he had in the beginning, adding maturity and authority born of experience. As a writer, he's not only avoided the dead end of hook songs, but has grown into the most masterful storyteller of his generation. His best work has a timeless realism that can stand with Harlan Howard, Roger Miller or Merle Haggard.

Jackson's genius for understatement is obvious on the first track, "Right on the Money," an easygoing, Charlie Black and Phil Vassar love song whose litany of slang phrases—a pain in the butt in



most current songs—is neutralized by Jackson's lazily sunny performance. His own sorrowful "Gone Crazy" confronts the time-honored pain of an empty house, the punch line, "Ever since you left/I've been gone," packing more emotional wallop than any slick hook phrase. His storytelling genius surges full force on "Little Man," the lament of small towns bowled over by malls, 24-hour mini-marts and megastores. His novelist's eye for rich, evocative detail ("an old Coke sign dated 1950") truly brings what's left of that town to life.

Kieran Kane's "I'll Go On Loving You," the album's first single, was a risky venture, reviving as it does a Nashville tradition long out of favor: the recitation. Hank and Porter did them, as did Cash, Ferlin Husky and Red Sovine. Emotionally potent in the right hands, maudlin and pretentious (even hilarious) in the wrong hands, recitations have to be done right. This roman-

tic, sensual and dramatic number, nicely enriched with strings, serves as a potent reminder of the medium's power. The bittersweet nostalgia of the Mel Beshar-Charlie Craig ballad, "What a Day Yesterday Was," retains a vivid, life-affirming edge.

The rock edge of Jackson's own "Hurtin' Comes Easy" gives it commerciality, yet remains true to those high standards I mentioned earlier. Those standards even redeem the album's sole dance track, the Harley Allen-Carson Chamberlain ditty, "Another Good Reason"—it's a tough performance embellished with blazing guitar. "A Woman's Love," another engaging original, reflects Jackson's usual straightforwardness, as does the eloquent Chamberlain/Brian Tabor/Michael White love story, "Dancin' All Around." "Amarillo," the Jackson original that closes the album, is the time-honored tale of a lover leaving town while the singer retains a tiny

sliver of hope she'll return.

As a beacon of excellence in unsettled musical times, Alan Jackson's continuing triumph proves that quality can win out—even in an era when bean counters, consultants and no-talent poseurs too often seem to be in charge. For that, we can all be grateful.

—RICH KIENZLE

Emmylou Harris
Spyboy
Eminent EM-25001

Right now, Emmylou is two-thirds of the way to the Country Music Hall of Fame, her influence over the past quarter-century beyond question. After Gram Parsons' death, she combined his legacy and vision with her own, and made it all matter. Not only did she pave the way for the success of The Desert Rose Band, but no less than Ricky Skaggs, Rodney Crowell and Jon Randall were launched from her band, as were MCA honcho Tony Brown and guitar wizard Albert Lee. She reintroduced not only bluegrass, but also the genius of The Louvin Brothers, to mainstream audiences who'd ignored the former and forgotten the latter. No one deserves more credit for making the world safe for Alison Krauss and other modern bluegrassers while maintaining ties with Bill Monroe and other pillars of tradition.

Spyboy, a career summary more engaging than most, is also the name of her tough little trio of guitarist Buddy Miller (a major talent in his own right), and drummer Brady Blade and bassist Daryl Johnson, both of whom worked on *Wrecking Ball*, her Daniel Lanois-produced non-country album. I personally

Record Reviews

didn't care for that album when it appeared, yet it clearly broadened her appeal to the alt-rock crowd. The 14 live performances on *Spyboy*, however, filtered through her Lanois experience, can appeal to old and new fans, her weathered voice curling around each number, beginning with "Songbird" from *Quarter Moon in a Ten Cent Town*.

"Where Will I Be," "All My Tears" and "Deeper Well" all hail from *Wrecking Ball*, and seem more accessible here than they did on that record. Revisiting Crowell's "Ain't Livin' Long Like This" from *Quarter Moon*, *Spyboy* adds even more kick than the Hot Band had on its version. She first recorded "Love Hurts," the Everly Brothers hit, with Parsons when she sang in his band. She gives the traditional "Green Pastures" from *Roses in the Snow* a treatment of majestic dignity and does the same with her own "Prayer in Open D" from *Cowgirl's Prayer* and the unaccompanied "Calling My Children Home" (sung with the band) from *Live at the Ryman*. One of *Luxury Liner's* most moving ballads, "Tulsa Queen," co-written with Crowell, is followed by "Wheels," which appeared on *Elite Hotel* (and which Parsons recorded with the original Flying Burrito Brothers). She revives both "Born to Run" from *Cimarron* and, from her first album, *Pieces of the Sky*, the classic "Boulder to Birmingham." Lanois' "The Maker," which closes the album, wasn't on *Wrecking Ball*, but comes from his own 1990 solo album. In fact, the songs from that album, and her decision to tackle this complex but compelling number, are enough to make me try *Wrecking Ball* again.

Emmylou is far from the only artist to revisit her previous work this way. Too often, these albums are exercises in nostalgia, sometimes palatable, but too often sad reminders of what once was. This one does not fall into that category. Not only does it validate the past 25 years, it demonstrates



how creatively reinventing one's repertoire keeps it new and fresh. Other veterans pondering such albums, take notice. —RICH KIENZLE

Willie Nelson *Teatro*

Island 314-524 548

Critics are forever moaning and groaning about younger country artists who abandon the old traditions in the chase for crossover success. These journalists (and I'm as guilty as anyone) ask, how much can you change the instrumentation, the rhythms, the subject matter and the attitude and still call it country music? What happens to the legacy of Hank Williams, Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson if no one keeps it alive?

But no one—not Shania Twain, not Garth Brooks—is tampering with country-music tradition as radically as Nelson has on his latest album, *Teatro*. The weather-beaten, gray-bearded Texan recorded the project in an abandoned Mexican movie theater in Oxnard, California. Producer Daniel Lanois—best known for his work with U2, Bob Dylan and The Neville Brothers—framed Nelson's voice with tumbling, shuddering rhythms; dreamy, sustained guitars; and eerie, ethereal echo. The results sound like a Lefty Frizzell show broadcast from a humming silver spaceship in a 1950's sci-fi flick.

For all its otherworldly sound, however, *Teatro* is unmistakably a country album. Sever. of the 14 tracks, in fact,



came from the 1961-66 period when Nelson was a Nashville songwriter, penning hits for Patsy Cline and Faron Young and trying to jumpstart his own career. These tales of crumbling marriages are slices of classic honky tonk, and Nelson's three new compositions, though more hopeful about romance, are in the same vein. In other words, Nelson has remained true to tradition even as he has thoroughly recast its sound and shape. How does he pull it off?

He pulls it off by aiming his crossover moves at artistic targets rather than commercial ones. He's not working with drummers from the rock groups Luscious Jackson and The Scott Weiland Band because he thinks they'll get his next video on MTV (fat chance) or CMT (even fatter) but because their rolling, rumbling beats capture the way problems develop their own momentum beyond lovers' control. Nelson gets Lanois to play his thick-as-cream electric guitar lines not because they're hip but because they evoke the slow-motion quality of a romantic crisis.

Teatro opens with a jazz instrumental by the great Frenchman, Django Reinhardt, and closes with another jazz instrumental by Nelson himself, who reminds us once again that he is as brilliant an acoustic guitarist as he is a singer and songwriter. The breezy, elastic quality of those two swing tunes carries over to the dozen songs in between (10 by Nelson, one by Texas swing legend Chester Odom and a hymn by Lanois). Joining Nelson, Lanois and the two

rock drummers are jazz keyboardist Brad Mehldau, slide guitarist Brian Griffiths and two veterans of Nelson's road band—his sister Bobbie on Wurlitzer piano and Mickey Raphael on harmonica.

Crucial to the triumph of *Teatro*, however, are the harmony vocals of Emmylou Harris, who had worked with Lanois on her own experimental project, 1995's *Wrecking Ball*. Harris' voice is often half a beat behind Nelson's, thus suggesting the fate of the songs' lovers, who are close but never quite together. Her silky soprano and his craggy baritone are two of the best known signature voices in country music, and hearing them shadow each other on this album is a rare pleasure indeed.

When Nelson sings "I love you in my own peculiar way," he could be talking about his approach to country. Whether he's singing a creepy murder ballad like "I Just Can't Let You Say Good-Bye," the post-break-up lament of "Pick Up the Pieces" or the transparent fibs of "I Never Cared for You," the arrangements are mighty peculiar indeed, but they deliver the ache and hope that have always been the heart of the music.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Allison Moorer *Alabama Song* MCA 70028

Maybe it's a matter of conscience, or merely an unwillingness to admit defeat. It's hard to imagine why else Nashville's labels continue to occasionally sign, champion and promote the hell out of a few token tradition-based or left-of-center artists, even when country radio—the tail that now wags the dog—has made it clear it's not interested.

Shelby Lynne, Kelly Willis, Aaron Tippin, Marty Brown, David Ball, the brilliant Bobbie Cryner.... These are just a few

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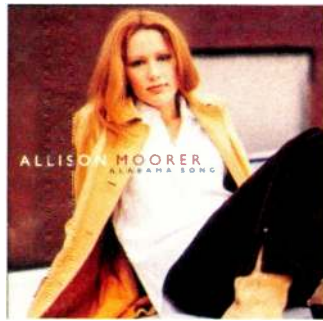
of many such gifted singers whose recording careers have ultimately become “playlist roadkill.”

Now MCA, having gotten nowhere with Marty Brown, or Bobbie Cryner, or even George Jones (whom the label recently dropped), or with Patty Loveless (who only found big-time success when she went up the street to Sony), has signed yet another latter-day neo-traditionalist.

Allison Moorer (who is Shelby Lynne's younger sister) is certainly a worthy and timely choice. Her dusky, sultry, sometimes brutally cool, mid-range voice is impressive indeed. She has a restrained elegance that's vaguely reminiscent of vintage Tammy Wynette, and very reminiscent of her sister, Shelby. Additionally, the ten original songs on *Alabama Song* (all of which Moorer co-wrote with her husband, Doyle Primm) are, for the most part, a far cry from the usual Music Row song mill fodder. Many of these songs chart complex and often troubled emotional waters while steering clear of easy answers and stock sentimentality.

I could go on about how Allison Moorer may indeed be too good for country radio, but I've sawed on that old saw enough already. Besides, contemporary country radio is a pretty brainless and tacky format against which to judge any serious talent. Moorer certainly deserves better. The best tracks on *Alabama Song* aren't the kinds of songs that immediately hook you with superficial cleverness or bowl you over with unrestrained emotion. Moorer's brilliance often lies in the power of restraint and understatement. You can hear this in the almost offhanded way she sings the opening lines of “Call My Name” and only gradually opens up the full measure of the song's desolate, unbearable loneliness.

“A Soft Place to Fall,” which was featured in the movie, *The Horse Whisperer*, is another



gem of a song. In a beautifully subdued way Moorer grapples with the twisted emotions of old lovers who reunite on the rebound, only to spiral away again into their separate loneliness. Moorer's mood turns defiant and surly on “I've Already Set You Free.” The woman in this electrifying song has a sneer on her face as she shows her lover to the door and triumphs in the one-upmanship of bitter good-byes. There's nothing nice about it—even the churning, growling guitars in the song's edgy arrangement are charged with aggression and smoldering anger.

There is one ditty on here—a gutsy, drawingl Buck Owens-style outing called “The One That Got Away.” It's propelled by a lean and muscular guitar/steel arrangement, as are most of the tracks on *Alabama Song*. Producer Kenny Greenberg deserves special credit on this front for keeping the instrumentals clean, crisp and country.

Without fail, though, it's the slower, deeper-cutting songs that pull you in and hold you. On the title tune—which, on at least one level, is an ode to Moorer's home state—Moorer, in a wistful, offhanded way, conveys the yearning and dislocation of being stuck in one place and longing for another. One of the most unforgettable cuts of all is Moorer's lovely rendition of her friend, the late Walter Hyatt's own “Tell Me Baby.” It's hard to imagine a more fitting tribute to Hyatt, a gifted and somewhat overlooked singer/songwriter who left this world way too early.

Alabama Song closes with

another masterfully restrained tour de force. At first listen, “Is Heaven Good Enough for You” sounds like just another standard gospel tribute to a departed loved one. But on closer listen, it proves to be about a grief so profound that it shakes the pillars of faith.

Strong stuff, for sure. But it's songs like this that set this subtle yet powerful and mature debut album heads above the rest.

—BOB ALLEN



Junior Brown *Long Walk Back* Curb 77897

Anybody who's heard Junior Brown or read stories on him knows his roots spread wider than the Ernest Tubbs-Red Simpson-Hank Garland axis that earned him justifiable accolades. His music's part retro for sure, but with attitude and a few influences from classic rock and pop that the fortysomething Brown knows well. It's no less appealing that, so far, Brown's made his albums as he sees fit, handing them to Curb for release. That approach could revolutionize things if major labels adopted it with other artists. Individuality might flourish, which might scare the hell out of the quality-impaired market researchers who decide who gets on, you know, R-A-D-I-O.

Most of these 11 songs are Brown originals. There are beefy, twangy, honky-tonk laments such as the funky, shuffling “Long Walk Back to San Antone” and “Just a Little Love,” which brims with desperation. For unmatched raw

sorrow, “Read 'Em and Weep” allows Brown's wearily doleful vocal to unfold, uncluttered by amplification. It's a nice contrast to the preceding “The Better Half,” a roaring affirmation of blue-collar domestic bliss, and to the pure macho strut of “I'm All Fired Up.” In that same roaring vein is “Freedom Machine,” though it sounds like it was written to be picked up by an automaker for commercials. The guitar-steel licks that frame all his vocal performances come front and center for the playful instrumental, “Peelin' Taters.”

Brown plumbed the depths of kitsch for two non-originals. On Elvis' “Rock-A-Hula Baby,” which came from his visually breathtaking if incredibly insipid flick, *Blue Hawaii*, Junior's low-slung vocal, riding over a half-tough, half-bubbly arrangement, preserves the original's tackiness while giving it a screwball sheen that Elvis' version never had. That oddball perspective continues with the next song, from the Connie Francis archive (not “Tan Shoes and Pink Shoelaces,” thank God). Instead, it's a stomping interpretation of her 1964 rocker, “(I'm Just) Lookin' for Love,” that outguns her original by miles.

Junior's diverse musical vocabulary includes a deep admiration for Jimi Hendrix, who did as much for the guitar as Les Paul or Chet Atkins. To explore the Hendrix muse, he hired original Hendrix drummer Mitch Mitchell to play along on “Keepin' Up With You” and “Stupid Blues,” the album's two biggest mistakes. It's a given that Junior is a great picker. Nonetheless, his well-played Hendrixisms on both songs sound self-conscious and clichéd. While “Keepin' Up” has the advantage of brevity, the eight-minute-plus “Stupid Blues” revives one of the worst aspects of 60's music: the extended blues guitar jam. While Hendrix or Eric Clapton were both inventive enough to pull these off, nearly everyone else was not.

Two failed experiments,



YEAR OF THE WOLF

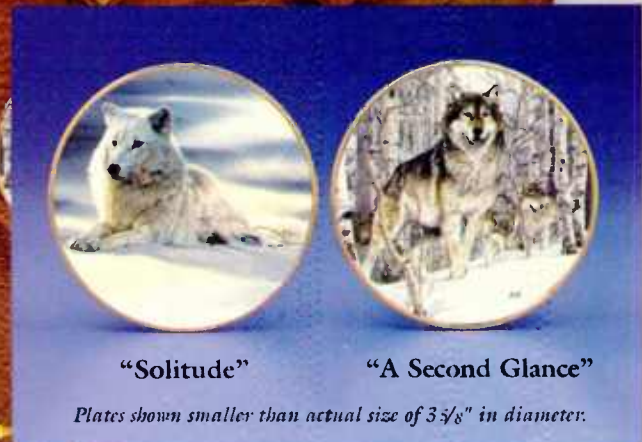
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however, don't constitute failure. In fact, were other artists as willing to work without a net as Junior has been from the start, they might actually create quality music and carve themselves a niche. Any mistakes here count less than the sense of joy and adventure that's marked everything Brown's done since the outset. So long as that remains as it does here, I'll gladly forget about the ones that get away.

—RICH KIENZLE

Danni Leigh

29 Nights

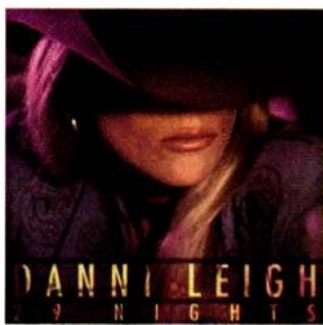
Decca DNRD-70032

If you've heard the first single, the marvelous "If the Jukebox Took Teardrops," you've just tasted the hors d'oeuvres. Danni Leigh's debut is a ten-course meal of real, solid, meat-and-potatoes, country honky-tonk music, co-produced by Mark Wright and Michael Knox.

I can't think of any of the recent, so-called neo-traditional women singers whose debut has impressed me this much. She's just so down to earth, so appealingly basic. Leigh drives an old Chevy pickup truck. She has dirt under her fingernails, a burr under her saddle and a kick-ass voice that takes these mostly-new songs and wrangles the best out of a subtype of country music I thought was only kept alive by funky, costumed retro acts.

Danni Leigh is sort of a retro heroine without being kitschy; a honky-tonker in the Loretta Lynn vein, sort of the female Dwight Yoakam. It is said she has the personality of Patsy Cline, who was quite salty and outspoken, a strong-minded woman in a man's world. Notwithstanding all these comparisons, she is very much her own woman. She writes on seven of the 11 tunes on this record, and holds her own doing it.

When Danni Leigh writes, she wears her influences on her sleeve. When she does a cover, she does the same. Her cover of



Merle Haggard/Tommy Collins' "Mixed Up Mess of a Heart" has Buck Owens and Loretta written all over it (two of my favorite country artists of all time); it kills me. She also covers Willie Nelson's "Touch Me," and gives it a distaff treatment a la Ray Price.

She hung out last fall in smoky Music City watering holes with Harlan Howard while her deal was being negotiated and her record planned. Harlan promised to write her a hit. She did cut a great tune in the Howard/Kostas-penned shuffle, "I Feel a Heartache Coming On." You gotta love a young tomboy beauty who has a feel for the real stuff, the honky-tonk tunes that put this kind of music into high gear decades ago.

She wrote a pair of tunes with new independent label artist Monte Warden, and they sizzle. Their "Chain Me," for instance (co-written also with Doug Swander), is a shuffle that drips with genuine, pre-rockabilly country swing.

Throughout, this album's a winner. There's no chaff. There's no crossover dreck. There's only a terrific surprise waiting for you when you crack the wrapping and slap this baby on your CD player.

—BOB MILLARD

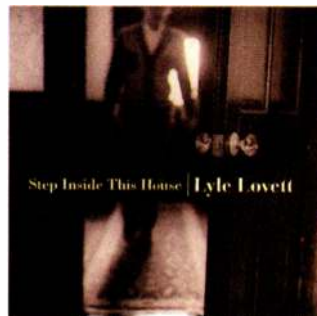
Lyle Lovett

Step Inside This House

Curb/MCA MCAD-11831

Some folks call them the "Cosmic Cowboys," others call them the "Lone Star Troubadours" or the "Armadillo Army," but whatever the la-

bel, there's a group of Texas songwriters whose mix of free-wheeling literary lyrics and down-home roots music sounds like nothing else in the world. Even before they heard Bob Dylan, pioneers such as Townes Van Zandt, Jerry Jeff Walker and Guy Clark had grasped the possibilities of narrative, satire and surrealism by listening to Houston bluesmen like Lightnin' Hopkins and itinerant cowboys like Ramblin' Jack Elliott. These pioneers took what Dylan was doing up north and gave it a distinctively Texas spin by tying their lyrics to honky tonk, Western swing and Tex-Mex.



Lyle Lovett is the purest product of that school, and he pays tribute to his Lone Star mentors on *Step Inside This House*. The two-CD set includes 21 songs written by Van Zandt, Clark, Robert Earl Keen, Willis Alan Ramsey, Michael Martin Murphey, Walter Hyatt, Steve Fromholz, Vince Bell, Eric Taylor and others. In Lovett's trademark dry, leathery voice, you can hear the great affection he has for these songs and their authors. And his loving tribute shines a welcome light on the often-overlooked, *original* alternative-country movement.

Except for Van Zandt's "If I Needed You," Lovett stays away from the best known "Cosmic Cowboy" songs. You won't find Van Zandt's "Poncho and Lefty," Clark's "Desperadoes Waiting for a Train," Walker's "Mr. Bojangles," Ramsey's "Watermelon Man," or Keen's "The Road Goes On Forever." Lovett figures everyone already knows those

songs; he prefers to call attention to such uncelebrated gems as Eric Taylor's "Memphis Midnight/Memphis Morning," the tale of a Texas boy losing his innocence on the road. With its sparkling visual details and sly commentary, it demands a patient, understated delivery, and that's just what Lovett is best at.

The first CD opens with Steve Fromholz's "Bears," a witty parable about prejudice; it's given an elegant string-band treatment by Lovett's all-star band, which includes mandolinist Sam Bush, dobroist Jerry Douglas and bassist Viktor Krauss (Alison's brother). The second CD opens with Fromholz's ambitious "Texas Trilogy," three linked songs that bring small-town East Texas to life. Fromholz was a great songwriter who never won the fame of many of his peers, and if Lovett's new album does nothing more than remind people of this forgotten figure, it will have performed a worthy service.

Only slightly better known was Walter Hyatt, whose Austin trio included future Nashville star David Ball and current Austin session pro Champ Hood. Hyatt, who died in the 1996 ValuJet crash in the Everglades, was Lovett's most direct influence and is represented on *Step Into This House* by four different songs. And on those numbers, Lovett joins Ball and Hood to recreate the three-part harmonies of Uncle Walt's Band beneath the bouncy rhythms and witty lyrics that anticipated so much of Lovett's own writing.

In similar fashion, Lovett calls our attention to Ramsey's "Sleepwalking," Keen's "Rollin' By" and a handful of Van Zandt compositions. With the tastefully restrained string-band arrangements, the seductively understated vocals and the pointed lack of celebrity guest spots, Lovett gives these songs what may be their definitive treatment.

The album's title comes from a 1971 Guy Clark song which invites the listener to "Step

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World Radio History

Record Reviews

Inside This House” to view a friend’s painting, an ex-girlfriend’s book of poems and a guitar handed down by a teacher. In a sense, Lovett is doing the same thing—in- viting us into his musical home to proudly show us the things he has collected along the way. “I’ll show you all the things I own, my treasures you might say,” he sings. “It couldn’t be more than \$10 worth, but they brighten up my day.”

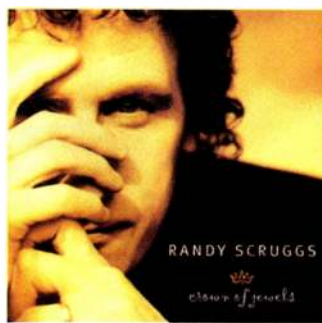
—GEOFFREY HIMES

Randy Scruggs *Crown of Jewels* Reprise 9-46930

An esteemed producer, songwriter and session guitarist, Randy Scruggs (son of bluegrass legend Earl Scruggs) has long been an influential behind-the-scenes player in country music. In recent years, he’s made his mark as a songwriter (Trisha Yearwood, Ricky Skaggs, Deana Carter and Waylon Jennings are just a few of the many artists who’ve covered his original tunes), a session guitarist (he’s backed Johnny Cash, Linda Ronstadt, Ricky Skaggs, Rosanne Cash, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and countless others on studio sessions) and a producer (recent credits include *Red Hot + Country*, the AIDS benefit album that featured an array of superstars, and *Keith Whitley—A Tribute Album*).

Crown of Jewels, Scruggs’ utterly compelling new album, makes you wonder why he’s waited so long to step forward as a solo artist. (In the past, Scruggs has recorded with his brother Gary as The Scruggs Brothers, and with Gary and their father, Earl, in The Earl Scruggs Revue.)

Admittedly, Scruggs’ many musical friendships have afforded him such a hefty line-up of guests that it’s stretching it to call this a “solo” outing. Mary Chapin Carpenter, Joan Osborne, Vince Gill, Bruce Hornsby, Rosanne Cash,



Trisha Yearwood, Emmylou Harris, Iris DeMent, Roger McGuinn, Amy Grant, Matraca Berg, Jerry Douglas, Harry Stinson, Marty Stuart, John Hiatt, Randy’s father Earl, his wife Lindsey Scruggs, and his brother Gary Scruggs are just some of the notables who lend a hand.

Yet it’s Scruggs’ prodigious talents as a producer as much as his affecting vocal style and his multi-instrumental prowess that makes these 12 tracks fall together so beautifully.

Scruggs has an appealing singing style that’s a bit reminiscent of Bob Dylan, only with a whole lot more range, tone and texture. Throughout *Crown of Jewels*, he’s content to share the spotlight with his various and illustrious friends and guests. He and Trisha Yearwood really connect on their duet version of “I Wanna Be Loved Back,” a yearning ballad co-written by Scruggs and Earl Thomas Conley. Scruggs and Mary Chapin Carpenter turn in a hushed rendition of “It’s Only Love,” a wistful ballad that the two of them co-wrote. Rosanne Cash gets her turn at the plate when she and Scruggs duet on “My Secret Life,” which they co-wrote some time ago. Travis Tritt joins Scruggs for a hearty rendition of the 70’s Pure Prairie League hit, “Amie.”

Scruggs and rock singer Joan Osborne deliver an absolutely galvanizing duet on the apocalyptic-sounding Scruggs/Johnny Cash composition, “Passing Through.” A Scruggs/John Prine duet similarly breathes vivid new life into the Steve Goodman chestnut, “City of New Orleans.”

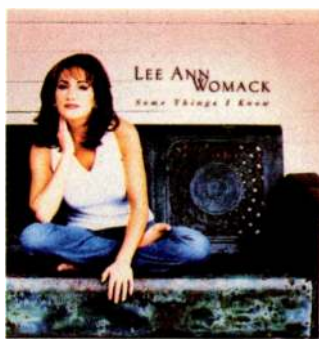
Bruce Hornsby puts his vocal and keyboard prowess to work on not only the title tune (a Hornsby composition), but also “Travel On,” a spirited Scruggs-penned instrumental that features Scruggs on lead guitar and Lee Roy Parnell on slide guitar. Along with his father, Earl, and contemporary Dobro master Jerry Douglas, Scruggs shines with similar power on a fiery bluegrass instrumental called “Lonesome Ruben.”

On “Wildwood Flower,” Scruggs is content to sit back and play the sideman. Joined by Sam Bush on mandolin, he lays down acoustic guitar, autoharp and five-string Dobro backing for a lovely Emmylou Harris-Iris DeMent duet.

It’s one thing to assemble such a diverse collection of talent on one album. It’s quite another to inspire such an array of stylistically diverse and consistently great performances from them. That’s what makes *Crown of Jewels* such a fine album, and such a fitting showcase of Scruggs’ remarkably multi-faceted talents.

With results like these 12 tracks, we can only hope he does it again soon!

—BOB ALLEN



Lee Ann Womack *Some Things I Know* Decca DRND-70040

Texas-born Nashville newcomer Lee Ann Womack gained a good bit of attention with her solid, self-named 1997 debut album, and if a clear-headed musical vision and uncluttered country instincts still

carry any weight at all, *Some Things I Know*, Womack’s second album, will really light some fires.

Womack has a high, quavering, deeply expressive voice that’s vaguely reminiscent of early Dolly Parton or a quirky latter-day country stylist like Pam Tillis. She at times sounds a bit thin and reedy on cute but piffly Music Row fodder like “A Little Past Little Rock” and “I’ll Think of a Reason Later.” But she’s impassioned and suitably inspired on a stunning ballad like Buddy and Julie Miller’s “Don’t Tell Me” and the lovely title track, which was co-written by Burton Collins and Sally Barris and features shadowy harmonies from Vince Gill.

Womack beautifully summons up just the right mixture of loss, regret and disgust on Bobby Braddock’s brilliant “I’d Rather Have What We Had.” In this powerful stone-country ballad, a woman laments over the fire, lust and romance that’s drained out of a relationship that’s descended from the thrilling “No-Tell Motel” phase into the dispiriting domesticity of dirty socks and dirty dishes. At one point in the song, Womack bitterly asks her equally disillusioned man which he liked best: “Sneakin’ around with me or bein’ tied down with me?” “I’d Rather Have What We Had” (on which Joe Diffie provides killer harmonies) is simply a killer song that might easily have been a hit for Tammy Wynette in her vintage years. Besides being a sterling performance from Womack, it once again reminds us that Bobby Braddock (who, in fact, wrote quite a few of Wynette’s and George Jones’ biggest hits) may be Nashville’s most enduring and accomplished songwriter.

On “The Man Who Made My Mama Cry” (which Womack co-wrote with Billy Lawson and Dale Dodson) she summons up the powerful inner tension of love and tenderness that’s all tangled up with anger and resentment. For the

John Wayne, his legend lives on.



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Record Reviews

first stanza or so, this song sounds like just another proforma broken-hearted love song. But gradually you realize that it's about an adult woman confronting the father who abandoned her as a child.

Womack displays similar power, and strong conviction, on "The Preacher Won't Have to Lie" (co-written by Billy Montana and Steve Dean), the closing cut on *Some Things I Know*. This song vividly addresses the moral challenge of living up to your own standards—"I'm just trying to live," Womack sings, "so that when I die, the preacher won't have to lie."

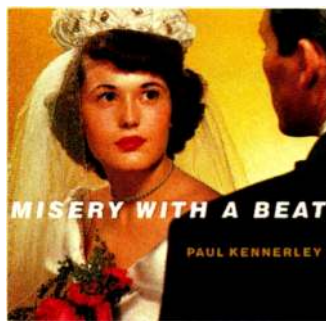
The painful earnestness and emotional clarity that Womack brings to memorable songs merely affirm the obvious: she's ready for a place in the front ranks of Nashville's contemporary leading ladies.

—BOB ALLEN

Paul Kennerley *Misery With a Beat* Spinout Records

We have here a sampler by one of country music's more unique and eclectic hit-writers. His Judds cuts alone would be quite a calling card: "Young Love," "Have Mercy," "One Man Woman," "Give a Little Love," "Let Me Tell You About Love" and "Cry Myself to Sleep." He also has credits on Marty Stuart's "Hillbilly Rock" and "Little Things." He had a long and impressive collaboration with Emmylou Harris, too, but more about that later.

Kennerley was never noted for his vocal strength. In fact, this is the first time he has made a record on which he sings. The vocals here are blended in harmonies and often mixed just under the music, but they are adequate to pleasant in all cases. His British accent occasionally leaks through like the twinkle of stars through an old tent roof. This effort presents five brand new tunes by Kennerley in the pop-rock-



country mold of Nick Lowe and Carlene Carter, with Everly Brothers and Steve Earle sensibilities as well.

Songs like "Heart Full of Rain," "Tryin' to Get Over You" and "She Was Mine" are driven by a solid wall of acoustic guitars and groove drums, with bass lines more reminiscent of Paul McCartney than Glen Worf. It's a tasty effort. Though it won't be easy to find, and is liable to be stocked in the pop-rock bin at your favorite record shop if they have it at all, it is a wonderful little record, unprepossessing and thoroughly fresh.

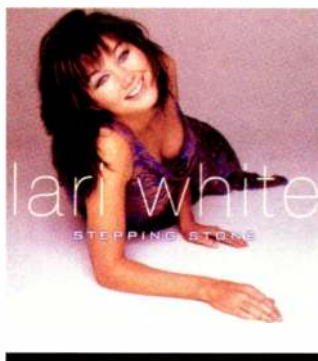
For those who don't know, Paul Kennerley is one exceptionally tall, talented, English country songwriter. He burst onto the scene from England in the late 70's with a pair of groundbreaking concept albums: *White Mansions*, about the Civil War, and *The Legend of Jesse James*. These were event records, little operas with a country twist featuring as vocalists just about everybody who was anybody in the hip country camp of that time. Johnny Cash, Levon Helms, Emmylou Harris, Charlie Daniels, Rosanne Cash, Rodney Crowell, and a couple of the guys from The Ozark Mountain Daredevils rounded out the cast. Eric Clapton, Albert Lee, Jesse Ed Davis and ex-Eagle Bernie Leadon were among the featured players.

You may also remember *Sally Rose*, his compelling concept CD written with then-lover/now-wife Emmylou Harris. It was based on Emmylou's experiences at the beginning of her career, when she recorded, traveled

and sang with pioneering country-rock artist Gram Parsons. Brilliant as it was, it proved uncommercial; but brilliant it definitely was.

Misery With a Beat is as brilliant as anything Kennerley has ever done, and probably more accessible than most for its bouncy pop melodies and lyric sensibilities. If country radio wasn't so narrowly Top Ten-oriented, this would fit in nicely as some of the freshest country sounds since The Mavericks or The Everlys. Worth searching for.

—BOB MILLARD



Lari White *Stepping Stone* Lyric Street HL-65001

It was only four years ago that Lari White was nominated as Top New Female Vocalist of 1994 and landed three singles from her breakthrough album, *Wishes*, in the Top Ten. In the speeded-up world of Nashville, however, such success has a short shelf life. White lost her deal with RCA after her 1996 album, *Don't Fence Me In*, and has only now re-emerged as the flagship artist on Disney's new country label, Lyric Street.

The new album, *Stepping Stone*, proves that none of the luster has worn off White's voice. She has the brassy power to belt out a pop-rock tune as if she were Shania Twain, and she does just that on "This Is Love," a catchy, Ronstadt-ish number she cowrote with her husband Chuck Cannon and Austin Cunningham. But White also has a rich Southern drawl that

can sound whisperingly intimate and wonderfully plush at the same time.

She uses that latter voice on "Tired," one of the best songs to come out of Music Row in recent years. White sang on the original demo of this tune, which was written by Cannon and Toby Keith, and she transforms Keith's male view of the blue-collar blues into a female perspective. After all, if anyone has a right to complain of being "Tired," it's a woman who holds down a full-time factory job plus a full-time job as a homemaker.

Cannon has given his wife one more strong ballad for her comeback album. "You Can't Go Home Again" is yet another nostalgia song for a Disney-fied rural South that never existed, but Cannon and his co-writers (Cunningham and Allen Shamblyn) transcend the formula by giving us crisp visual details ("a hole in the screen door big as your fist and flies on the butter") and by insisting that this world can never be reclaimed.

Unfortunately, once you get past the three numbers mentioned above and the title track (another Ronstadt-ish pop-rock anthem), the songwriting quality falls off dramatically. Keith joins White for a romantic duet on "Only God Could Stop Me Loving You," a gooey ballad that has the two singers talking like the cover of a romance novel rather than real human beings. That song turns a list of geographic names into empty clichés, and the mid-tempo pop number, "Take Me," does the same thing. "John Wayne Walking Away" and "That's What You Do" also take the same tack, replacing the place names with show-biz celebrity names.

It's this kind of cutesy-pie songwriting that gives Music Row a bad reputation. Worst of all is "Look Homeward Angel," a syrupy ballad that describes death as disappearing like "a cloud of stardust." Singers like White are too rare to be saddled with such nonsense.

—GEOFFREY HIMES



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It's been a heavy year for Pam Tillis, both professionally and personally. She's made changes in her life which have helped her gain a new perspective. But, she's also learned that sometimes you have to look back to go forward.



PAM TILLIS

No Excuses

by Michael Bane

Maybe what we're all doing, Pam Tillis says, is sitting around waiting for Elvis.

She says this with her head in her hands, not from despair, but from sheer fatigue, as if the Giant Treadmill of the World has speeded up and Pam Tillis is running like crazy just to stay aboard.

"I'm going to tell you this, because people always ask me—I'm heading you off at the pass, so to speak—I think our music is in transition now. Big time transition," she says. "The radio sounds confused to me. I feel unsettled when I listen to it, because I'm hearing a lot of what I think belongs to yesterday. Current yesterday, I mean. And I don't know where it's headed. As artists, you know, we can't think about the Big Picture. As artists, we've got to go to our room and think about our little picture. That's all. I don't know; it's a transitional time."

So here's Pam Tillis, who joined her father Mel onstage at the Ryman when she was eight years old—the same year she started piano lesson—by her own admission "an extremely gawky, intensely shy and rather goofy-looking kid." This year, Pam Tillis appeared on RuPaul's show on VH-1, copped two Grammy nominations for "All of the Good Ones Are Gone," received a Gold record for her *Greatest Hits* package of last year, did a couple



she finally decided that her musical fate was in Music City. She had just come out of the studio recording "Maybe It Was Memphis," and she told me she cried during the session. "It was definitely shorter, but it got really long there. I

was working so much I never got home for a haircut. That's a problem now, I'll tell you, because I got this new short hair and I'm supposed to maintain it. The guy who cut it is in L.A., and, like, I'm having a lot of trouble figuring out how to keep this 'do. Maybe I'll just ignore it, and people will think I've gone rock 'n' roll."

Entertaining the fans, and at work on "I Said a Prayer" with Arista's Scott Rattray and director Thom Oliphant.

When you're a smart kid growing up in the limelight, and you think you're goofy-looking, your only defense is to sharpen your tongue.

Pam Tillis is still the master of backhanded, self-deprecating satire, sort of like the smart girl in high school you were afraid to talk to because she always seemed to be about two steps ahead of you. When asked about her new single, "Every Time," by an interviewer in Dallas, she responded that she'd missed a marketing opportunity by not sending out buttons with the international symbol for "No Whining." Asked to describe another song on the album, "I Said a Prayer," she quipped, "If God can part the Red Sea, he can sure find you someone to enjoy dinner and a movie with."

When I ask about the new album, she launches into a long soliloquy on the song "Hurt Myself," she says, which reminded her of ("Go ahead and laugh...") Meat Loaf—the singer, not your mom's favorite dinner.

"The song is sort of Meat Loaf," she says. "I'd say, Meat Loaf with white gravy."

Meanwhile, back on hair, I am opining that previous Pam 'dos seemed to be tending toward the Loretta/Reba Big Hair Axis.

"It was not!" she says scornfully. "But that's a good topic, too, because you're not gonna please everybody.... A lot of people like that Opry Music Big Hair. I kind of get tickled now when people come up to me...I have a lady, who, when I was still pretty new to the haircut, she came through the autograph line and she said, 'I hate your haircut.' I said, 'Well, I'm just glad you feel comfortable enough with me to say that!' What I really hate is when people tell you what they don't mean. So, I liked her. Well, it depends on how someone tells you. It's change, you know. You shouldn't be afraid of change. You can't please everyone all the time, and this is a good way to find that out. You change your hair, but you can't please everybody. Same with songs."

She has, however, managed to please quite a large number of people over the last few years.

of television guest spots and released a new album, *Every Time*. Oh, yeah, she also got divorced from her husband, songwriter Bob DiPiero, parted ways with her longtime manager, Mike Robertson, sent her 18-year-old son off to college, and cut her hair:

"I couldn't think of anything else to do," she says, "so I went on the road."

No excuses, Pam adds.

"Guess it was sort of a knee-jerk reaction to the divorce," she says. "I just started indiscriminately accepting dates...I don't mean *dates*, as in dates. Performing engagements. Work is a panacea, but it's not a good deal. So I'll get through this year, and I will never book myself to this extent again! It's not the 'Farewell Tour'; man, more of the 'What Was I Thinking?' tour!"

Well, I say, it keeps you occupied, and the more occupied you are, the less you think.

"Yeah, but not thinking is not good," she says. "Thinking is good. Stewing is bad."

Your hair looks good short, I reply.

"I think it was shorter in 1989, when we talked before," she says. Pam and I sat down the first time as the last decade closed, when

"There are people who made it faster and hit it bigger, but I feel I've been blessed with a consistent career. And, I've gotten to do it on my own terms."



Pam has sold more than four million records, and has had six Number Ones. She's also maintained a level of creative control that's still rare for women in Music City, even having full production credit on the album *All of This Love*.

"There are people who made it faster and hit it bigger, but I feel I've been blessed with a consistent career," Pam says. "And, I've gotten to do it on my own terms. I've done each album a little different, not wanting to become my own ' cliché.'"

One thing different with the new album is that none of the songs are written by Pam herself, a major departure. This she just shrugs off. For the last year or so, songwriting just hasn't been on the agenda.

"But I'm writing now," she says. "Actually, not *writing* writing. Not ready to put things down on paper yet. But I'm incubating. That's a good word."

She goes to this vocal training clinic at Vanderbilt, she says, and she was looking at pictures on the wall.

"And there was Trisha, and she had different hair! There was Faith Hill, and she had different hair: And there I am, and I had different hair! We're all growing up, growing up in the business!" Pam says.

You've always grown up in the business, I reply.

"Yeah," says Pam Tills, "there is that."

And as long as she's working like a crazy person, Pam thought it would be a good idea to do some work with her father, the Stuttering Boy himself. Once a week, every Thursday, she stops whatever she's doing and heads for Branson, where Mel Tillis reigns as king.

"It's a totally different show from what I usually do," she says. "And that's kind of neat. Branson is the 'Pam and Dad' show. You know, it's really great sharing the stage with him. It's incredible. And my little sister is there, too—she sings opera. Dad's got an awesome band, and a lot of integrity."

Still, I say, doesn't it mean that you end up commuting every week?

"I'm a human boomerang," she says. "I've got frequent flier miles out the wazoo."

In 1989, I ask, could you ever imagine getting to that point?

"Well...l...l...l...l...l, yeah," she says. "I could imagine it, but I knew it was a long way off. Because I was adamant about not doing it before I established myself. I never wanted to ride on any coattails. And sometimes I'd get impatient, because that would be a drag. There'd be things that'd come up that I'd want to do with Dad, but I just went 'no way, they won't get it.' The spin doctors, the critics, I just thought they wouldn't get it yet. So I waited."

Have you, I ask, survived turning 40?



Onstage with dad Mel Tillis at his theater in Branson. It's worth the weekly trip.

On tour to promote country music with Martina McBride, Chely Wright and the CMA's Ed Benser.



"Well, I'm sitting here, aren't I?" Pam says. "Senility hasn't turned on...yet."

Still, she has a list of things she's going to do as soon as she has the time; more accurately, when the Year From Hell finally ends. One of the biggest things is spend a little more time acting. In addition to her visit to RuPaul, Pam also did guest spots on television's *Promised Land* and *Diagnosis Murder*. She first appeared on the acting stage in 1989, playing Mary Magdalene in a Tennessee Repertory production of *Jesus Christ, Superstar*.

"When you're around the business long enough, you start looking for new things to do," Pam says. "You want to try different things, because you've got to keep it fun for yourself. Acting is a really cool creative outlet. It's similar to what I do, but different. No audience, you know, and you have to do things over and over again.

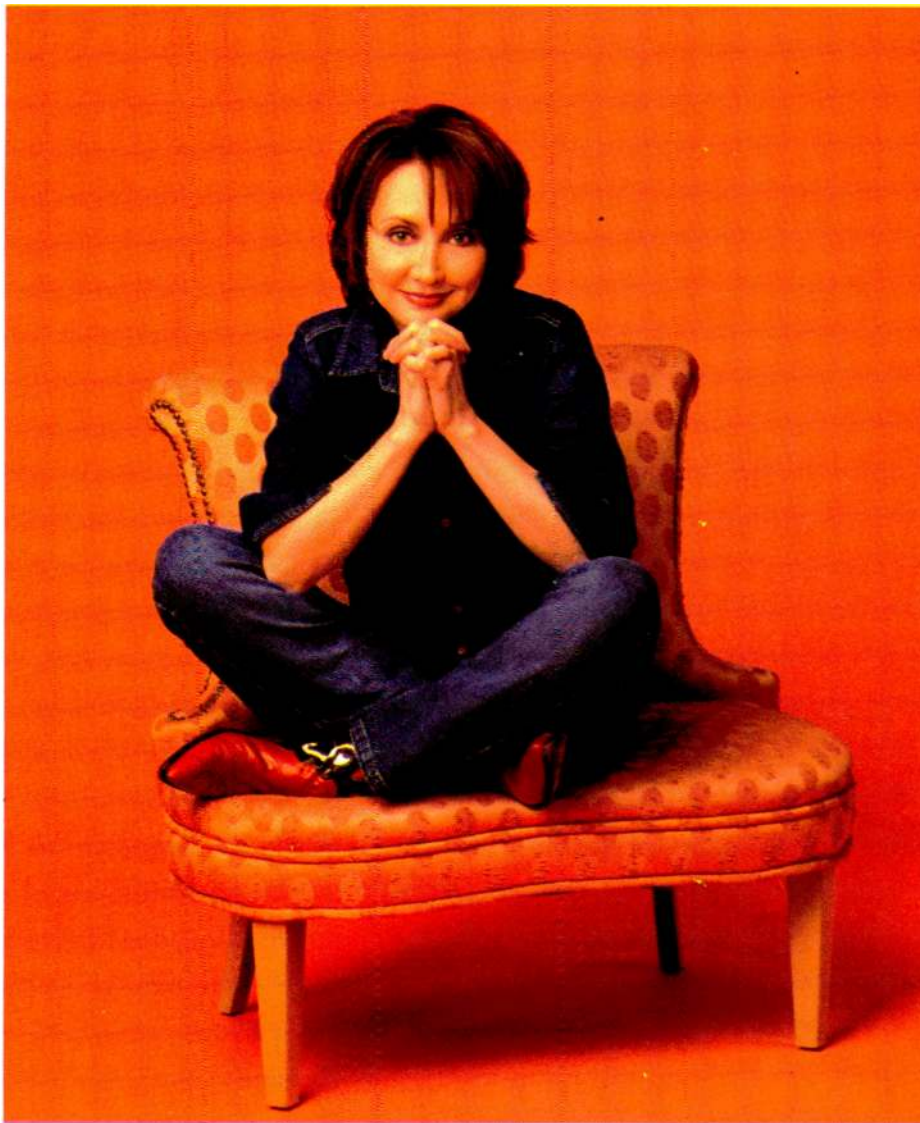
The way it's similar is that acting is all about conveying emotions, which is what's important in singing."

It's hard, she says, to go back to "baby steps."

"It's really uncomfortable, and it's really humbling," she says. "I know I wasn't great [in my acting]. But I could pull it off, and I am learning. It's about risk—risking embarrassment. But it's a good risk."

The trick, Pam says, is learning to juggle all the aspects of her life, which is a continuous process.

"You do things when you think it's right to do them," Pam says. "At least, I do things that way. Like this year was a pedal to the metal year. I had to do this year this way. I don't know; some people like to work from five-year plans or three-year plans. I tend to take it a



focus. You can't allow yourself to be distracted by the rise and fall of your popularity. You've got to laser in and do what you do."

New people, she says, are so caught up in the moment that they can't see what's really going on around them.

"And I feel like I've been freed from that; I really do," Pam says. "And it's the best feeling. It makes my job so much more enjoyable. It really is cool."

Just as important, when a performer isn't totally caught up in the minutiae of the business, whole vistas open up.

"I think, I can do this or I can do that," she says. "And that's all right...Other than the fact I need a small vacation."

Well, I say, you can't have everything. There is a vacation window coming up, Pam adds, on an Australia tour that's scheduled.

"I'm taking a couple of weeks at the end of the tour," she says. "I'd love to take my mom over there with me, but I'd have to medicate her heavily. She's just not one of those traveling people. When we tell her about flying cross-country, she gets claustrophobic."

Wait, wait, Pam says. Do I know what "hype" really is?

I nod the negative.

"Okay, okay, let me read you this," Pam says. "Hype is the glittering rhinestone on the jumpsuit of mediocrity that catches our eye and makes us think, hey, maybe the Spice Girls don't suck!" Dennis Miller said that."

Now what, I ask when the laughter dies down. What does Pam Tillis want to do that she hasn't done? When's she starting on the new record? When is she going to start putting words down on paper? It'll all be done in nine months, right?

"Okay," she says, deadpan. "I'll start as soon as the interview is over."

There's lots of things out there, she says. More movies; more television. "And I'd like to do some musical theater, 'cause I think that would be a blast.

"Wouldn't it be cool to sing with your teenage idols, like, say, James Taylor?" she says. "I want to cut an album of Dad's songs, ala Natalie Cole, one of these days. And Dad's really into that. He even mentioned it to my sister the other day, 'When's she gonna get on that? I'd really like to hear it...' So I'm gonna do that. And everybody in this business likes to think they haven't made the best music of their career yet."

The key to music, says Pam Tillis, is constantly getting back to the original intent.

"What did you start this business to do?" she asks rhetorically. "That's your original intent. And you always have to keep coming back to that, because it's what keeps you honest." ■

year at a time. That makes sense to me. Five years is a long way away."

How many dates will you end up playing in the Year From Hell?

"All total, 175 shows," she says. "There again, the 'What Was I Thinking Tour'! The good news is that people are showing up. And, hey, as long as everybody walks away from those shows happy, then I'm happy. I mean, that's so silly, saying how overworked I am. I'm working a lot; poor me. What you hear in the background is the sound of the world's *smallest* violin!

"You know what I've learned," Pam suddenly asks. Thinking, she says. "I think differently now. I'm more stoic than I used to be; than I was when we first talked back in 1989."

In the first years of performing, she says, everything is personal. Every tiny movement of a record on the charts, every review, every quote takes on momentous importance.

"And if something doesn't work out the way you want it to, it's the end of the world," Pam says. "And I just don't feel that way anymore. And some people say...what do they call it?...your killer instinct...that I've lost my killer instinct, my edge. I don't think that's what it means at all. I think it means I have even more

"I mean, that's so silly, saying how overworked I am. I'm working a lot; poor me. What you hear in the background is the sound of the world's smallest violin!"





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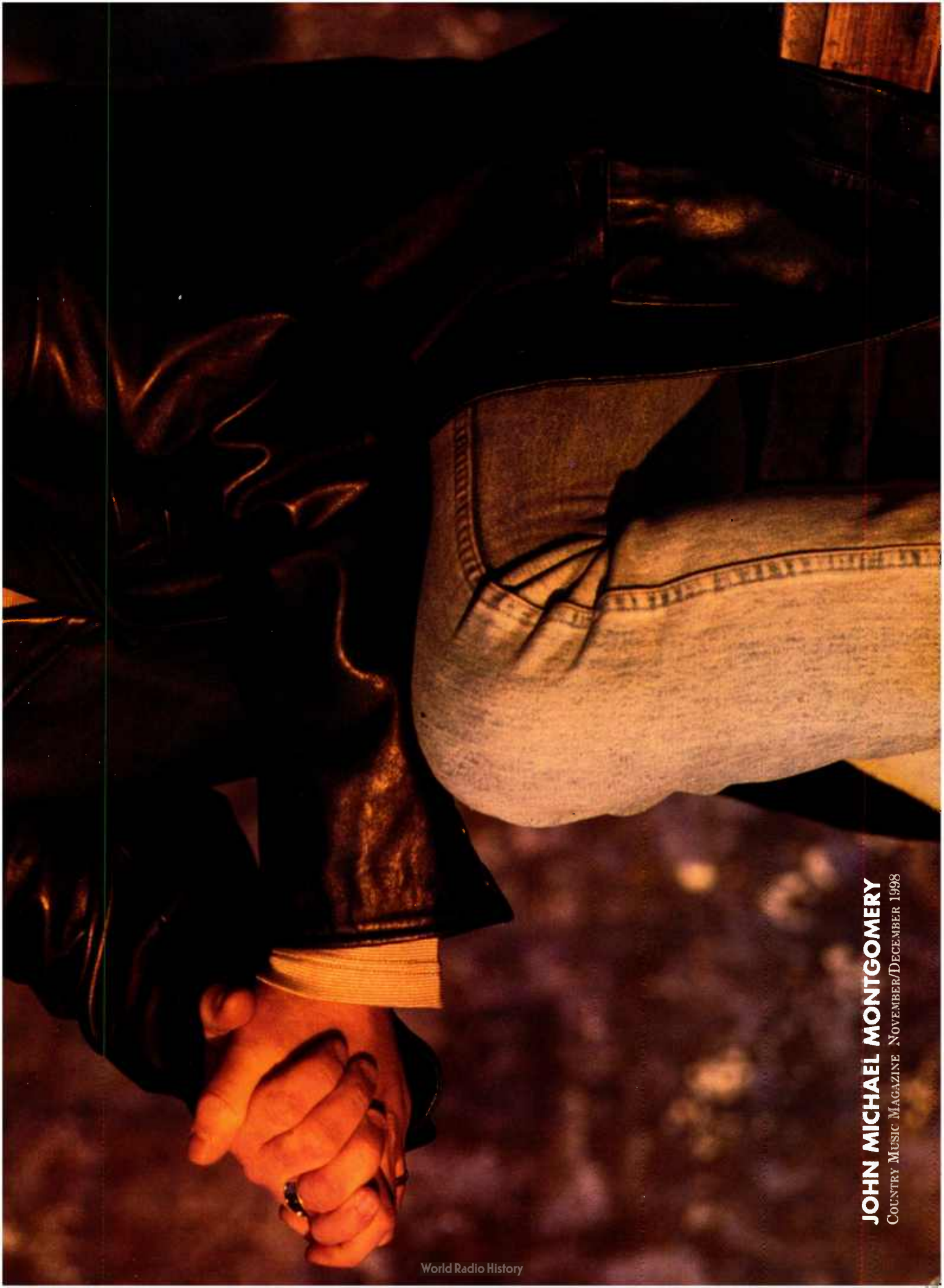
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WorldRadio History



COUNTRYMUSIC



JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY
COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

Update

Personal Data

Given Name: John Michael Montgomery
Birthdate: January 20, 1965
Family: Wife, Crystal Michelle; daughter, Madison Caroline. The Montgomerys are expecting another baby in February.
Hometown: Nicholasville, Kentucky
Hobbies: Golfing, hunting (turkey, dove, deer), playing music
Favorite color: Kentucky blue
Favorite food: Brown beans (pinto beans)

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'2"
Weight: 200
Color eyes: Blue
Color hair: Brown

Recording Career

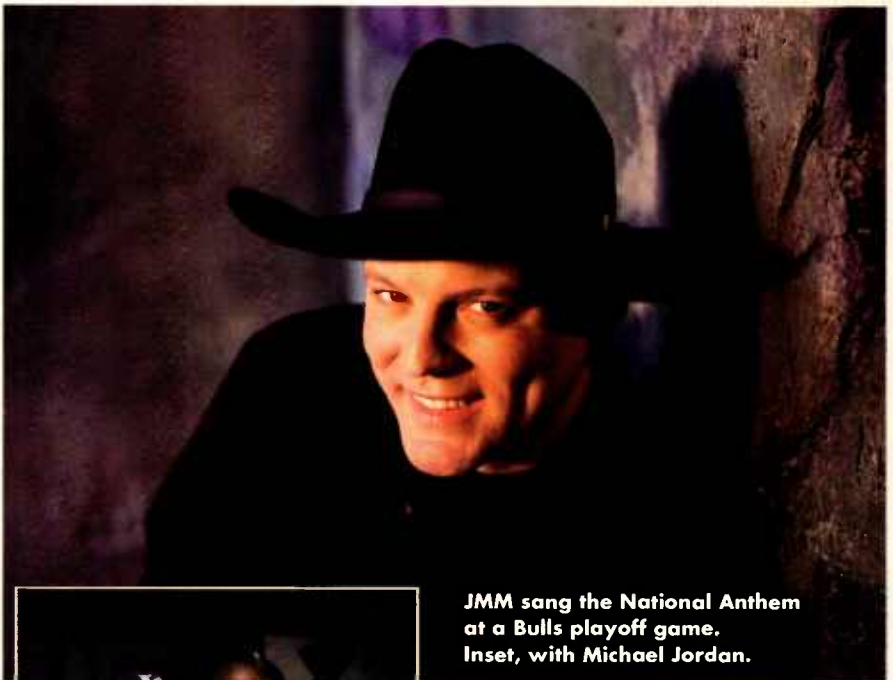
Record Label: Atlantic Records, 1812 Broadway, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

<i>Albums</i>	<i>Release Date</i>
<i>Life's a Dance</i> (triple platinum)	1992
<i>Kickin' It Up</i> (quadruple platinum)	1994
<i>John Michael Montgomery</i> (quadruple platinum)	1995
<i>What I Do the Best</i>	1996**
<i>Greatest Hits</i>	1997*
<i>Leave a Mark</i>	1998

*Gold
**platinum

Singles

"Life's a Dance"
"I Love the Way You Love Me"*
"Beer and Bones"
"I Swear"*
"Rope the Moon"*
"Be My Baby"*
"If You've Got Love"*
"I Can Love You Like That"*
"Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)"*



JMM sang the National Anthem at a Bulls playoff game. Inset, with Michael Jordan.



"No Man's Land"*
"Cowboy Love"
"Long As I Live"*
"Friends"
"I Miss You a Little"*
"How Was I to Know"*
"Angel in My Eyes"
"Hold On to Me"
*Number One Single

Selected Awards

1994: CMA—Horizon Award and Song of the Year, "I Swear"/TNN-Music City News Star of Tomorrow/American Music Award, Best New Country Artist/ACM Top New Male Vocalist and Song of the Year, "I Love the Way You Love Me"/CMT Number One Video of the Year, "I Swear"
1995: Grammy Best Country Song, "I Swear"/ACM Single of the Year and Song of the Year, "I Swear"/CMT Number Two Video of the Year, "Sold"/Billboard Top Country Artist, Top Male Country Artist, Top Country Single, "Sold"
1996: ASCAP Song of the Year, "I Can Love You Like That"/BMI Song of the Year, "I Can Love You Like That"

Website

www.johnmichael.com

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GARY ALLAN'S

Honky Tonk Surf Party

My first impression of Southern California honky-tonker Gary Allan is the one that sticks.

It was a late Saturday night, the wild finale of the 1997 Country Radio Seminar at Nashville's Opryland Hotel. The beer was flowing, and mobs of seminar revelers were wandering the corridors of the massive complex, in search of free drinks and one final round of good times on their last night in Music City.

In the storm's eye of this mayhem, and obviously quite comfortable there, Gary Allan and his band, The Honky Tonk Wranglers, were cranking it out in a little nook just off the hotel's gigantic atrium. People were packed into the little enclosure so tightly that they almost had to sweat in unison to keep from suffocating. They swilled beer, hollered and sang along with Allan and the band. Couples groped each other, and others tried to dance if they could find room. Other late-night partiers—everyone from celebrities like Narvel Blackstock, Reba McEntire's husband/manager, and songwriter Dean Dillon (who later joined Allan on stage for a couple of songs), to hapless drunks who stumbled by without a clue as to who Allan was—surged around and clustered in the nearby corridors. It was pure pandemonium, and Allan, best known for hits like "Her Man" and "It Would Be You," the title tune from his latest album, had a big grin on his face that let you know how much he was enjoying being the master of ceremonies of this good-natured madness.

"That's my vibe right there, that's my rush—playing for people like that," the

29-year-old singer assures me a year or so later, when I remind him of the night he threatened to turn the pretentious Opryland Hotel into a midnight roadhouse. "The tighter they're packed in, the better," he assures me.

Sweaty beer bottles, sweaty bodies and people jammed sardine-style into small rooms are, in fact, the real meat and potatoes for Gary Allan, who spent roughly 14 years honing his craft in cramped, steamy little Southern California clubs and honky tonks before busting into the big time with his 1996 debut album, *Used Heart for Sale*.

Allan, in fact, is still wearing that big grin he wore that raucous night at Opryland when I talk to him on the final day of the 1998 Country Radio Seminar. Indeed, as he sits in Blackstone, a Nashville brew pub, at midday, holding a glass of iced tea, dressed appropriately in a tan doo-skin great coat and black cowboy boots, and sporting an ornate tattoo of a double-barreled

shotgun on one arm, he's got quite a bit to grin about.

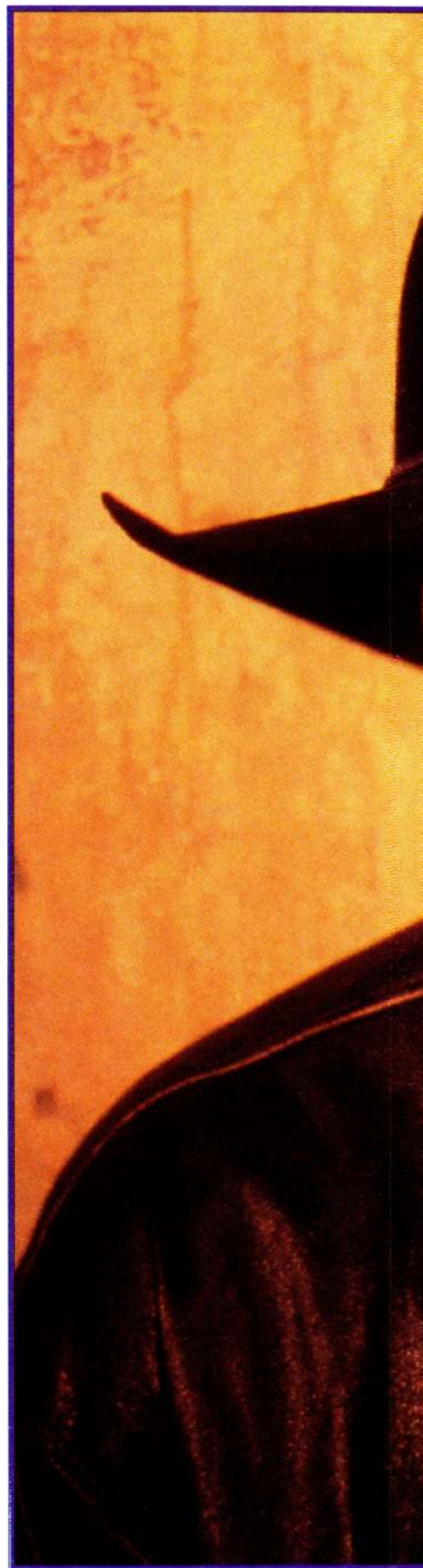
After "Her Man," his debut single, took off unexpectedly in late 1996 and eventually reached the Top Ten, *Used Heart for Sale*, his first album, was rushed into early release. The album eventually sold a quarter of a million copies. That's a modest figure by Garth's or Shania's standards, yet a very respectable one, considering that Allan's no-apologies, stock-in-trade brand of gutsy, edgy Bakersfield-influenced honky tonk is not exactly the sort of music that country radio is begging for these days.

On *It Would Be You*, Allan's sophomore album, released this spring, he shows no

*You won't
find this
honky tonker
riding the
pop-country
wave.*



by Bob Allen





signs of musical compromise. He sets the neo-traditional tone of his latest song collection with a swaggering honky-tonk celebration called "Quarter in My Pocket" and "She Loves Me, She Don't Love You," a soulful Conway Twitty oldie. Twangy, utterly stirring ballads like the title tune and the stunning "I'll Take Today" (both co-written by Kent M. Robbins, who also co-wrote "Her Man" for Allan) are about as smooth as he gets.

Allan had a hand in writing two of the songs on *It Would Be You*—the up-tempo "Baby I Will" and the stark, haunting "Living Like There's No Judgment Day." When it came to scouring the Nashville publishing houses for the rest of the material, he took an unusual approach—one that's in keeping with his musical philosophy.

"I'd go into the publishers and ask them to play me the songs they were too embarrassed to play for anybody else because they were too country," he explains, sipping his iced tea and counting the minutes until he'll be riding those big silver wings back home to Huntington Beach, California, to see his three daughters (ages three, four and eight).

"We intentionally went to publishers like Tree International that had really deep catalogues of old traditional stuff," he recalls. "The people at Tree even pulled out songs from the 40's to play for me. We spent two whole days just up there listening to old demos. I think Tree ended up getting about five songs on the new album."

Allan admits that during his long years of musical apprenticeship in the California clubs in the 1980's and early 1990's, he avoided Nashville like the plague. He says he never set foot on Music Row until late 1995, when he was putting together his major label debut contract with Decca. "I don't want to slam anybody, but Nashville seems real vanilla," he told the *Chicago Sun-Times* in late 1996. "I don't listen to much country radio because of that."

His influences had always been anchored much more deeply in the proud Bakersfield/Southern California country tradition, which through the years has given us greats like Buck Owens, Merle Haggard and, more recently, Dwight Yoakam.

Though Allan was born in 1969, in Montebello, California, and grew up in La Mirada, in L.A.'s vast suburbs, his father was from North Dakota. "He played guitar at barn dances from the time he was a little kid," says Allan. "He took me to see my very first concert when I was in the fourth or fifth grade—Ernest Tubb at the Universal Amphitheater. I remember afterwards Ernest came out and sat on the edge of the stage and signed autographs. It was the very first autograph I ever got.

"My dad strictly played guitar," he adds. "The only song he'd ever sing was 'Have I Told You Lately That I Love You,' and he'd only sing that if Mom was there. There was always lots of records around the house, but Dad never

brought the music to us. I remember when I was in the sixth or seventh grade, I was putting this little band together, and my older brother was starting to get into bands, too, and we tried to talk Dad into getting us a p.a. My mom took us aside and said, 'If you guys buy your dad a guitar and get him into it, he'll buy you whatever you want.'

So Allan's mom helped him and his brother pick out a new Telecaster for their dad, and sure enough, Dad and his two musically precocious sons were soon performing at a little bar just a few blocks down the street. "Even today there's usually a p.a. set up in my parents' living room," Allan laughs. "When we go there for Christmas every year, there's always a big jam session, a real good time."

Allan drifted in and out of various bands through junior high, and at 15, he played at the famous Palomino Club and garnered serious attention from the record industry. Soon came an offer from A&M Records for a four-

album deal. But Allan's dad put his foot down. "He told me, 'I don't want to just give you to them and have you do what you're told. You need to learn what you're all about first,'" Allan recalls. "My father really felt I needed to play the clubs some more and find my own style. He was smart, ya know."

But there was more to life than just music, growing up in the shadow of the decadent City of Angels, just a stone's throw from Southern Cal's sunny beaches. The tattoo on Allan's arm is a memento of sometimes adventurous youth. "I got it back when I was 15, when all my punk rocker friends were getting tattoos, and before they got to be the trend," he recalls with a chuckle. "I'll never forget when my mom first saw it. It about killed her! She told me, 'Well, ya might as well go on out and rob a bank now! Ya already look like a criminal!'"

The thing, besides country music, that really floated Allan's boat was surfing. He still beams with delight when the subject comes up. "Absolutely!" he grins. "I still surf whenever I have time. We used to surf every day before school, at four-thirty in the morning, off the Huntington Beach Pier. Matter of fact, [former U.S. President] Nixon had a place down at San Clemente, and we used to sneak past the guards and security cameras and cut across his property to get to one of the best surfin' spots. I still live right near the pier, and I still surf with the same bunch of guys I used to surf with in high school."

After high school, Allan served a brief stint in the army that was cut short by a sprained back. Back home again, he labored in the iron workers' union for a while before starting his own construction business. And he got married. "I'd work construction from like six in the morning until five in the afternoon, then grab my gear and go play the clubs till two or three in the morning, and try to sneak in a few hours sleep in between."

When he was 24 years old, he got another major label offer—this time from BNA Records, RCA's sister label. But after he handed the construction business over to his partner and re-arranged his life to embark on a recording career, the BNA deal kicked out on him. "The label had a big corporate shuffle," he shrugs. "Everybody I'd been working with at the label, the whole A&R department and even my producer, Byron Hill [who, along with Mark Wright, has since co-produced both *Used Heart for Sale* and *It Would Be You*], were gone in a phone call. I'd just gotten a divorce, and it seemed like everything was goin' south on me all at once."

His brother, the general manager at a Whittier, California,



Dodge dealership, hired him on as a salesman. And Allan kept in close touch with Byron Hill in Nashville. At that point, he couldn't afford to cut his own studio demos. So Hill would send him tape copies of demos he'd cut in Nashville with other singers. "He'd send me the instrumental tracks on D.A.T., and I'd put my own voice on them with this little four-track recorder I had in my living room."

All the while, he kept grinding away in the Orange County clubs. "Most of the places we played were small, because I wouldn't play Top 40 stuff, and we also just naturally found ourselves more at home in smaller places," he explains. "My band and I spent three years at a place called Lion D'Or, in Downey, California. We got the gig by making a deal with the owner. We told him, 'Look, give us two months, let us play what we wanta play and see what kind of crowd we can build.' About two months later, the place was rockin'. It was completely our show.

We got to play whatever we wanted—which was mostly original tunes, a whole lot of Buck Owens and Haggard tunes, George Jones' 'Bartender's Blues' and stuff like that."

Allan was itching to try his luck with the major labels again. But he couldn't afford the trip to Nashville until he found some unlikely patrons: a well-to-do couple to whom he sold a fancy Dodge truck. "I gave them copies of some of the demos I'd been making, and they asked me, 'What's stopping you from going to Nashville?' I told them money. They asked me how much, and I said \$10,000 to \$12,000, which was what I figured I'd need to make the trip and make the kind of first-class kind of demo I needed to make." He laughs as he finished the story: "The guy tapped his wife on the shoulder and says, 'Write him a check.' I told them, 'Look, I've never even taken money from my family. If this doesn't work out, I don't want to owe anybody.' She handed me the check, and I handed it back to her. She handed it back to me and laughed. She told me, 'Twelve thousand dollars isn't that much money to us. If it can change your life, you should take it.'"

Allan takes pride in the fact that when he got his first advance from Decca, the label with whom he eventually signed, he paid the couple back in full and gave them a royalty percentage on his first album.

Decca ultimately proved to be just one of a pack of record labels that got into a bidding war when Allan and Hill began shopping the state-of-the-art demo they made in Nashville. Wisely, Allan made the labels come to him. He did his auditions at the Lion D'Or, where he was most at home.

"I also asked [the different label executives] a lot of questions. One thing I asked all of 'em was what they wanted to change about my music. And Shelia Shipley-Biddy [Decca/Nashville's senior vice president and general manager, who eventually signed him to his first major label deal] was the only one who slowed down and really listened to what I had to say. I told her, 'At the risk of sounding goofy, I'd rather stay here in these honky tonks and play for 50 bucks a night than have you guys turn my music into something I don't like.'

"Shelia was great about it." Allan recalls fondly. "She got teary-eyed and told me, 'Man, you just do what you do.'"

Allan grins again as he takes a last sip of iced tea, checks his watch, pays his tab and heads out the door to the Nashville Airport and the long flight back home. "That was exactly what I wanted to hear. It really made my decision easy. And that's just the kind of freedom they've been giving me since Day One." ■

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THE DERAILERS

On The Right Track



At a long wooden dining table in a music joint in Tampa in the late afternoon, The Derailers are taking their pre-show meal—crabs, beer, roasted corn, hush puppies, Pepsi—and playing with the most promising of all the standard music interview questions.

Playing with it, but also taking it seriously. If they were isolated for a long period of time—cast away on a desert island, left to drift in space, whatever—with only a solar-powered tape player and a tape of ten different songs recorded by any artists, anytime, what *would* those ten tracks be?

“We’ve been asked that before,” says Tony Villanueva with a characteristic quiet amusement, “but I can’t remember what we replied. It’s a hard one. Let’s see...”

“Well, I can tell you that you’d have to have one by Jimmy Reed. And, aah, one by Buck Owens. One by George Jones. You’d have to have one of the Phil Spector things. You’d probably have to have a Ray Price, and a Lefty. But which ones? That’s the tough part.”

“Yeah,” breaks in Brian Hofeldt, the other half of the duo at the hard core of the band—he and Tony are The Derailers’ John and Paul—“Which Beatles song? One of their Buck Owens things? Which Everly Brothers? Which Louvin Brothers? And I’d have to have something that had the Stax guys on it, Steve Cropper and them, maybe a Booker T. song.”

Tony agrees. “Right. Put them on my list, too. Maybe an Otis track. And some of that Sam & Dave would be pretty tough to rule out... Heck, I just hope I never have to do this for real. There’s just too much. Hank Williams. Chuck Berry. ‘What Am I Living For?’ And you gotta have a Little Richard. You’ve got to have Elvis. You gotta have Jerry Lee. And Orbison. Shoot, you’ve got to have *all* the Sun guys. There go, like, five choices right there.”

Brian speaks up again. “All those people, they’re all in our sound. And y’know, with us living in Texas. Bob Wills permeates everything, that swing sound. Bob Wills and T-Bone Walker. Ernest Tubb.”

Okay, that’ll do it. Add the impression that these boys aren’t snowing you, and now you have most of what you really need to know about The Derailers’ music. The rest is that Buck Owens and his Buckaroos are the strongest of their influences; that their sound is pretty stripped-down, just four pieces most of the time; and that they write good, classic-style country/rockabilly songs. Other relevant information includes the fact that Villanueva and Hofeldt both hail from Portland, Oregon, where Villanueva’s father was a route salesman and Hofeldt’s

They’re Number
One on the
Americana
country charts,
but will the rest
of country’s
listening audience
get on board?

By Patrick Carr

father had a medical practice. They met and worked in bands together in Oregon—notably The Barnburners, described by one writer as “a hard-rocking, Jason & The Scorchers-type outfit that wore cowboy hats and played Rolling Stones and Johnny Cash covers”—but they didn’t form The Derailers until 1993 in Austin, when Villanueva, who had migrated to the Buckle of the Slacker Belt in ’89, persuaded Hofeldt to do likewise. Drummer Vic Gerard left Two Hoots and a Holler to join them, and in relatively short order the new band became a popular feature in joints of distinction like the Continental Club and the Broken Spoke.

They got a recording contract with the Austin-based Watermelon label, which released their first studio album, *Jackpot*, and then they traded up to Seymour Stein’s Sire label out of New York for *Reverb Deluxe*, keeping alt/roots vet and former Blaster Dave Alvin as their producer. A third album, *The Derailers Live Tracks*, preceded both the Watermelon and Sire records on the Freedom label in ’95, but neither Villanueva nor Hofeldt thinks much of it.

Their music has done well: attracted ardent fans around and



outside Texas, and sold decent numbers of tapes and CD's. Country radio, of course, has been ignoring them all along, but at the time of our talk in Tampa, *Reverb Deluxe* has just hit the Number One spot on the Gavin Americana chart—very good news, a healthy addition to the body of evidence suggesting that perhaps Tony Villanueva's greatest ambition, to have his music as "a job for life," is realistic. He's not expecting to get rich and famous, and neither is anyone else in the band.

In other Derailer news, former drummer Vic Gerard has been replaced by Mark Horn, and young Ethan Shaw is now playing bass and adding a gravelly, E.T.-style baritone to the vocal mix. Villanueva, who once quipped that he and Hofeldt have had "about 25 rhythm sections," says that he likes the current crew and hopes they stick. He'd like it even more if Marty Muse, who plays steel on most of The Derailers' Texas dates, could join the band, but for now, they don't have the money and he doesn't have the time.

As to the kind of work they get, the Tampa job is pretty typical: a medium-sized honky tonk, not strictly a country place, where most of the featured acts can also be heard on the

local listener-supported radio station and most of the customers are college-educated and/or alternatively inclined; there probably isn't a Mindy McCready or Bryan White fan in the house tonight, but Merle or Emmylou could sell the place out in a heartbeat. And while tonight is The Derailers' first appearance in Tampa, their music is known, and people are looking forward to their show. In that respect it's a good gig; less lucrative than some, but more fun than others. Twenty-four hours ago and a hundred miles away at a date in a sports bar, the crowd was so far out of tune with the band's music, and so rude about it—one drunk in particular yelling obscenities louder than the Fenders' amps—that Brian Hofeldt had to be restrained from getting physical.

It all ended without bloodshed, but also without money; the band never got paid. "Yeah," sighs Villanueva. "It was really great to be doing *that* instead of being with my family." Back in Austin he has a wife and two little boys, the younger still a toddler.

Tonight it's much, much better. When they hit their marks in their stage clothes, conservative retro-Western wear; they

“These are often young people. They’ve never heard this kind of music before; for them it’s brand new. And the great thing is, when we do a straight-ahead George Jones song, or Buck Owens or Ray Price, they usually react very well.”

look a little wary, but by the time the last chord of “Jackpot” fades away, they know they’re home. People are already cutting a rug; middle-aged couples jitterbugging, college kids doing their interperative dances, lone guys swaying in rhythm, clacking beer bottles against their shirt buttons. It’s just like this in Austin: music played for farm hands and factory workers 40 years ago, reinvented now for organic food brokers, history professors and mountain bike techs.

The Derailers are in one of those time/culture warps where people are always coming up after their shows and saying, “I don’t like country music, but I sure like *you* guys.”

When Tony Villanueva tells me about that, I don’t ask him the obvious question, which is, “What do you say back to them? Probably not ‘You clueless moron. Get an education, will you?’” No, not likely. I’m sure, in fact, that he’s perfectly polite. The hint of Roy Orbison in his visual style is matched by a grace of manner also reminiscent of that kind gentleman. And as he explains, “These are often young people. They’ve never heard this kind of music before; for them it’s brand new. And the great thing is, when we do a straight-ahead George Jones song, or Buck Owens or Ray Price, they usually react very well. So I think there’s a virtue in going all the way back to the drawing board and taking it from there.”

Brian chips in. “It’s like the punk rockers did in the 70’s. There was a roots music revival around that, too, like stripping it down and starting over, getting to the visceral edge of what makes people react to music, what makes people want to play music, write songs.”

Ethan adds his angle. “You know, I’ve got a Dave Brubeck record from the Newport Jazz Festival. It was when Miles Davis had one of his big electric bands, with just this *huge* sound. They played, and then right after that, Dave Brubeck went on with just his piano, saxophone, bass, and drums. He was worried they were going to get blown away, but what happened is, with that bare sound, they stole the show.”

“When was that?” asks Brian. “68?”

“Yeah,” says Ethan. “Late 60’s.”

Tony looks at them and chuckles. “Well,” he says, “I *still*



The Derailers—Ethan Shaw, Tony Villanueva, Brian Hofeldt and Mark Horn—have been attracting younger fans with older songs.

make it a policy to never follow a band with horns.”

Which does not mean, mind you, that The Derailers reject the notion of ever using horns themselves. For one thing, their producer, Dave Alvin, might just think horns belong on some Derailers studio track of the future, and given the fine working relationship they report, they might agree with him. “Dave has very strong ideas about how to shape a song for recording,” Tony says, “but he’s really worked *with* us. He has the same kind of mindset as us; it’s like having an extension of ourselves with a whole lot of extra experience and knowledge. An extra set of ears with an objective view.”

“Yeah,” adds Brian, “and one we can trust.”

“Right. Exactly,” Tony agrees. “One we know is coming from the right place. There’s no kind of agenda or anything like that. He’s just trying to bring out what we do.”

Which, for those of you thinking of embarking on a recording career, is the definition of a perfect producer.

If you feel your music would be greatly improved by a producer who tells you what to sing and how to sound, you have no business embarking on a recording career.

The musical future as The Derailers see it is progress, not great change. Tony explains that “we introduced some new textures and sounds on *Reverb Deluxe*. I think its heart is very similar to *Jackpot*, but on the surface it’s more like Modified choke [in a shotgun barrel] than Full choke: a wider pattern. And I think our progression is probably going to be just further defining what we’ve done on *Reverb Deluxe*, improving on everything.”

That’s cool, since what they’re doing now is very nice, and you can hear how a little more luxury would add to the mix. It’s like when Tony talks about their best Texas gigs, say at the Broken Spoke, which he calls the greatest club in the world: “We have Marty Muse playing steel, and sometimes we have a fiddle too”—there’s real pleasure in his voice now—“and so, gettin’ up there, playing those old shuffles, that to me is honky-tonk heaven. Steel and fiddle, Brian’s tick-tackin’ on the guitar...”

Ethan muses right along. “We’re playing Ray Price songs...”

“Oh, yeah,” says Tony. “That’s nice. I think that’s my favorite thing in the world to do.”

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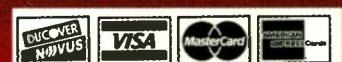


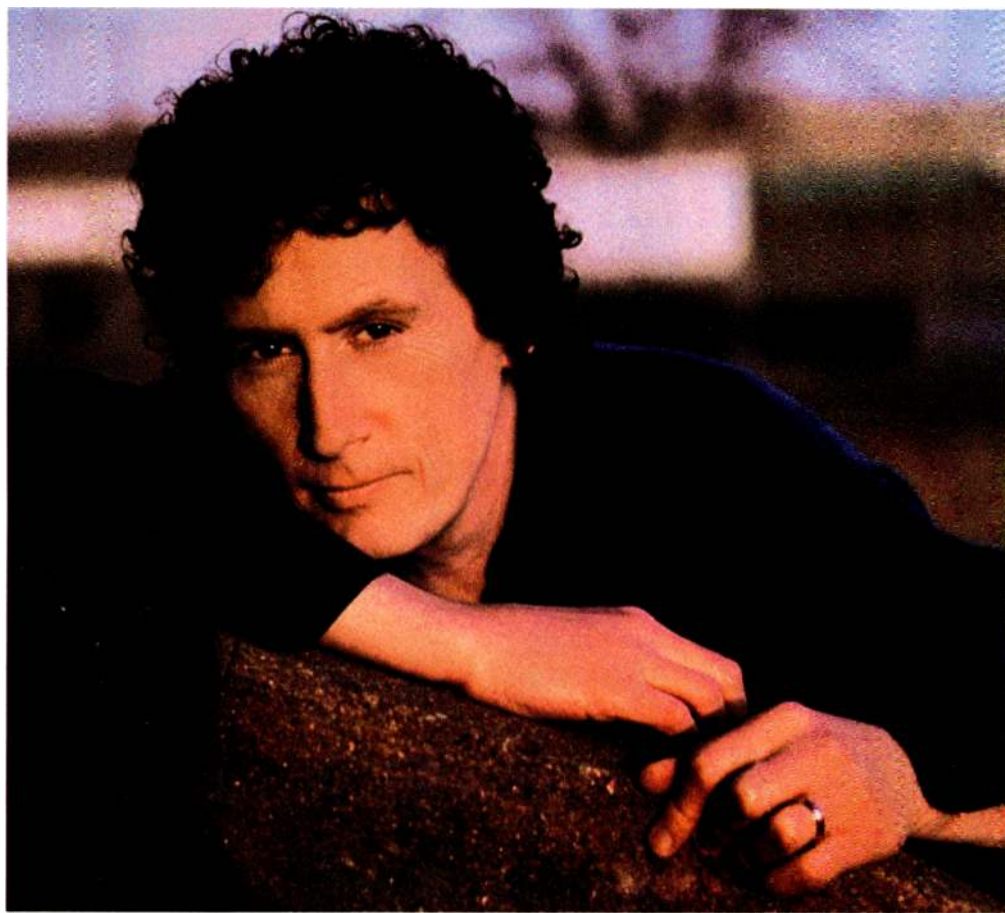
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20 Questions with RANDY SCRUGGS

By Rich Kienzle

One reason the legendary bluegrass duo of Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs dissolved in 1969 was Earl's determination to pursue a more contemporary sound. In 1970, the banjo great, along with sons Randy and Gary, formed the pioneer country-rock act, *The Earl Scruggs Revue*. After they disbanded in 1980, Randy became a session guitarist, producer and hit songwriter (most recently writing Deana Carter's Number One hit, "We Danced Anyway"). He produced *Will the Circle Be Unbroken 2* with *The Dirt Band*, as well as *Red Hot + Country* and *Keith Whitley—A Tribute Album*, which introduced Alison Krauss and

Union Station to a larger audience. But plans for a Randy Scruggs solo LP languished nearly a quarter century until the just-released *Crown of Jewels*, with guests including Vince Gill, Rosanne Cash, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Emmylou Harris, Iris DeMent, Trisha Yearwood and Travis Tritt. With all that going on, Rich Kienzle recently caught up with Randy in Nashville, and got him to answer 20 Questions.

1 You've worked behind the scenes a lot of years. Why not a solo project earlier? When Dad formed *The Earl Scruggs Revue*, there was dis-

cussion about me doing a solo record, but the *Revue* was an opportunity I just didn't want to miss. The same thing happened a few years after the *Revue*. I went right into production work, and it took precedence over the solo project. I'm thrilled now to have this opportunity to have made *Crown of Jewels*. It really encompasses everything I've been part of throughout the years.

2 A career summary, so to speak? Exactly. I've really put all the experiences I've had producing and writing as well as live performances and studio work

into the album, mixed with a lot of dear friends and artists that have not only been great friends but have inspired me throughout the years. I really wanted it to represent my whole background. So I went back to when I started playing, and then wanted it also to carry forward into not only what's happening right now, but for the future. Many of the artists involved, I've spent a lifetime knowing and working with—obviously my dad, but also Rosanne Cash. We've known each other since we were teenagers.

3 How did you organize to produce the album?

In the sense of directing a movie. At the point that I knew what the song was going to be and which artist [was going to guest], I created this wish list of musicians and singers. Fortunately I was able to have most of those people. At the same time, I didn't want the album completely mapped out. I felt it could take on a certain life of its own, which was what happened about two months into the recording when I wrote "Passing Through" with Johnny Cash and recorded it with Joan Osborne, who I met during the actual recording of the album.

4 How did it feel recording "Lonesome Ruben" with Jerry Douglas and your dad?

I was ecstatic about it. Dad and I have played together all throughout my life at home and in the studio. It's a very relaxed feeling to record with him. Then Jerry, he's just a totally incredible musician and is accomplishing the same things for Dobro as dad has as far as the banjo.

5 Your voice has a remarkably weathered quality. You never sang in the *Revue* days. Gary did most of it. Why now? I think in the way the *Revue* was originally set up, my concentrations really were on guitar. And Gary's was as a vocalist and, of course, he played bass. I didn't feel the urge to be a vocalist at that time, but also I think through the years my voice has matured and

that there's more character to it now. I feel like I can bring more to it than when I was younger.

6 *Did Maybelle Carter teach you to pick "Wildwood Flower," also on the album?*
The Carter Family were close personal friends. Maybelle actually babysat for myself and my brothers at one point. I first started playing autoharp when I was six, and it was the influence of her and their music. And then a little bit later, I started playing guitar, and "Wildwood Flower" was one of the earliest songs I ever learned through her style. Including it on *Crown of Jewels* was special for me, not only because of The Carter Family influence, but also with Emmylou and Iris DeMent.

7 *Did your dad's guitar picking influence you?*
Right. Again, that points back to The Carter Family. Most people traditionally think of Dad as the legendary banjo player, but throughout the Flatt & Scruggs days, he actually played a lot of guitar. A lot of what he played not only had to do with his own style of fingerpicking, but also the influence of Maybelle's playing.

8 *You and Gary were really in at the beginnings of the "New Nashville" with the Revue in the early 70's. Along with your dad, you were playing music that a lot of his friends wondered about. How do you view those days?*
I think a lot of people here didn't realize what we were doing. The band lived and basically grew up in Nashville, yet we were doing things that weren't the Nashville way at that time. The town had a certain tendency to put barriers around some of the musicianship and artists because they felt it possibly just didn't belong or would never work in an urban format, or in the format of universities and colleges. We'd perform in some very unique environments and places and with other artists that, traditionally, Nashville acts would never consider playing with.

9 *How has today's Nashville changed, as you see it?*
Musically, it's become more diverse, more open to accepting other artists and musicians who aren't necessarily country musicians. It's become a real significant part of the music industry because of the impact and the broad range of sales that country music now has.

10 *What do you think the Revue contributed?*
I think there was a transition happening through the country music community at that time as well as with the rock community. We'd play all types of music festivals. Some people characterized it as bluegrass because of my dad's background. But in essence, we were really a mixture of a lot of different forms of music from bluegrass to country to rock to jazz. It was an incredible experience to be part of that.

11 *We've talked about your dad, but your mother managed Flatt & Scruggs and the Revue. Did she influence you on the business side?*
Absolutely. I've been influenced by both of them as parents and then professionally, through Dad's work, and certainly through Mom's ability to handle the business side, to put things together and be creative in that sense. She did that not only because of a dedication to Dad's work, but also feeling like there was something very significant about their music. And she wouldn't take no for an answer during the years when people thought Nashville talent just didn't belong in New York or at Carnegie Hall or at universities. She really felt that it was important and that they did [belong] and was proven right.

12 *You played on the first Will the Circle Be Unbroken album and produced the second. How do you see those albums today?*
I think [the first] showed a kinship between several traditional, historically important artists such as Roy Acuff, The

Carter Family and Dad, and how they could blend with what at that time was considered a pop group—The Dirt Band—yet create very simple yet pure and significant music.

13 *What about the second? Was it unique also?*
When we went in to record *Circle 2*, The Dirt Band and myself were thinking of a couple of additional musicians. Mark O'Connor and Jerry Douglas were the very first people that we thought of. And when Mark came in, he said that original *Circle* album was like a Bible to him, musically.

14 *With your traditional roots and involvement in the current scene, do you fear we're losing too much of the past?*
I think there's a good share of artists—I'd say a majority of artists—that have so much respect for that, that I don't think the music would ever die. The significant artists that we've had in the past will always remain significant.

15 *How? How do you think that will happen?*
I don't think it'll just be part of history, but I think it will continue to incorporate itself in the music that will continue to be made. I think Roy Acuff, Flatt & Scruggs, Johnny Cash, were all very, very unique artists who certainly had their own influences at that time, yet were able to put their own stamp into their music.

16 *As a producer today, is it hard balancing artistry with the demands of radio?*
I think it's difficult if you're totally dependent on making music for any one particular format, such as radio, because there are certain limitations musically. It's not totally open to being completely expressive, because of the nature of the format. It's something that's very important because radio is one of the very, very best tools that we have to expose our work. Yet I'm finding myself more in a direction of really focusing on who I am, and not so much how I fit into a format. I think it's real important to follow your

heart, and sometimes that might not be exactly what's being played next month.

17 *What about Alison Krauss' "When You Say Nothing At All," which you produced as part of the Keith Whitley tribute album?*
That was a different style, different type of record, not only for radio at that time, but for what was being performed. And we had that same positive reaction. I think it fell into that sort of scenario of an audience ready for something that felt different.

18 *As a songwriter, do you see the "hook" song fading?*
To a certain extent, I do. I think with the range of audience that we have today, and certainly with the growth in country music, I don't think it can get by just on a hook. A lot of people in the past would build an entire song just around a catch phrase or some kind of thing like that. I think it takes a little more than that these days.

19 *Listening to Crown of Jewels and other recent Nashville releases, I hear less backbeat and a lot more acoustic music coming in. What's going on?*
I think there's more of a focus on song and performance, as opposed to just a certain sound. I think at one point, it felt like the harder the backbeat was, maybe that was driving the music more. I don't think we need that as much now as much as a great, great performance and blend of instrumentations.

20 *Who's going out on tour with you?*
Hopefully, many of the musicians and artists that were part of this record. Some of the things I'm doing are solo, and then there will be a band I'll put together for the full dates. I did a concert in Nashville a little over a month ago for a radio broadcast. John Hiatt and Emmylou and Roger McGuinn and my dad all came over and were a part of that concert. It was just a great night.

5-4-2-1

Me and Dolly

Our own Hazel Smith got to spend some time with Dolly Parton. They connected immediately. They were just a couple of hillbilly chicks shooting the breeze. ✧ By Hazel Smith

Tony Brown, Prez MCA Records, and Mark Wright, VP A&R Decca, were hovering over Dolly when I arrived at the conference room of Decca Records, Dolly's label. "Those two dudes are lucky to have a real woman on the premises," I said to the p.r. person in charge of Dolly happenings. Seated at a conference table, Dolly counted, "5-4-3-2-1, me and Hazel." We giggled and giggled all through our too-short allotted time.

Graduate cum laude from the school of hard knocks, the lady of many "wigs" is as honest and genuine as daybreak in the Smokies. She's not changed one iota. Course, Dolly's been there, done that...from the Smokies to the world...she's worth several million dollars...and she gives "back" all the time. She is country music's most successful female entertainer—probably the best-known country entertainer worldwide. In my opinion, Dolly Parton is the smartest person ever born in the State of Tennessee and Tennessee's best export. Come, look through the hillbilly spy glass.

Dolly's self-penned songs carry a message of hope, truth, faith and strength. She's not afraid to say she believes in the Heavenly Father, nor ashamed to admit she fasts and prays to receive spiritual guidance from Him. We're not talking religion here. We're talking spiritual. Naturally a witty person, if Dolly half tried, she could be a stand-up comic. Her red lips are always smiling or talking, keeping you on your toes. She's a velvet-tongued cynic who'll laugh at herself but would never poke fun at someone else. And she's a marketing dream that once slept nightly in a pee-soaked bed with five brothers and sisters right down the road from the amusement park that bears her name. Let's not forget the Number 2 washtub where 12 kids bathed in the same bath water; once a week, one at a time, on Saturday night, whether they needed it or not. She built Dollywood, providing employment for the entire Parton/Owens clan, which is half of Sevier County. Anybody who



CURTIS W. HIBBUN

can sing or sweep got a gig. You can't do better than that for your family.

It all started with a song. Probably her song. But now, with her back against the wall, her mind tired of thinking and her heart o.d.'d from the trappings of West Coast, East Coast, Third Coast stardom, and her 30-year recording career in neutral, Dolly was holed in. She'd been holed in before, and she knew in order to get out she had to resurrect herself. In order to get back to where she'd know what was in the stars for her, Dolly knew she had to get hungry again. Thus, she had a possible song title.

She cut off her long signature nails, took all her favorite musical instruments, and retired to the cabin she'd purchased outside Sevierville. Between there and her place on Center Hill Lake, she prayed and fasted, seeking spiritual guidance, knowing the Lord would reveal an answer. After all, this wasn't Dolly's first trip down on her knees. It was painful. Three months and 37 songs later, she emerged. Keeping it in the family, she got her first cousin, Richie Owens, to co-

produce the project in his basement studio at his home. The results, *Hungry Again*, a CD of 12 songs with a semblance of "early Dolly." God, is it good! As we talked, Dolly explained the "birthing" of each tune. It was like a mother describing her 12 children and why each one was special to her.

Herewith a selection. "Hungry Again"—"People have to work so hard to get where they are, and romance gets lost along the way. The thrill and excitement is gone. 'Let's love like we're hungry again' is the hook line for the song," Dolly explained.

"The Salt in My Tears"—In her head and heart, Dolly knew "The Salt in My Tears" was a commercial song.

"Honky Tonk Songs"—While composing the songs for the album, the thought crossed her mind, "Why don't more women

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SCENES FROM THE SESSION
Dolly called on family for this project, among them the Parton clan, top left: David, Bobby, Rachael, Randy, Cassie, Willadeene, Lee (Dad) and Dolly; the Owens, top right: John Henry, Louis, Dolly, Dorothy Jo and Bill; and on musicians and vocalists, below left: Bob Ocker, Johnny Lauffer, Brian Waldschlager, Bob Grundner, Richie Owens, Mark Brooks; below right: Rhonda Vincent, Paul Brewster and Darrin Vincent. Richie Owens, seated, co-produced with Dolly.

sing honky tonk songs?" Great song idea! Dolly thinks women should get to go out to the bars like the men where they can drink or get drunk if they want to and pick up somebody. "Men do it. Why can't we?" she allowed.

"Blue Valley Songbird"—Dolly says she is in this song; however, her daddy never abused her. "Daddy didn't bust my ass half as much as he should have," she said with blue eyes twinkling. Dolly has plans to make "Blue Valley Songbird" into a TV movie.

"I Wanna Go Back There"—"Can we?" I asked. "Wouldn't it be nice if we could," remarked Dolly. "Then again, I don't know if we'd want to go back if we could," she added. "Remember that old song, 'In the Good Old Days When Times Were Bad,' that I wrote?" I remembered. She quoted: "No amount of money could pay me for all the memories I had back then/No amount of money could pay me to go back and live through it again."

"When Jesus Comes Calling for Me" reminds Dolly of both her granddads. "You know I love old men," she said. She told me her Grandpa Parton would be plowing in the field, and he'd say, "When Jesus comes calling." "He was always looking for Jesus," Dolly whispered and acknowledged she'd long ago got this song idea.

"I'll Never Say Goodbye"—"It just came rolling out," Dolly said. "What the song is saying is, if you ever want to try and make it right, you can. But I'm never gonna forget you whether you make it right or you don't. I'll never say goodbye to you."

"The Camel's Heart"—The song's title has such a cute turn-around and is one of my favorites. I told Dolly as I listened to the song, I thought, "Now that's Dolly wearing her silk underwear a-carrying her pistol." "And I had it up there, too," she admitted. "If my prayers don't protect me, my pistol would. I knew the Lord would understand," she offered...as we both fell over laughing our heads off.

"Paradise Road"—The story of Dolly's life is in this song, and it's used daily at Dollywood. When she's in town, she can step into the role as herself.

"Shine On"—This is the song Dolly sang at Tammy Wynette's funeral. She recorded it at her Grandpa Owens' church, with family and friends singing along with her on the chorus. Dolly told me that she and Tammy had started a song several years ago, and that night, after the funeral, Dolly finished it. She misses Tammy and feels bad that she'd been so sick. "But look what she left," said Dolly. "What a legacy."

"How are the folks back home?" Fans like me want to know, so I asked. Her parents are fine. They had a little scare with her mama here a while back. Her mama used to dip snuff, but she quit and took up smoking. She had problems with her throat, and they were worried it might be cancer, but it wasn't. It scared her mama enough to quit smoking.

I mentioned it never bothered me that my relatives talk country, and I've never tried to change the way I talk. Dolly said she felt the same about her relatives. She's never been ashamed of the way she talks or they talk. Sometimes she says she worries for them being so uncomfortable with TV or something. But "it's like you said, Hazel, they're precious and sacred to me."

When she's in the area, Dolly attends the little church where her Grandpa Jake Owens used to preach. Nobody knows when she's coming, she just shows up. Everybody there is kin to her, and she can stay in touch with cousins and aunts and uncles and such that she doesn't otherwise get to see often.

The family matriarch with no kids, Dolly takes care of her family's "needs," but says she can't take care of everybody's "wants." She uses her own discretion as to what a kid wants, or somebody wants, if they should have it. Learning to say no to family was the hardest thing she ever had to do. But she learned. And, she says, she thanks God she's always been able to give what anybody needs.

In closing, Dolly said, "I've been very lucky. Very fortunate. Living life, you don't think about stuff, but turning 50, you do think of it. It's been amazing. What a blessing. What a joy. What a journey."

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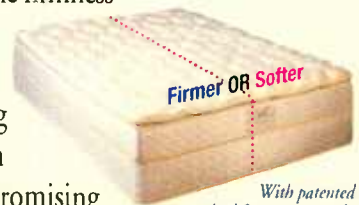


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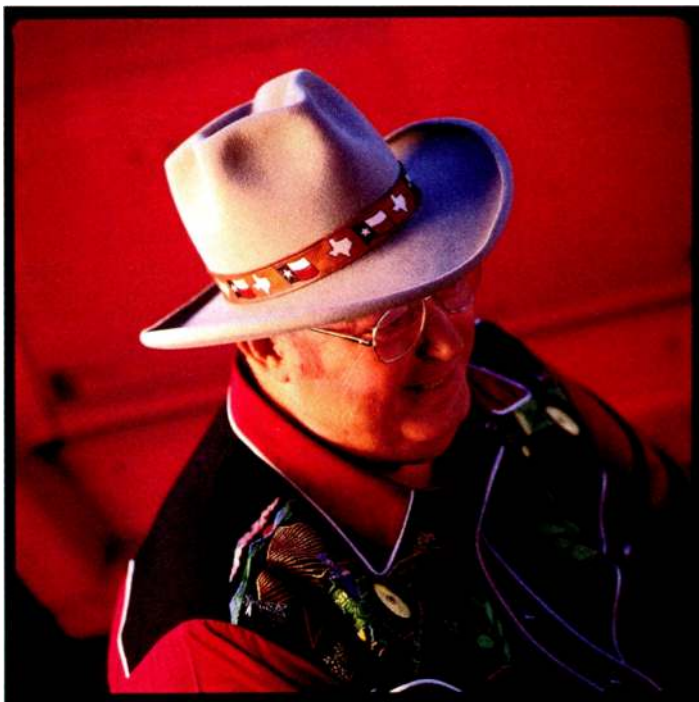
by Geoffrey Himes

"I used to do a lot of traveling for the State of Texas to promote tourism," Don Walser recalls, "and on one of those trips to Mexico I wound up at a downtown café in Durango. The houses just had blankets for doors, and this old guy was playing a beat-up guitar in the café, but he was singing the most beautiful songs in the world. No matter how high he sang, he never broke his voice; it was as smooth as glass. I thought it was so unfair that no one had ever heard of him, so as soon as I got back on the bus, I started writing a song about him."

Walser called the song "Ramon," and it wound up on his current album, *Down at the Skyview Drive-In* (Sire/Watermelon). Over a Mexican-flavored guitar figure, Walser's vocal captures not only his admiration for Ramon's singing but also his bewilderment at Ramon's unjust fate. Walser is reluctant to admit it, but there's more than a little of himself in this story of a great singer who never gets the recognition he deserves. Described by the *Washington Post* as "one of the most exciting acts in country music today" and by the *Houston Chronicle* as "the essence of country music," Walser couldn't get a record deal until he was 61.

After a frustrating trip to Nashville in 1972, the Texas yodeler resigned himself to playing weekend gigs around El Paso and then Austin and selling his cassettes off the stage. It wasn't until he retired from the National Guard after 39 years of service in 1994 that he signed his first record contract with Watermelon and released *Rolling Stone from Texas*. This year's *Down at the Skyview Drive-In* is his first major-label release and marks a breakthrough that Ramon never enjoyed.

"Maybe I'm not as good as he was," Walser says modestly, "but I had that dream when I was growing up that someone was going to discover me. You find out soon enough that no one's going to come to Lamesa, Texas, or El Paso to discover you. You soon find out whether



.....

When you get your first recording contract at age 61, you'd better have a hook. And amazingly enough, Walser's reeling 'em in with traditional country music.

.....

you're playing because you want to or because you have to. Me, I had to sing.

"I don't care about myself so much," he insists, "but what bothers me more than anything is we've got some of the greatest artists in the world—people like Merle Haggard, Mel Tillis and Hank Thompson—and you can't hear them on the radio. It's kind of strange. It's like you're running a race of 12 guys, and there are guys on the sidelines who are faster than anyone in the race. How do you know who's really fastest?"

"Fast" is not a word one would associate with a pear-shaped, 64-year-old retiree with bad knees, but it's hard to think of anyone on country radio who could out-sing him. On a recent night at Jovita's in Austin, Walser and his Pure

Texas Band climbed up on the patio stage and entertained a dinner crowd that contained a high percentage of admiring musicians. Walser squatted on a stool in his snap-button Indian shirt and his giant gray cowboy hat and sang "Ramon" as if bringing to life the line, "His gentle voice could be heard for miles around."

If the Mexican-flavored "Ramon" is a departure from Walser's usual diet of honky tonk and Western swing, the next song at Jovita's was even more surprising. "Hot Rod Mercury" is a rockabilly number about the days when Walser was courting his future wife in a souped-up car down at the Skyview Drive-In in Lamesa.

"Ramon" and "Hot Rod Mercury" are both on *Down at the Skyview Drive-In*, but the strangest musical detour

Walser takes on the current album is his collaboration with the classical chamber group, the Kronos String Quartet. It turns out that the Kronos cellist, Joan Jeanrenaud, is a big Walser fan and suggested that the two bands share the stage at a 1996 concert at the University of Texas. It went so well that they regrouped in the studio for a version of the old Nelson Eddy song, "Rose Marie."

The rest of *Down at the Skyview Drive-In* is old-fashioned country music, produced by Walser's longtime supporter, Ray Benson of Asleep at the Wheel. There are songs associated with Hank Locklin, Hank Snow, Grandpa Jones, Bob Wills, Roy Rogers, Johnny Bush and Patsy Cline.

"Traditional country music is an art form that needs to be preserved," Walser argues. "We have movements to keep the blues alive, to keep jazz alive, but no one's trying to keep traditional country music alive on the radio. Nowadays, so much of Top 40 country music is just chords and riffs and the same three lines repeated 50 times. No one wants to play a melody or tell a story. Someone's got to keep these great old songs out there, so that's why we're singing them." ■

VIDEO BONANZA

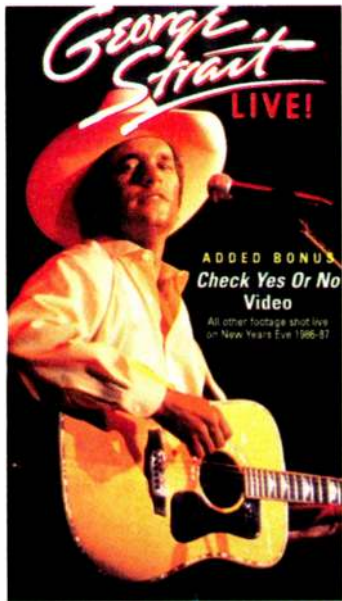
ROY ROGERS & DALE EVANS SHOW—40 mins.

Taken from the beloved legend's ABC-TV show (1962), and featuring The Sons of Pioneers and others, this video includes classic Western hits like "High Noon," "Cool Water" and "Old Paint Needs a Paint Job." Item No. V6U - \$19.95

GEORGE STRAIT

Live!—60 mins.

George and his fabulous Ace in the Hole Band give their all in a classic live performance taped New Year's Eve 1986. The concert includes 16 Strait hits, like "Unwound," "The Fireman," "Amarillo by Morning," "Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind," "All My Ex's Live in Texas," "You Look So Good in Love," "Marina Del Ray" AND MORE! Plus, as a bonus, the tape includes George's videoclip for "Check Yes or No!" Item No. V5K - \$19.95



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

PATSY CLINE

Remembering Patsy—60 mins.

This heartfelt celebration features 17 Patsy Cline songs and 10 rare television appearances. You'll meet Patsy through intimate home movies, personal letters and fond reminiscences from her loved ones, both family and friends. Item No. V1E - \$19.95

WOMEN OF COUNTRY MUSIC VOLUMES 1 & 2—45 mins. each

Volume 1 (Item No. V1Y) includes "He Thinks He'll Keep Her"/Mary Chapin Carpenter, "Something in Red"/Lorrie Morgan, "It's a Little Too Late"/Tanya Tucker, plus hits by Emmylou Harris, Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline, Kitty Wells and others. *Volume 2* (Item No. V2Y) includes "Cryin' in the Rain"/Tammy Wynette, "It's Never Easy to Say Goodbye"/Wynonna Judd, "Hurt Me Bad"/Patsy Loveless, plus hits by Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton, Barbara Mandrell, Rose Maddox and others.

Each volume is a wonderful celebration of the contributions female singers and songwriters have made to country music. Only \$14.95 each, or both for \$27.90. YOU SAVE \$2.00!

BROOKS & DUNN

Greatest Hits Video Collection—55 mins.

Containing 14 top hit videos from the popular, award-winning duo, this new tape is sure to be a best-seller. Included here are "Brand New Man," "Boot Scootin' Boogie," "Little Miss Honky Tonk," "My Maria," "A Man This Lonely," "Rock My World (Little Country Girl)," "My Next Broken Heart" AND MORE! Item No. V9W - \$19.95

CHARLEY PRIDE

An Evening With—45 mins.

Listen to the rich baritone sounds of Charley Pride, the Country Music Association's 1971 Entertainer of the Year—and one of the top country record sellers of all-time. This noteworthy performance includes many of his highly acclaimed, best-loved hits, including "Kiss an Angel Good Morning," "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antonio," "All I Have to Offer You Is Me," "Just Between You and Me," "A Whole Lot of Lovin'" AND 9 MORE! Item No. V1C - \$19.95

LOUISIANA HAYRIDE—62 MINS.

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 such venerable stars as Hank Williams Sr., Johnny Cash and George Jones. This unique program uses old photographs, film clips and live transcriptions of radio show recordings to tell its story. Item No. V8W - \$14.95

CHERYL WHEELER

"What Do I Care I Don't Have Any Kids"

Construction Company Inc.—68 mins.

Here's a long-awaited live tape from one of the finest singer/songwriters on the acoustic country/folk music circuit. You know her emotion-packed slice-of-life songs—as covered by Suzy Bogguss, Dan Seals and others—now you can hear them performed by Wheeler herself in an intimate setting that also spotlights her keen wit and sharp observations. Among the songs here are "Driving Home," "Northern Girl," "Aces," "Arrow," "One Love," "Quarter Moon," "75 Septembers" AND MORE! Item No. V6Y - \$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 here in full. This video is a must for any Bill Monroe fan. Item No. V2K - \$19.95

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 be the judge: "My Favorite Memory," "Mama's Hungry Eyes," "Today I Started Loving You Again," "When Times Were Good," "Okie from Muskogee," "Stay Here and Drink" AND 11 MORE! Item No. G3F - \$19.95

NEAL MCCOY

You Gotta Love That—45 mins.

Neal's become one of the top young stars over the past few years, and this video features the songs that started the ball rolling for him, including the two Number One singles from his Gold album, *No Doubt About It*: "Wink" and the title track. It also features the Top Five hit, "The City Put the Country Back in Me," and

such other favorites as "If I Built a Fire," "This Time I Hurt Her More Than She Loves Me" AND MORE! Item No. V4N - \$19.95

COUNTRY ON BROADWAY

Filmed in New York—96 mins.

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

DON WILLIAMS

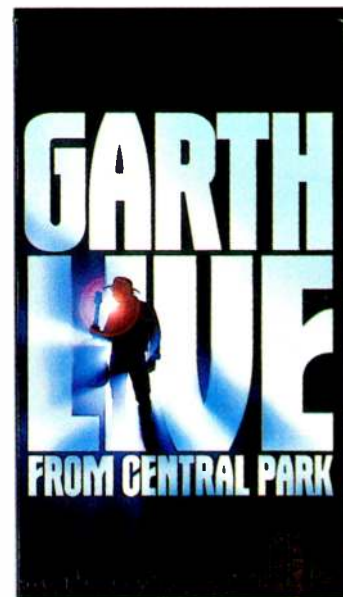
Video Collection Vol. 1: Echoes—55 mins.

Here are 14 of Don's personal favorites, including "Good Ole Boys Like Me," "The Ties That Bind," "That's the Thing About Love," "Till the Rivers All Run Dry," "It Must Be Love," "I'm Just a Country Boy" AND MORE! Item No. V10E - \$19.95

NEW! DON WILLIAMS

Vol. 2: Into Africa—65 mins.

Join Don as he fulfills a life-long ambition and travels to Africa. On his visit to Zimbabwe, Don blends concert performances with visits to amazing sights like Victoria Falls, and shares the experience with his fans. Among the songs included here are "Amanda," "In the Family," "Senorita," "I Recall a Gypsy Woman" AND MORE! Item No. V8Y - \$19.95



GARTH BROOKS

Live From Central Park—120 mins.

Here it is—as seen on HBO—the most talked-about event in country music in all of 1997. Garth's concert in New York City's Central Park is captured here in all its excitement and spectacle, including special guest appearances by Billy Joel and Don McLean. Garth rolls through all of his top hits during the course of the two-hour show, with a total of 21 songs included here. Item No. V8X - \$19.95

GARTH BROOKS

Video Collection Vol. 2—34 mins.

Included on this most recent Garth Brooks video are such chartbusters as "We Shall Be Free," "Standing Outside the Fire," "The Red Strokes" and "The Change" from Garth's *Fresh Horses* album. There's also behind-the-scenes footage and exclusive interview footage. If you're a Garth fan, don't miss it. Item No. V21B - \$16.95

ERNEST TUBB

Thanks Troubadour Thanks—62 mins.

Here's the story of "America's Troubadour," from his birth in Depression-era Texas to his friendship with Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers, first recording sessions and radio shows and stardom on the Grand Ole Opry. This unique video features classic performances and his top hits, narrated by Skeeter Davis and others whose lives he touched. Item No. V2N - \$19.95

TOOTSIE'S ORCHID

LOUNGE—60 MINS.

Kris Kristofferson, Faron Young and others join host Willie Nelson for this all-star program celebrating Tootsie's famous 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, Ray Price and others. Item No. V1N - \$19.95

VINCE GILL

I Still Believe in You—24 mins.

Vince Gill has joined the esteemed ranks of country's premier entertainers. Now you can enjoy this popular star on his only home video performing many of his top hits. Among the favorites included here are "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

TRAVIS TRITT

Greatest Hits From the Beginning—50 mins.

Along with exclusive, never-before-seen footage on this video are hits like "Country Club," "Here's a Quarter (Call Someone Who Cares)," "Can I Trust You with My Heart," "The Whiskey Ain't Workin'," "Help Me Hold On," "I-r-o-u-b-l-e," "Tell Me I Was Dreaming." Item No. V10P - \$19.95

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

WAYLON JENNINGS

Lost Outlaw Performances—60 mins.

The master recording of this memorable concert was never released and lay forgotten in the vaults of RCA since 1978. Now we bring it to you in its entirety, as it was recorded on August 12, 1978, at the Grand Ole Opry. Here is the "Outlaw" period in all its glory, with eight Number One singles, including "Luckenbach, Texas" and "Good Heated Woman." Item No. V4D - \$19.95

HANK WILLIAMS

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. "Sneaky" 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

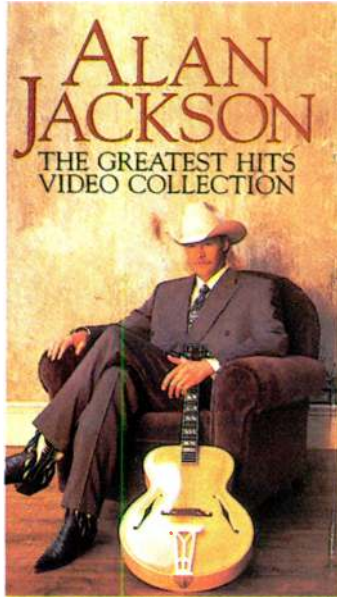
SECOND FIDDLE TO A STEEL GUITAR—107 MINS.

Second Fiddle to a Steel Guitar is a rare production featuring 17 old-time artists and 30 great 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, Minnie Pearl and others, both on-stage and backstage. Item No. V7E - \$29.95

VIDEO BONANZA

ALAN JACKSON

Greatest Video Hits Collection—75 mins.
This new collection features 18 songs from throughout Alan's red-hot career, including "Blue Blooded Woman," "Here in the Real World," "Wanted," "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow," "Don't Rock the Jukebox," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "Chattahoochee," "Mercury Blues," "(Who Says) You Can't Have It All," "Tall, Tall Trees," "Summertime Blues," "Livin' on Love," "Gone Country," "Song for the Life" AND MORE! Item No. V10J - \$29.95



ALAN JACKSON

Livin', Lovin', and Rockin' That Jukebox—28 mins.

Here are seven Number One videos from two double platinum albums by one of the most popular country entertainers around. Included here are "Don't Rock the Jukebox," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "She's Got the Rhythm (And I Got the Blues)," "Chattahoochee," "Mercury Blues" and "Tonight I Climbed the Wall." Item No. V6K - \$19.95

TIM MCGRAW

An Hour With Tim—60 mins.

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

LORETTA LYNN

Honky Tonk Girl—60 mins.

This personal portrait follows 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 video features never-seen home movies and photos and over 20 songs and performances. Item No. V8A - \$24.95

MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER

Jubilee: Live at Wolf Trap—90 mins.

The brilliant singer/songwriter is captured live at one of the country's best-known venues—Wolf Trap in Virginia. Carpenter performs many of her top hits, and welcomes fellow singer/songwriters Shawn Colvin and Joan Baez in guest duets. Songs included here are "Passionate Kisses," "I Feel Lucky," "Keeper for Every Flame," "Shut Up and Kiss Me," "Only a Dream," "I Am a Town," "Stones in the Road," "The Hard Way," "He Thinks He'll Keep Her," "Down at the Twist & Shout" AND MORE! Item No. V6V - \$24.95

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 a few of his friends—such great stars as Roy Acuff, Loretta Lynn and Johnny Cash. In addition to the "up close and personal" look you'll get at this country legend, the video also includes great performances of 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 at the Knoxville Civic Coliseum, this video features George thrilling the audience with 15 of his biggest hits including "I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair" and the Number One 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 MORE! Item No. V1X - \$24.95

GEORGE JONES

Golden Hits—50 mins.

This most recent video presents George Jones talking about his greatest hit songs and performing these songs at the time each one was released. We're taken into a time capsule that allows us to experience the career of this "living legend" as it unfolds. Some of the 14 songs are "White Lightning" (2/9/59), "Near You" (12/11/76) and "He Stopped Loving Her Today" (4/12/80). Item No. V3T - \$19.95

MARTY ROBBINS & ERNEST TUBB—60 mins.

Catch these two legends in the early days of their careers—rare footage of the pair performing some of their classic hits. There are 26 songs here, including such favorites as "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 - \$29.95

WEBB PIERCE

Greatest Hits—52 mins.

Before his death, Webb personally created a compilation of his greatest hits from rare filmed performances, narrating and providing background on the songs, their writers and their origins. This unique video contains 17 of Webb's favorite hits including "There Stands the Glass," "I Ain't Never," "Rocky Top," "Someday," "Tupelo County Jail," "Wondering," "More and More," "Slowly," "It's Been So Long" and "In the Jailhouse Now." Item No. V2R - \$19.95

COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION—90 mins.

Yesterday's legends, today's brightest superstars. For one magical night, they share the spotlight of country music's greatest spectacular—the Country Music Hall of Fame 25th Anniversary Celebration. There are classic Hank Williams favorites performed by Alan Jackson, Randy Travis and Tanya Tucker...Clint Black sings and plays the guitar of Jimmie Rodgers...Emmylou Harris, Patty Loveless and Pam Tillis pay tribute to Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn and Kitty Wells...and so much more. Item No. V10Y - \$19.95

DWIGHT YOAKAM

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

TAMMY WYNETTE

In Concert—60 mins.

This popular re-release features 24 classic hits from "The First Lady of Country Music" including such standards as "Stand By Your Man," "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," "Take Me to Your World," "I Don't Want to Play House" and "Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad." Item No. G1F - \$19.95

JIM REEVES

Golden Memories—50 mins.

This Jim Reeves video features 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

THE STATLER BROS.

What We Love to Do—40 mins.

As a celebration of their 31st anniversary in country music, The Statler Brothers recently released this fine video, their first in over a decade! Featuring such Statler classics as "Elizabeth," "My Only Love," "What We Love to Do," "Atlanta Blue," "Maple Street Memories," "Sweeter and Sweeter," "You've Been Like a Mother to Me" and "Let's Get Started," this is one that fans won't want to miss. Item No. V6A - \$19.95

ROGER MILLER

King of the Road—60 mins.

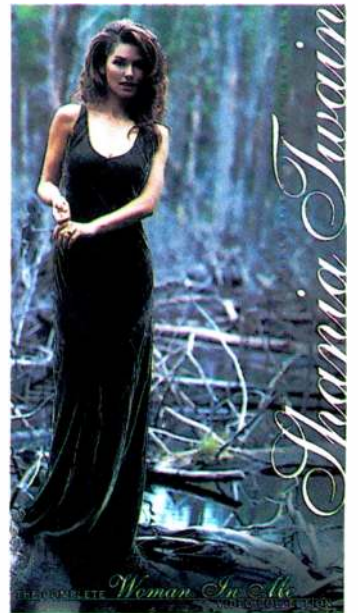
Here is the story of the life and career of one of country music's most notable talents. A brilliant songwriter and fine entertainer, Roger Miller was loved the world over. Here you'll see Roger perform some of his top

hits, including "England Swings," "Dang Me," "Chug-A-Lug" and, of course, "King of the Road," narrated by Waylon Jennings, and featuring comments from family and friends. Reviewer Rich Kienzle called this video "an engrossing and definitive portrait of a true Nashville original." Item No. V20G - \$19.95

DWIGHT YOAKAM

Pieces of Time—40 mins.

Dwight's latest video features 11 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



SHANIA TWAIN

The Complete Woman in Me Video Collection—35 mins.

For the first time ever, all eight of the video clips from Shania's breakthrough album, *The Woman in Me*, are available in one place. Included here are: "Whose Bed Have Your Boots Been Under," "Any Man of Mine," "The Woman in Me (Needs the Man in You)," "(If You're Not in It for Love (I'm Outta Here))," "You Win My Love," "No One Needs to Know," "Home Ain't Where His Heart Is Anymore" and a previously unreleased version of "God Bless the Child." Item No. V10M - \$14.95

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Letters

Alan Plus

I had to get *two* copies of your September/October issue since the Number One guy, Alan Jackson, was on the cover. I'm sure Patrick Carr did a great interview, because the story on Alan is wonderful. However, an apology and the correction of a major error are due to Kieran Kane. On page 34 Patrick writes about Alan's first single from the new album, "I'll Go On Loving You," and then states, "It was just a great song (by Jamie O'Hara) which appealed to him...." Though Jamie O'Hara and Kieran Kane were together as The O'Kanes awhile back, Kieran Kane wrote "I'll Go On Loving You," not Jamie O'Hara. I'm sure all concerned would like to see this corrected.

On another note: I thought Alan jokingly, and with great wit, describing his wife Denise as "Damn lucky!" was 'just like Alan'. But I'm real serious when I say we are "damn lucky" to have Alan and his music in our world, even if the CMA didn't see it that way this year. I think they'll change their minds after they hear his latest album, *High Mileage*, in its entirety. Another platinum project from Alan and producer Keith Stegall....

Thanks for the time here; I thoroughly enjoy your magazine, especially when it includes great print on Alan!

Janna Stollery

Ft. Walton Beach, Florida

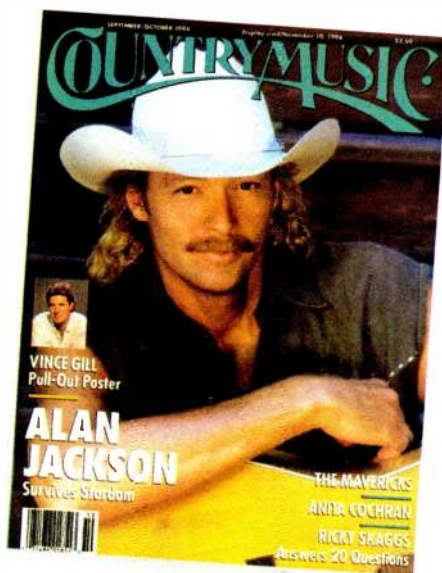
You're right on Kieran Kane. Alan's album is reviewed this issue.—Ed.

Thanks to Dwight and Patrick

Thank you so much for the wonderful Dwight Yoakam cover story in the July/August 1998 issue. Seeing Dwight on the cover, I knew I was in for some great reading inside! Thanks to Patrick Carr for the latest installment to the very enjoyable, interesting and insightful Continuing Saga of Dwight that has been ongoing since 1988! He and Dwight seem to have a great rapport and appear to understand and respect each other.

I can just picture Dwight fiddling around with those coasters, and driving around with Wynn Stewart "blowing pretty hard and heavy" in his truck. It is also exciting to know that Dwight has "been writing like crazy"! That can only mean more great music from Dwight is on the way!

Laurie Olson
Spicer, Minnesota



More September/October letters next time.

Advice to Dwight

I bought the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine*, about Dwight Yoakam. I also bought Dwight's tape, *A Long Way Home*. I like Dwight, I love his new tape, I think he gets better-looking every year. I love him in his tight pants. As for Dwight being a romantic person, he is losing out on a good thing. Maybe he thinks he will lose his fans if he gets married. I for one would not stop listening to his music.

Rosemarie Goode
Athens, Alabama

Generational Dwight

Thank you for putting Dwight on the cover of your July/August issue. Dwight is the favorite country star of three generations in my family. Hope to see a pull-out poster next.

Phyllis Branch
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Northland for Dwight

Patrick Carr, thank you so very much for the fantastic, interesting article and photos of Dwight in the July/August issue. His new album, *A Long Way Home*, is a delight in lyrics and melodies. You also mention his acting and writing abilities, and I am sure there are many more. Dwight is an all-round artist.

Country greetings,
Margie Yntema
Vernon, British Columbia, Canada

Shades

I was delighted to see on your cover of September/October *Country Music* that it contained a pull-out poster of Vince Gill. When I opened to it, I was appalled. How could you? A picture of Vince with his best and most distinctive features—his eyes and lashes—concealed by dark glasses. Thanks for nothing.

I like your magazine and always read Hazel Smith (that was my mother's name).

Sarah Coe
Republican City, Nebraska

Carr's Listenin' List

In response to Patrick Carr's column, "A Listener's Fancy," in Final Note in the September/October issue of CMM:

I like the selections you made for your "own radio station." However, it will be a cold day in hell before any of "Today's Country" radio stations play Johnny Cash or Ralph Stanley. "Johnny Who? Ralph Who?"

My favorite new country song of 1998 was from Hank Thompson and Junior Brown—"Gotta Sell Them Chickens." How many times did you hear that on country radio?

P.S. KFDI-AM in Wichita (1070) still plays oldies. Don Gibson is playing as I write.

Myrtle Schlosser
Strong City, Kansas

Thompson's album, with the song on it, is reviewed in Essential Collector this time. Junior's in Record Reviews.—Ed.

Farewell to Tammy

Commendations on a great article on Tammy Wynette in the July/August issue of *Country Music*. Tammy was a true Queen of Country Music, always finding time to help her fans. I was honored to know Tammy Wynette by mail. She answered all my letters and allowed me to submit songs to her for possible recording. Tammy's encouragement helped me get songs published and recorded.

I will always miss Tammy's personal encouragement and openness. Knowing her was a treasure I will always cherish.

Michael D. Martindale
Bay City, Michigan

Response to Tammy

Your farewell feature to Tammy Wynette in the July/August issue of *Country Music Magazine* was such an inspiration to me! My copy came in the

mail while I was still mourning the death of my favorite cowboy, Roy Rogers, who had passed away earlier that week. I immediately turned to page 40 and devoured the article you wrote with the succinct comments made by her peers.

We were looking forward to finally seeing Tammy at the Grove, Oklahoma, Grand Lake Opry where she was scheduled to perform when she was taken ill that last time. Her passing was such sad news for all of us who loved her and grew up with her music.

O.J. Rooney

Picher, Oklahoma

Asylum's Tammy tribute album, Tammy Wynette Remembered, is out now.—Ed.

Iris DeMent Hits Home

Thanks so much for the fine article on Iris DeMent in the July/August issue. I have seen Iris on several occasions, and she never ceases to amaze me with her talent. Not many singers can hold an audience for several hours with just their voice and a guitar. The great ones can. I've seen Iris do it, and Emmylou Harris as well.

The fact that country radio won't play either of these great ladies proves that they are worth listening to. Country radio today seems to play the least talented artists! Only one complaint about your article. Couldn't you find a better picture of Iris? Surely, there must be some pictures of her smiling somewhere.

Michael Merandino

Salem, Massachusetts

P.S. How about a centerfold of Emmylou and Iris?

Never satisfied.—Ed.

Sammy Kershaw

You have a great magazine with interesting articles. We're all "nosy" about our C&W stars.

I must complain about something that affects us all and especially youngsters. The "20 Questions with Sammy Kershaw" in the July/August issue was good except for the *foul language*. He's a great artist and role model if he'd clean up his language. Please forward a copy of this to Sammy.

Jane K. Blackmon (a grandmother)

Carrollton, Mississippi

20 Questions in Trouble

This is perhaps the second time I have ever written to a magazine other than renewing a subscription. But after reading the "20 Questions with Sammy Kershaw" in the July/August issue, I had to respond.

I do not understand how that interview, with its foul language and taking God's name in vain, could ever promote anyone's career. I was a DJ at one time and have done many interviews, and we had some standards to go by. Now it seems that anything and everything is all right to say.

I purchase a lot of music in a year's time, but I won't be buying any Sammy Kershaw music.

Carter S. Carlton

Miami, Oklahoma

More Sammy Kershaw

Shame on you for printing the "20 Questions with Sammy Kershaw" in the July/August issue. He said over 13 curse words and talked of blowing smoke up people's ass. What a complete shame that someone like Sammy Kershaw has to talk like that. My kids and I really enjoy his music, but after reading his 20 Questions and the way he talked, I am no longer a fan. Try and keep it clean and have our stars set examples for our kids.

Anne McGarry

Warrenton, Missouri

CMM's policy, always hotly debated, is to print the star's exact words.—Ed.

Correx on Maybelle's Guitar

In People in the September/October issue, we mistakenly stated that Maybelle Carter used her L-5 Gibson on the historic Bristol sessions in 1927. This is in error. Maybelle purchased the famous guitar several years later. For more on the guitar, see *The Journal* this time.

Millard Boo-Boos

In the September/October 1998 issue, Bob Millard reviewed John Michael Montgomery's new CD, *Leave a Mark*. He said "I Couldn't Dream" was co-written by Ricochet's Richie McDonald. Richie McDonald is the lead singer for Lonestar, while Ricochet's lead singer is Heath Wright.

Valerie Grove

Champaign, Illinois

Apologies to all concerned.—Ed.

Tammy in the Hall of Fame

I am writing to comment on the recent announcement that the first lady of country music, Tammy Wynette, has finally been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Most are applauding the decision and saying she is certainly deserving. I agree. However, was she less deserving in 1995? 1996? 1997? Of course not! It is disgraceful that Tammy was denied the great honor while she was alive. The Country Music Association Hall of Fame committee should hang their collective heads in shame. I know that Tammy Wynette, George Morgan and Elvis are extremely pleased to be enshrined; in the case of Tammy, the gesture is a bit late.

Bill Woodruff

North Providence, Rhode Island

The Possum

Well, The Possum has done it again (*It Don't Get Any Better Than This*). This isn't George's best album, but it is certainly a darn good one. It beats heck out



CHEVROLET presents the 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 1999 issue.

1. Name the Pam Tillis single that was nominated for two Grammys earlier this year.
2. Which country legend do The Derailers consider their strongest influence?
3. Where did Dolly Parton record her new album?
4. How many albums has Gary Allan released?
5. Before turning to performing, Don Walser spent 39 years with what organization?
6. Chevy's new full-size pickup is bigger, faster, stronger and smarter than before. What is its name?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. Mattie, Alexandra, Dani
2. Steve Wariner
3. Miami, Florida
4. Pure Prairie League
5. 1985
6. Chevy's S-10 features a new interior.

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of the so-called country artists the radio stations are playing nowadays.

Anyone who can listen to George's "Wild Irish Rose" and not get goose bumps had better have his/her heart checked. Chances are it isn't working. And, any country station that doesn't play "When Did You Stop Loving Me" is doing its listeners a great disservice.

For those who do the programming for today's country stations, I would hope for singing what we can all relate to. Would like to know more about her and see her again on TNN. This is one show my husband, Steve, and I watch often.

Glenn M. Taylor
Lomita, California

Alan Jackson in Concert

I have seen most of the country concerts since the 70's, and I have been in AJ's fan club since '91 and never seen him in concert! August 1, 1998, he played at Mid-State Fair in Paso Robles, California. We went, and he puts on a first class country show. He sang 26-plus songs, talks to the audience and introduced his band! We have not been this entertained by anyone like this. Wanted your readers not to miss seeing Alan Jackson—he's worth every dollar! The audience sings, dances in the aisles and etc., right along with him. They give a ten-minute standing ovation when

he comes out and beg him by standing and yelling for ten minutes for him to come back. He did. He sang "Chattahoochie."

Harriett Fyke
Whittier, California

Alan's new album, *High Mileage*, is reviewed in this issue.—Ed.

Hooray for Danni Leigh

On September 28th performing on TNN, I saw Danni Leigh. She has talent for singing what we can all relate to. Would like to know more about her and see her again on TNN. This is one show my husband, Steve, and I watch often.

Mary Alice Bock
Texas City, Texas

Record review on Danni this issue.—Ed.

Whatever Happened to....

Does anyone have any information, pics or records (4-Star 78's) of The Armstrong Twins? In 1949-1950 they played music at Anaheim, California, Harmony Park Ballroom and also a place in Los Angeles called the 97 Street Corral. They lived in Willowbrook, California, and were about 18 years old. They had a younger sister, Patsy, who sang with them sometimes. They were originally from Little Rock, Arkansas. Floyd played the guitar and Lloyd the mandolin.

W. Love
Hanford, California

Unchained Melody

I am trying to find out who wrote "Unchained Melody." Hope you will send me the answer. Didn't know who else to send it to. Thank you.

Albert Crase
Lawrenceburg, Kentucky

It was written by Hy Zaret and Alex North. In addition to Elvis' version, many remember *The Righteous Brothers'* 1965 hit. And there were others.—Ed.

Lookin' fer Gene Watson

Tell me whatever happened to Gene Watson. Gene sure is a great singer. I sure liked "Farewell Party"—that sure is a pretty song. I have one tape by Gene with "Farewell Party" and "Pick the Wildwood Flower" on it. *Reflections* is the name of the tape.

I don't see anything in the magazines of him doing any personal appearances or anything. So clue me in what he is doing. I miss hearing Gene; he's a great talent.

Al Baisley
Highland Mills, New York

P.S. What about Hank Williams III? I met him in person in Chester, New York, and he put on some show. I would love to see a cover story on young Hank III.

Gene Watson still performs. He was just named Entertainer of the Year by ROPE (Reunion of Professional Entertainers)

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6. Place your full name, telephone number and complete address on the same sheet of paper as your song.
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Or submit your entry through our website at www.song-lyrics.com

in Nashville, and performed at their awards show. Watch for a new album on Step One Records. Nothing on Hank III this time, but Hank Jr. and Jett are featured in the People section.—Ed.

Shania Revisited

If it's one thing that gets on my nerves about Shania Twain it's her choice of tops. You know, the ones that show her "world famous" belly button and half of her stomach. Yes, Shania has the body to wear it (and so do I), but if you look around, you'll notice that just about in every picture every top she has on has that same problem.

I've seen so much of it, it just makes me sick! Look at LeAnn Rimes. Does she show her navel and half of her stomach to get attention and sell records?! I don't think so. And yet she's a whole lot prettier and more popular than Shania in my opinion. Take Deana Carter for instance. I've never seen her stomach and navel at all, and she sells records. Shania, I think it's time you gave that belly button of yours some vacation time and cover up in some of your pictures.

Shelly Welsh

Southhaven, Mississippi

P.S. Love your magazine, *Country Music*. Please do a story on Lila McCann!

For another take on Shania, see *Final Note*—Ed.

Miss LeAnn Rimes

Your magazine is great. The best out there today! There is one thing that I think, and a lot of the other readers do too. There is not enough LeAnn Rimes. She is definitely the most popular artist in country music. You can go up to anyone and say LeAnn Rimes, and they say, Man, that girl can sing! She's like an angel anytime you see her. If it's on a magazine, in concert, or even on TV, she puts a big smile on your face! I would travel all over the globe to see her. She's got the best album out there today. It's a thought-fight between her and The Kinleys. They've both got the best albums. Print this in the next issue of *Country Music* and see how many people write in that totally agree!

Sarret Ardoin

Shreveport, Louisiana

Tacky Tacky

In my opinion, LeAnn Rimes has the best voice in country music today. Male or female. LeAnn can sing any kind of song, and her voice is so strong and pure country. Recently I watched her on the daytime soap opera, *Days of Our Lives*. She performed so well for one so young. Also she has hosted or co-hosted several award shows. She is always poised, lady-like and so mature for her age. I predict this young lady has a long, successful career ahead. I truly am a Rimes fan. How-

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ever, I was very disappointed in the outfit she chose to wear to a recent award show. She's always been so well-groomed. This one looked like a yard-sale reject. I hope she learns from this disaster. Several people have mentioned this to me. Most of the time she's a well-dressed, beautiful young lady.

Melanie Johnson

Columbus, Ohio

High Line Riders Thank Patrick

I was surprised and extremely pleased by your inclusion of myself and my band, The High Line Riders, in your May/June Final Note column. As someone who grew up listening to and idolizing artists such as Waylon, Willie, Kris, Johnny and Billy Joe, among others you recently have mentioned in your column, I am truly honored. It means a great deal to an artist like myself to be recognized by yourself and your magazine.

Though some may defensively disagree with some of your observations, I found many of them to be quite accurate (for example: "about 2.5 alt. country musicians for every alt. country fan"—very funny! and very true...for now!).

It saddens me that the Waylons and Willies, et al., don't continue to get the chance to reach people as much as they once did. We could use a few Outlaws again (actually the title of a new song I'm writing). Humbly we walk in their shadows and hope we can bring a smile to the new faces along the way.

Thanks again for your kind words and support.

Ed Pettersen

Upper Black Eddy, Pennsylvania

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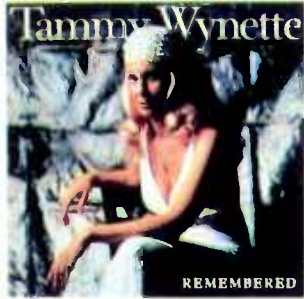
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2. Alan Jackson *High Mileage*
3. Dixie Chicks *Wide Open Spaces*
4. Alabama *For the Record: 41 Number One Hits*
5. Vince Gill *The Key*
6. Various Artists *Hope Floats (soundtrack)*
7. Faith Hill *Faith*
8. Mark Wills *Wish You Were Here*
9. Garth Brooks *Sevens*
10. Tim McGraw *Everywhere*
11. LeAnn Rimes *Sittin' on Top of the World*
12. Brooks & Dunn *If You See Her*
13. Trisha Yearwood *Where Your Road Leads*
14. Garth Brooks *The Limited Series (boxed set)*
15. Jo Dee Messina *I'm Alright*
16. Reba McEntire *If You See Him*
17. Diamond Rio *Unbelievable*
18. Various Artists *Tammy Wynette Remembered*
19. Tracy Lawrence *The Best of Tracy Lawrence*
20. Willie Nelson *Teatro*
21. Various Artists *Ultimate Country Party*
22. George Strait *One Step at a Time*
23. Clay Walker *Greatest Hits*
24. Brooks & Dunn *The Greatest Hits Collection*
25. The Wilkinsons *Nothing But Love*

Singles

1. Tim McGraw *Where the Green Grass Grows*
2. Brooks & Dunn *How Long Gone*
3. The Wilkinsons *26 Cents*
4. Alan Jackson *I'll Go On Loving You*
5. Mark Wills *Don't Laugh at Me*
6. Diamond Rio *You're Gone*
7. Shania Twain *Honey, I'm Home*
8. George Strait *True*
9. Lonestar *Everything's Changed*
10. Reba McEntire *Forever Love*
11. Garth Brooks *You Move Me*
12. Clint Black *Loosen Up My Strings*
13. John Michael Montgomery ... *Cover You in Kisses*
14. Jo Dee Messina *I'm Alright*
15. Dixie Chicks *Wide Open Spaces*
16. Lee Ann Womack *A Little Past Little Rock*
17. LeAnn Rimes *Nothin' New Under the Moon*
18. Alabama *How Do You Fall in Love*
19. Tracy Byrd *I Wanna Feel That Way Again*
20. Ty Herndon *It Must Be Love*
21. Dixie Chicks *There's Your Trouble*
22. Linda Davis *I Wanna Remember This*
23. Collin Raye *Someone You Used to Know*
24. Faith Hill with Tim McGraw ... *Just to Hear You Say That You Love Me*
25. Terri Clark *You're Easy on the Eyes*



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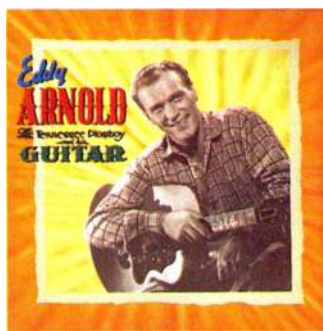
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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Eddy Arnold: In the 1940's and 50's, before "Make the World Go Away" and "What's He Doing in My World" surrounded him with strings, everyone knew Eddy Arnold as The Tennessee Plowboy. He did have strings behind him in those days, too—only they were the ones on the fiddle, guitars, bass and Little Roy Wiggins' steel guitar. Except for a few of his biggest early hits, virtually none of that



early material has been available since it was first issued on 78's and 45's. Only a fraction of it ever made it onto LP. For years, I've been agitating for someone, anyone, to tackle reissuing Arnold's original early recordings, not the re-makes of hits that RCA has foisted on the public over the years. Bear Family has finally rectified that situation for good with the five-disc, 120-track *The Tennessee Plowboy and His Guitar 1944-1950* (BCD 15726) covering his complete Bluebird and RCA Victor recordings (released and otherwise).

In those six years, Arnold racked up an unbelievable 35 hit singles, including "It's a Sin," "Chained to a Memory," "I'll Hold You in My Heart," "Bouquet of Roses," "Molly Darling," "Texarkana Baby," "Anytime," "A Heart Full of Love," "Just a Little Lovin'" and others, including "The Lovebug Itch." His style was a work in progress when he began recording for Victor in December 1944 at WSM's studios (the first modern country

session in Nashville). That session was heavy on sentimental fare like "Mommy Please Stay Home with Me" along with his first (and best, in my mind) recording of Tex Owens' "Cattle Call."

By 1946, Arnold found not only his voice but an instantly identifiable sound. If Roy Acuff stood out for raw, unabashed emotion, Arnold conveyed an impression he was singing to only one person. Relaxed, and influenced by—but not imitative of—pop crooners, his style was smooth and pleasing, plaintive or playful as the song demanded. Behind the voice, the sound was sparse and airy. Little Roy Wiggins' Hawaiian-influenced non-pedal steel embellished and filled in the gaps while leaving plenty of space, becoming a virtual trademark on Arnold recordings. Underneath them, subtle but complex fiddle lines created a counterpoint. Going through this material, Arnold had a consistency and high standard that, combined with his smooth voice, helped him become one of the first country singers to gain wider acceptance and broader exposure in the late 40's and early 1950's. It's somewhat ironic that nearly all Arnold's early material, considered such a boost to Nashville's reputation, was actually recorded elsewhere, at RCA's New York or Chicago studios, since the company had none in Nashville until the 1950's.

The booklet in this set includes the usual comprehensive discography with brief biographical notes by Arnold biographer Michael Streissguth, who wrote the better of two recent Arnold books. Though the notes are fine, a bit more musical insight would have been welcome. Fans of his later work might find much of this primitive. I have no problem with those who prefer "Make the World Go Away." But even though I wasn't born

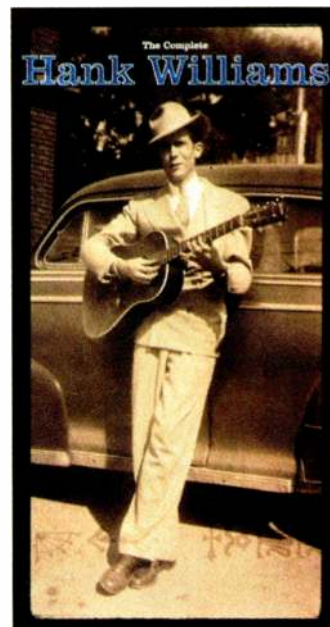
when he recorded his earliest hits, to me, the material here is the true Eddy Arnold.

The Maddox Brothers and Rose: Forty-nine years ago, 14-year-old Glenn Mueller of North Hollywood, California, first heard The Maddox Brothers and Rose. In 1953, this dedicated fan used his new reel-to-reel tape recorder to record every bit of the Maddoxes he could from the radio, be it their own shows or guest shots on other local radio or TV programs. In Mueller's case, the Maddox tapes endured to be issued as *The Maddox Brothers and Rose Live—On the Radio* (Arhoolie CD 467). Despite inevitable technical flaws, Mueller's tapes have robust, clear sound, since the broadcast signals were local.

In 1953 the Maddoxes, after a few months on the *Louisiana Hayride*, were back in California at KXLA radio. Nine tracks from guest shots on other KXLA radio and KTLA-TV shows begin the set, the remaining 29 coming from their regular shows during December 1953. The repertoire is at least partly predictable, made up of such Maddox standards as "Mule Skinner Blues" and "Water Baby Blues." Fine as these are, the other material stands out more, particularly their searing version of Johnnie Lee Wills' Easter classic, "Peter Cottontail," and an eerie "When God Dips His Love in My Heart," as well as covers of Hank Thompson's "Wake Up Irene" and Tennessee Ernie's "Shot Gun Boogie." This collection leaves one wondering how many more resourceful souls who did this over the years have decent-sounding tapes of various greats in their prime lying in closets, attics and basements.

Hank Williams: The Complete Hank Williams (Mercury 314 536 077-2), a ten-CD collection assembling (nearly) everything Hank recorded, was released in September. It's a to-

tal of 225 tracks, 53 previously unissued. Discs One through Four assemble his complete Sterling and MGM recordings, and little more need be said about these elemental building blocks of modern country. Disc Five features early home recordings from his teenage days in Montgomery, Alabama, in the early 1940's. These performances, despite their flaws, reveal that Hank's style as we know it was fully formed even then. Also on Disc Five are some 1947 song demos for Acuff-Rose, including an early stab at "Honky Tonk Blues." Disc Six includes more Acuff-Rose demo recordings and solo performances from his Johnnie Fair Syrup radio show in Shreveport. Disc Seven fea-



tures more song demos, recorded in Nashville for Acuff-Rose, which carry over to fill Disc Eight. Disc Nine includes more demos, these of songs Hank never recorded but other artists did, along with more radio shots. While most are great, a low-fidelity guest shot on a Jackson, Mississippi, station and a hilariously bad Audrey Williams vocal are valuable only as curiosities.

The live performances that

make up Disc Ten are a revelation. This is Hank live, and more than any of the other material here, even the classic recordings, this brings the performer to life and leaves no doubt that, at his peak, he smoked onstage. These include Opry spots originally recorded for rebroadcast over the Armed Forces Radio, later issued on the *Hank Williams Sr. Live On the Grand Ole Opry* LP. The disc also features an April 1952 duet on "I Can't Help It If I'm Still in Love With You" with Anita Carter on TV's *Kate Smith Evening Hour*. Unfortunately, his performances of "Hey, Good Lookin'" and "I Saw the Light" from an earlier Smith show aren't included. Among the most mesmerizing performances is a duet with Little Jimmy Dickens on "The Old Country Church" and a terrific "Lovesick Blues" from his Opry debut. This isn't his legendary show-stopping June 11, 1949, guest shot, but his debut as a cast member a week later. A rocking "Move It On Over," recorded in Berlin during a 1949 Opry tour of American military bases, is bluesier than the hit version. None of the much talked-about "Mother's Best" shows from WSM are here. Those won't (legally) see the light of day until current litigation over ownership is settled.

For hardcore fans, this set is essential, but as with Bear Family boxes, for casual fans or newcomers this much Hank might be overwhelming. For them, less comprehensive sets are a better place to start. The stunning packaging, supervised by the Country Music Foundation, clearly reflects Bear Family's influence, though the "folk art" postcards included with the set add little. The greatest revelations here are the rare photos and memorabilia from Hank Jr.'s private collection, and material that collector extraordinaire Marty Stuart purchased from Hank's sister, Irene. Hank biographer Colin Escott's encyclopedic notes explain each performance in a book spiced with session information from Bob Pinson's pioneering Williams

discographical research.

Bear Family's *Hank Williams: Songwriter to Legend* (BCD 16286) offers two things that the Mercury box couldn't offer. First are recordings of 16 songs Hank wrote but didn't record, including Roscoe Hankins singing Hank's early composition, "I'm Praying for the Day That Peace Will Come," Hank's Montgomery buddy Braxton Schuffert (spelled "Shooford" on the original release) singing "Rockin' Chair Daddy" and Red Sovine doing "You're Barkin' Up the Wrong Tree Now." Jimmie Davis' "Forever Is a Long, Long Time" and "Bayou Pon Pon" were songs he co-wrote with Hank. Kitty Wells sings "My Cold Cold Heart Is Melted Now," an answer song Hank penned to his own classic ballad. Also special to this set are ten Hank tributes, among them Jimmie Swan's "The Last Letter," "Hank Williams Will Live Forever" by Johnnie and Jack, "Two Blue Singing Stars" by The Cochran Brothers (a duo made up of songwriting legend Hank and rock legend Eddie, who weren't brothers). Though the mediocre "Hank Williams, That Alabama Boy" made it on here, thankfully Ferlin Husky's equally bad "Hank's Song" didn't. Rex Griffin's original 1939 "Lovesick Blues," the version that inspired Hank's, is followed by a "mystery bonus track." This sloppy, irreverent late 50's Hank tribute, based on the melody of "The Battle of New Orleans," actually fea-

tures vocalist Gordon Terry, backed by Johnny Cash's Tennessee Three. Hank Jr. later recorded this song as "The Ballad of Hank Williams."



Merle Travis: Country Routes Records' *Turn Your Radio On: Merle Travis 1944-1965* (RFD CD 20) consists of 30 performances, most of them live. Everything here is rare, but perhaps the rarest material consists of six 1944 MacGregor transcriptions featuring Merle with Wesley Tuttle in a Delmore Brothers-inspired duo known as The Coonhunters. They sang a mix of such sacred standards as "Give Me Your Hand" and "Turn Your Radio On" along with country favorites like "Fireball Mail," the World War II favorite titled "Smoke on the Water" and "Fox Chase." The remaining material comes from the mid-1950's through the mid-1960's. A 1956 TV appearance features him performing "Sixteen Tons" at the time it was a hit for Tennessee Ernie. Other 1959-1960 appearances were culled from the *Town Hall Party* TV show, including a hot "Cincin-

nati Lou," "Nine Pound Hammer," "Rockabye Rag" and some guitar accompaniment behind Gene Autry on "Down Yonder" and "Wildwood Flower," which he'd recorded with Hank Thompson's Brazos Valley Boys. No less impressive and rare are four duets pairing Merle with his old guitar idol, Mose Rager, including "I'll See You in My Dreams." Two Travis medleys are featured, coming from a 1965 *Melody Ranch* TV show.

Flatt & Scruggs: One landmark Lester Flatt-Earl Scruggs LP was their 1963 *Flatt & Scruggs At Carnegie Hall!* set, though some hardcore bluegrassers like the pair's other live album, *At Vanderbilt University*, even more. The Carnegie Hall set legitimized the duo. The Columbia LP was a 13-song condensation of their December 1962 concert there. It occurred at a time when the Flatt & Scruggs audience had expanded beyond their core of older, rural fans to encompass the collegiate crowd and ordinary folks drawn to them through their prominent work on the *Beverly Hillbillies* TV show. Though Bear Family issued the complete concert as part of their Flatt & Scruggs boxed set series, Koch International's recent CD release, using the original cover art, is the first domestic collection to contain the entire Lester and Earl performance, subtitled *The Complete Concert* (CD 7929). Great as the original album was, one gets a better sense of the breadth and depth of the Flatt & Scruggs repertoire on this collection. Amid the Flatt-Scruggs standards not on the original LP are Earl's underrated guitar fingerpicking on "Wildwood Flower" and the loopy, unrelentingly syncopated Josh Graves Dobro tour-de-force, "Foggy Mountain Rock." The finale, "Mountain Dew," brought opening act Merle Travis onstage as well (a fact that should have been noted in the CD insert). Hopefully, Koch will move on to reissue their second live LP, recorded at Vanderbilt University.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Eddy Arnold, *The Tennessee Plowboy and His Guitar 1944-1950* (BCD 15726), a five-CD boxed set, \$165.00; Hank Williams, *The Complete Hank Williams* (Mercury 314-536-077), a ten-CD boxed set, \$189.98; Hank Williams, *Songwriter to Legend* (BCD 16286), CD only, \$27.50; The Maddox Brothers & Rose, *Live On the Radio* (Arhoolie CD 467), CD only, \$17.98; Merle Travis, *Turn Your Radio On: Merle Travis 1944-1965* (Country Routes RFD CD 20), CD only, \$17.98; Flatt & Scruggs, *At Carnegie Hall: The Complete Concert* (Koch CD 7929), CD only, \$18.98. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111298, 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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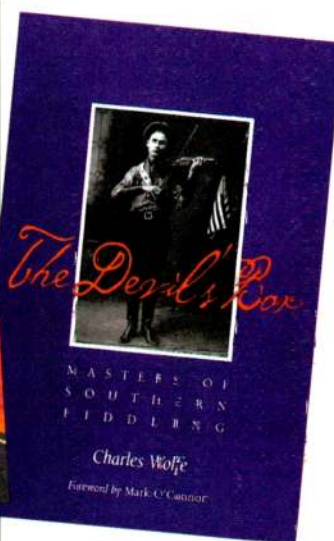
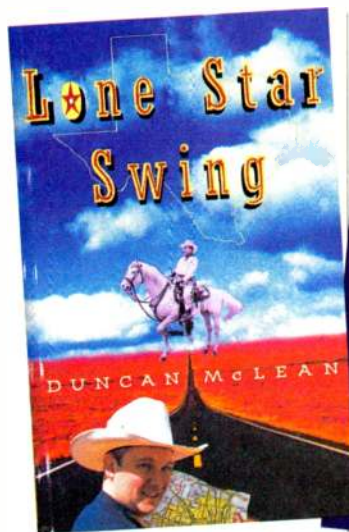
Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

■ Books ■

Southern Fiddling History: Of the many academics who've written country music books, too many produce texts so dense, ill-written and arcane as to be unreadable. Only one, Charles Wolfe, truly has mainstream appeal. Why? Because he combines outstanding writing with research to create work that is both academically worthy and accessible to a wide audience, ranging from academics to fans who never saw a college classroom. He's done it in every book he's written, particularly his Leadbelly biography with Kip Lornell, his liner notes and his articles for *The Journal*.

His latest work, *The Devil's Box: Masters of Southern Fiddling*, which is now available in paperback, is a thoroughly entertaining, readable journey through Southern fiddling traditions. The "Devil's box" term itself was an epithet, hurled by uptight religious types who felt fiddling was as sinful as rock 'n' roll was later on. Following an entertaining foreword by Mark O'Connor, Wolfe launches into a discussion of the earliest country fiddle recordings and styles, which reflected far more complexity and influences than simple "hoedown" styles of playing.

Individual chapters examine early greats, starting with Eck Robertson, the Texas fiddler who made the first country recording in 1922, and proceeding through pioneer Opry fiddler Uncle Jimmy Thompson and G.B. Grayson. A second section deals with "long bow" fiddle legends, including Clayton McMichen, Clark Kessinger, Fiddlin' Arthur Smith, Bob Wills and Slim Miller. A third section examines the fascinating origins and mythology surrounding two fiddle standards, "Black Mountain Rag" and "Over the Waves." The concluding chapters examine Nashville session fiddler Tommy Jackson and



the rediscovered 1920's and 30's fiddler, Ernie Hodges. No other book like this exists, and it well deserves the acclaim it's received.

Jim Reeves: Aside from his undeniable contributions to the rise of the Nashville Sound, Jim Reeves' public persona was that of "Gentleman Jim." That image, enhanced by his velvet voice and the perception of a modest, good nature, followed him to the grave after his untimely death in a 1964 plane crash near Nashville. His widow, Mary Reeves, shrewdly kept new Reeves releases flowing, giving him chart success into the 1980's. Of course, no man could be that saintly, a fact made clear in Michael Streissguth's *Like a Moth to a Flame: The Jim Reeves Story*. Research and interviews with various Reeves associates peel away that soft-edged, modest facade to reveal Reeves' triumphs and very human faults.

Reeves' fearless drive to succeed began in his pro baseball career, continuing after injuries sent him into radio, then music. Early struggles fostered insecurity, at times making Reeves what Streissguth calls a "prickly grouch." He refused to relax even after "Four Walls" and "He'll Have to Go" gave him stardom, lest his au-

diences forget him. Early on, the author writes of dalliances with women on tours while Mary Reeves patiently waited for him in a motel room. Some of Reeves' outbursts were justified, others embarrassing. He chewed out band members onstage, and on a 1963 Irish tour, let anger over a schizoid tour schedule and unplayable stage pianos boil over into blatant mistreatment of admiring audiences. Ultimately, his attitude proved fatal: An inexperienced pilot unaccustomed to navigating by instruments, he stubbornly spurned Nashville air controllers' efforts to direct him safely around a thunderstorm before his plane went down.

While Streissguth gives us more data than we need about Reeves' baseball career (nearly 30 pages in a narrative of 220 pages), his research is solid (though Billy Byrd was not a steel guitarist, as he insists on page 102). The book's only dubious moment is a pointless epilogue. After fairly examining Reeves' triumphs and failings, he launches into a gauzy, gushy soliloquy about the singer's greatness, genius and (yes) kindness, as if to soften his revelations and mollify anyone upset by them. The author's admiration for Reeves is clear. He needn't have

cheapened his research and this worthy book by apologizing for its honesty.

Western Swing: In the Jim Reeves book, a sideman describes a Reeves tour in Germany and the European perception of country performers thusly: "To the Germans, we were supposed to be cowboys—that was their perception of what country and western performers were: like cowboys." I thought of those cultural crossed wires when pondering Scotch novelist and playwright Duncan McLean's *Lone Star Swing*. McLean, clearly bonkers over Bob Wills and Western swing, traveled to Texas determined to pursue the music's spirit. The resulting stream-of-consciousness travelogue/personal journal has impressed some Gen-Xers and literary types taken by McLean's terrific writing, but ignorant about the music itself.

It's understandable that, like any non-American, a European would be overwhelmed by Texas culture, and it's here the book is at its most vibrant, as he careens from one hilarious encounter after another with congested interstates, border guards, dimwit motel clerks and small-town barbers. Alas, these cultural "alien encounters" eventually wear thin, morphing the narrative into a bad comedy script (*National Lampoon's Western Swing Vacation?*). Also, like the foreign fans mentioned earlier, McLean's obsessive naivete leads him to assume Western swing is alive and well in Texas only to find that except for occasional traces, it's not. He meets a few musicians, gifted fiddler Buddy Ray, veteran swing musician Walter Kleypas, and an old-timer and his wife in Bob Wills' hometown of Turkey, Texas, who claim he played with Wills in the pre-Playboy days.

While the author is moved by their kindness, those not so accommodating don't fare as well. McLean tried to meet

with elderly bandleader Adolph Hofner and octogenerian honky-tonk architect Floyd Tillman. Hofner had other plans, but the reclusive Tillman clearly wasn't interested in meeting a starstruck overseas fan. McLean's admiration for Tillman is beyond question, yet he recounts their conversation by emphasizing Tillman's hearing loss in a way that unintentionally makes Tillman, known for his vibrant intellect, seem dotty. In the end, the book says more far more about McLean's cluelessness than Western swing.

Ralph Emery: Ralph Emery's autobiography, *Memories*, and the less impressive sequel, *More Memories*, were both enormously successful, the former reaching the upper end of the *New York Times* best-seller list. Now, Ralph is back with *The View from Nashville*, co-authored with Patsi Bale Cox, who co-authored Tanya Tucker's autobiography. Chatty and gossipy, it meanders through a number of the lives (and deaths) of a number of different artists, most of them close friends of Emery. Some of this is unavoidably depressing, since he deals in depth with the losses of Tammy, Faron, Owen Bradley, and Carl Perkins, all close friends. His chapters on Conway Twitty's death and the fire over his estate between widow Dee Jenkins and Conway's children are informative and tie together all the details that appeared in various news stories. Emery's sense of loss particularly comes through in the cases of Faron, an old friend and frequent visitor to Ralph's *Nashville Now* series, and in the section on Tammy, as he describes the atmosphere of her funeral.

A chapter on Owen Bradley, Chet Atkins, Ken Nelson and Don Law is heartfelt if a bit uneven (and inaccurate) in spots. That unevenness grows as the book progresses. While his study of Alan Jackson is excellent, chapters on Vince Gill, Travis Tritt and Brooks & Dunn add little new information, and the brief entries on

The Judds, Roger Miller and Floyd Cramer seem like afterthoughts. Chapters on Olivia Newton-John and Ray Charles are effective, while a section on Patsy Cline adds little, nor does a rare "interview" with the ever-evasive Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis' predatory manager. Conversely, a profile of Monument Records founder Fred Foster accounts for some of the book's best moments. This is no *Memories*. It has great moments, but with more careful picking and choosing, it could have had more of them.

■ Recordings ■

Waylon: Since RCA has consistently dropped the ball on reissues, it's no surprise that again, an independent label has taken up the slack. Consider the classic Waylon LP, 1975's *Dreaming My Dreams*. It has recently been remastered and reissued on CD, with original cover and notes, by Digital Compact Classics (DRC 12065). Produced by Waylon and Cowboy Jack Clement, the nine studio tracks include several of his greatest songs: "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way," "Waymore's Blues," "Let's All Help the Cowboys (Sing the Blues)," "Dreaming My Dreams" and the live 1974 performance of "Bob Wills Is Still the King." It was a classic the day it was released, and—health and other problems completely aside—will forever stand as a reminder of the power of Waylon at his peak.

Tom T. Hall: Koch International recently reissued Tom T. Hall's 1978 LP, *Places I've Done Time* (KOC-CD-7973), in its original form. This wasn't necessarily Tom T.'s greatest triumph (I still think the early Mercury albums are the best), but it had its moments, including the evocative "The Grocery Truck," the penetrating "The Man Who Shot Himself," the rather anti-climactic "Son of Clayton Delaney" (a sequel to "The Year Clayton Delaney Died") and his brother Hillman's original "Gimme Peace."

Hank Thompson: To mark his 50th anniversary in the business, Hank Thompson got together with various admirers to record *Hank Thompson and Friends* (Curb 77925). The 12 tracks feature two solo performances, and ten Hank duets with various guest artists, beginning with a duet on "A Six Pack to Go" with perennial guest singer Vince Gill. He re-makes his minor talking blues hit, "Total Stranger," with Lyle Lovett. Marty Stuart joins in on "Green Light," David Ball doing likewise on "Get the Hell out of Dodge," and Junior Brown dueting with Hank on "Gotta Sell Them Chickens." The acoustic-dominated "Hey George, Hey Hank" teams him with George Jones. Even on Brooks & Dunn's modern dance track, "Hooked on Honky Tonk," Hank more than holds his own. Without guests, his resiliency is undeniable on "Sobering Up," and on Bill Mack's exquisite ballad, "I'll Still Be

Here Tomorrow." The studio band replicated the Thompson sound, guitarist Thom Bresh reproducing the picking of his father, Merle Travis, who played on Hank's records for years. It's tragic Curb let this tribute slide, without any promotion, but as a celebration of Thompson's enduring excellence, it's already a classic.

■ Videos ■

Hank Thompson: Hank Thompson sells two vintage videos on the road. The first of them, *Big Red Shindig*, is an hour-long video mix of material, most of it taken from an early 1955 TV show he and The Brazos Valley Boys did for the local Big Red Warehouse in Oklahoma City. I'll warn you up front this ultra-rare, black and white kinescope (taken from film—videotape didn't exist yet) has many technical imperfections, including a segment that's repeated, jerky editing and parts of songs cut out. That said, there are some great moments and two outstanding performances by The Brazos Valley Boys. A guest spot with Grandpa Jones features a rare shot of Hank playing five-string banjo. Other segments, seemingly from other shows, feature a young Roy Clark, an equally young Glen Campbell picking 12-string guitar, Rex Allen Sr., The Collins Kids and a too-brief bit of a Wanda Jackson performance.

The second video offering, *Performance and Interviews: 1975-1991*, is a compilation of 16 years of various TV appearances, including many featuring his later editions of Brazos Valley Boys. Among the segments are some with Merv Griffin and on other shows. Also included are televised Thompson TV interviews from that period, and a newscast profile of Hank at home. The one overwhelming impression left by the videos is the consistency in Thompson's voice. He sings superbly on the 1955 *Big Red Shindig*, and just as well 20 years later on the earliest TV performances on this video, and at age 72 on the CD discussed elsewhere in this column.

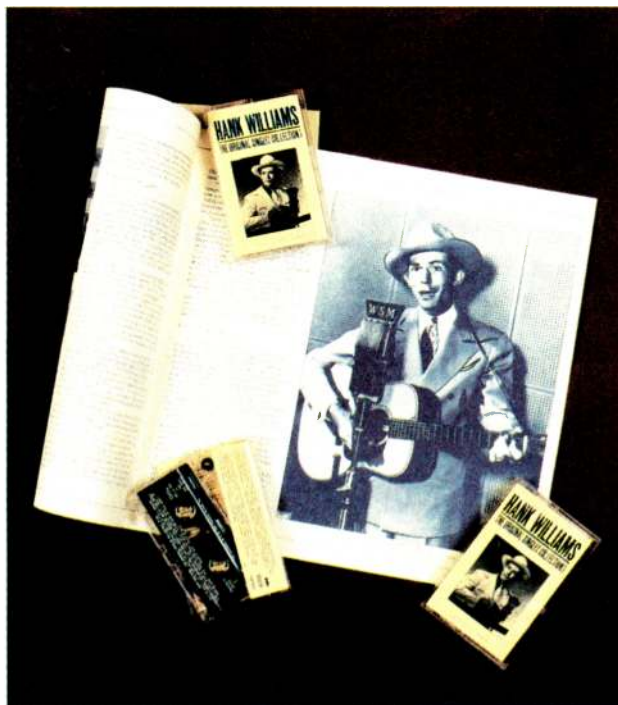
How to Get These Collectibles

Books: Charles Wolfe, *The Devil's Box: Masters of Southern Fiddling* (B6W), softcover, \$18.95/Michael Streissguth, *Jim Reeves: Like a Moth to a Flame* (B9U), \$24.95/Ralph Emery, *The View from Nashville* (B3U), \$25.00/Duncan McLean, *Lone Star Swing* (B9Y), softcover, \$14.00. **Recordings:** Waylon Jennings, *Dreaming My Dreams* (DZS-161), CD only, \$13.98/Tom T. Hall, *Places I've Done Time* (Koch CD-7973), CD only, \$14.98/Hank Thompson, *Hank Thompson & Friends* (Curb 77925), CD only, \$17.98. **Videos:** Hank Thompson, *Big Red Shindig* (V6F), \$17.00/Hank Thompson, *Performances and Interviews: 1975-1991* (V7X), \$20.00. To order, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111298EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, TN 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.**

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EDITOR'S CHOICE



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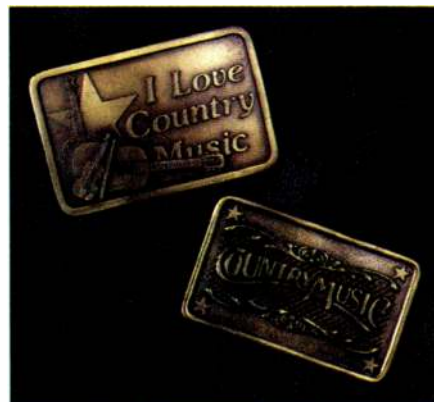
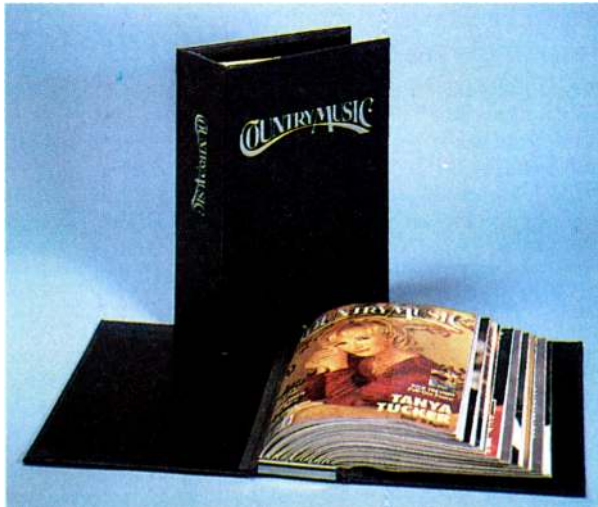
This popular item is now out of print, but we have a few remaining copies available! This three-cassette boxed set includes all of Hank Sr.'s big hits, plus nearly everything else that makes up essential listening for any Hank fan. A total of 84 tracks are included here, from the very first known Hank Sr. recording (a previously-unreleased 1942 live cut of "I'm Not Coming Home Anymore"), to early sides for Sterling Records like "Never Again (Will I Knock on Your Door)" to recordings released after his death, and later discoveries, like the original demo recording of "There's a Tear in My Beer" and the previously-unreleased "All the Love I Ever Had." In between are all of his hit singles, arranged chronologically to help the listener follow the development of his style over the course of his career.

You'll find all of your Hank favorites here: "Pan American," "Honky Tonkin'," "Move It On Over," "Lovesick Blues," "I Saw the Light," "Mansion on the Hill," "Lost Highway," "Why Don't You Love Me," "Cold Cold Heart," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "Long Gone Lonesome Blues," "I Can't Help It (If I'm Still in Love with You)," "Hey, Good Lookin'," "Half as Much," "Jambalaya," "Kaw Liga," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Take These Chains from My Heart" and many, many more. Plus, there's a 20-page book which includes notes by Colin Escott and many rare Hank photos.

Don't miss your chance to get this classic boxed set while it's still available! Order item #Polygram 847-194-4. Original price \$49.95. Special discount price while supplies last: \$39.95—a savings of \$10.00! Cassette only.

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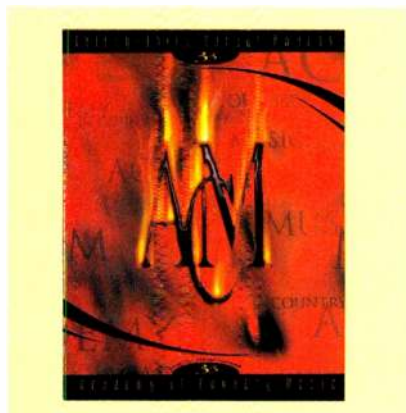
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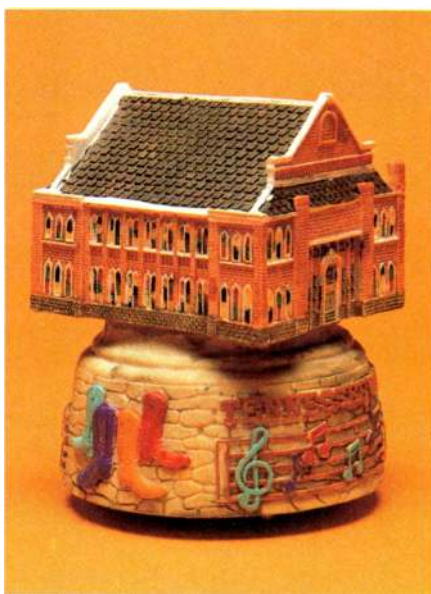
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Crowd Control

Here I am, squeezed into what used to be the cheap seats, just below the nosebleed section, wishing I'd brought earplugs—it's not the volume so much as the distortion, that ten-dollar-radio-in-a-tin-shed effect you get when you drop any old rock band into any old sports arena—and as I struggle to keep my binoculars focused on Shania Twain's drummer, I'm thinking *Gee, will ya look at that? Why's he need those goggles?*

How dumb can you get? He doesn't need the goggles! Goggles are a fashion accessory! You just have to watch MTV, or even Nickelodeon, to know that. And anyway, goggles don't look at all peculiar on Shania's stage. If I were up there, I might want a pair myself. She has Australians in the band, y'know, and Australians are known for their projectile sweating, especially when they're jumping around the way hers are (though, yes, it's true, her Americans and Canadians are just as frisky). Plus, of course, the fireworks are a risk—but not much of one, to be honest, 'cause the choreography places everyone safely away from the launch tubes whenever the pyro-tech toggles the switches. And anyway, being even more honest, if that *were* me up there, strutting and posing and tossing my hair, etc., I think I'd fear the boss' reaction to compromised choreography even more than literally getting a ball of fire up the undies.

Hmm. Shifting, though, from one prominent Shania theme to another, I'm also thinking about certain dictators. Here the connections are less direct than those between our sultry songstress and various kinds of heat in the pants, being a somewhat convoluted matter of A) tiny points of light in the darkness, and B) media manipulation and the psychology of crowds.

Say what? I'll tell you. That tiny-points-of-light thing? You know, the once rock, now country, custom where thousands of fans scratch their matches or flick their Bies when the house goes dark at that certain point in the show (Shania's, Garth's, Celine Dion's, The Backstreet Boys', whoever's), and it's, like, AWE-SOME, the, like, feeling? Well, that was invented by the people who ran the mass political rallies in Germany in the 1930's; it was them, not the big rock acts of the 1970's, who perfected the whole business of gathering hordes of citizens into sports

stadiums during the hours of darkness and driving them, carefully and calculatedly, into states of what has been best described as "kinetic devotion"—a condition of near-explosively energized identification with a charismatic figure, accompanied by a deep desire to find favor by doing his or her bidding.



Shania on stage recently in Nashville.

The bidding of Shania/Garth *et al.* is of course relatively innocuous. Unlike the average dictator, who's likely to ask his fans to go out and murder for him, they just want money (well, maybe "love" too). But if the end varies, the means don't. You flatter your crowd. You pretend you can see them, that you know them, that you "love" them (you tell them that, and tell them again). You have your minions excite and exhort them, pump them up. You thrill them with sound and fury, whiz-bangs and spectacles. You co-opt their symbols and coo over their children. Most of all, you never let them forget that they have an identity as a crowd. They're not just listeners and watchers; they're friends, allies, family—intimates on the inside, sharing the secret. That's your goal, the overriding imperative of your performance. You work for *that*.

I don't like it. Where I'm coming from, the music itself is supposed to move me;

when I close my eyes, it should grow more powerful, not less. If that happens, then the louder the whiz-bangs, the more beautiful the bodies, the cooler the clothes, and the more exciting the choreography, the better; they're icing on the cake. Otherwise, the showmanship just looks like salesmanship.

I dunno. Over about 40 years of concertgoing, I've been forced to the conclusion, obvious enough in theory, that there's an almost inevitably inverse relationship between the amount of effort an act puts into its showmanship and its purely musical quality. Figuring out why is easy: If half your energy goes into blowing kisses, showing off your muscles, and yelling at your crowd to rock, that leaves only half your effort for your music, and unless you're very good—amazingly good, perhaps even once-in-a-generation good—it's tough for you to do much more than follow the basic musical programming. So I suppose it's convenient for Shania's band that her music isn't very demanding either technically or creatively, and for herself that her voice isn't capable of delivering much more than it can when she's hardly giving it her attention, let alone her heart and soul. The crowd seems enraptured just being in the same building with her.

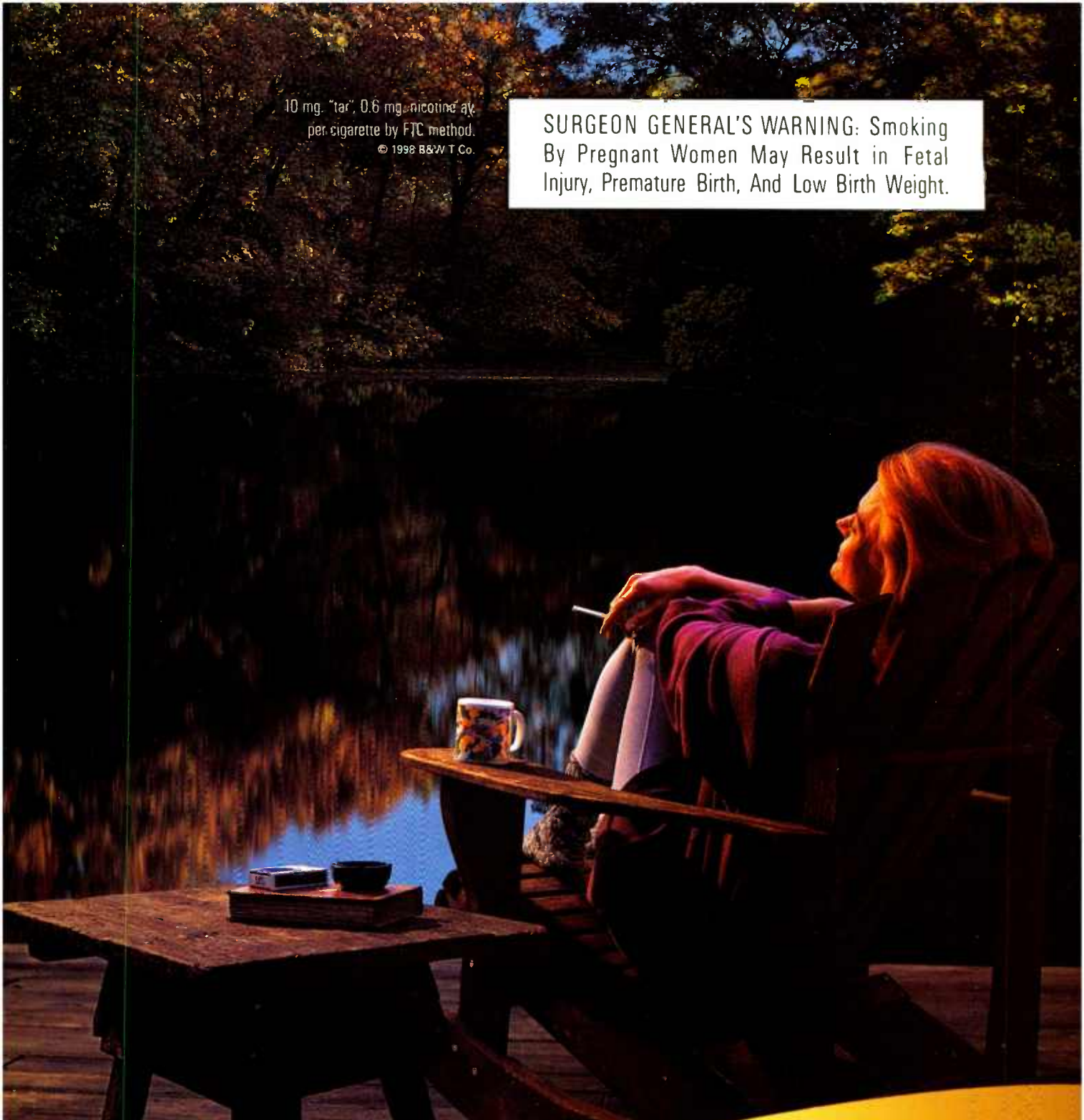
I'm disappointed. I came looking for the bright side, ready for a pleasant surprise. I would really enjoy finding pleasure in a country act of Shania's commercial magnitude. Instead I'm feeling alien again, and the dark stuff is starting to roll: how country's being bought or stolen by half-assed rockers; how the whole music business is being swallowed by multinational corporate manufacturers of booze, electronics, information product, whatever; how we're getting fewer and fewer choices pushed at us harder and harder; how the marketers of music are increasingly in control of its making; how the media are increasingly interested only in aiding the marketers...

I'd better quit. Bitching like this isn't good for my soul, or yours, and besides, there's a drunk behind me getting ugly about why I'm still in my seat, not up on my feet like everyone else, the way Shania wants us. You have to be careful in crowds, you know.

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

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LIGHTS

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