

CRITICS POLL 2000: THE YEAR IN COUNTRY MUSIC

# COUNTRYMUSIC

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2001

## FAITH HILL

She's Come a Long Way — But Where is She Headed?

## BRAD PAISLEY

Back to the Future

## JO DEE MESSINA

Dancing as Fast as She Can

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For Your FAVORITE VIDEOS!  
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## RICKY VAN SHELTON

Still Speaking His Mind

## JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

Isn't in it For the Money

## LORETTA LYNN

Flying Solo

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# COUNTRYMUSIC

December/January 2001

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Country fans know Faith Hill is more than a Cover Girl beauty. But is she abandoning us for pop? Country's prom queen answers the hard questions about her past and future.

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By Michael McCall



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: JEFFREY THURNER/CORBIS OUTLINE; BETH OWINN; COURTESY TNN; MORRISON WULFRATT

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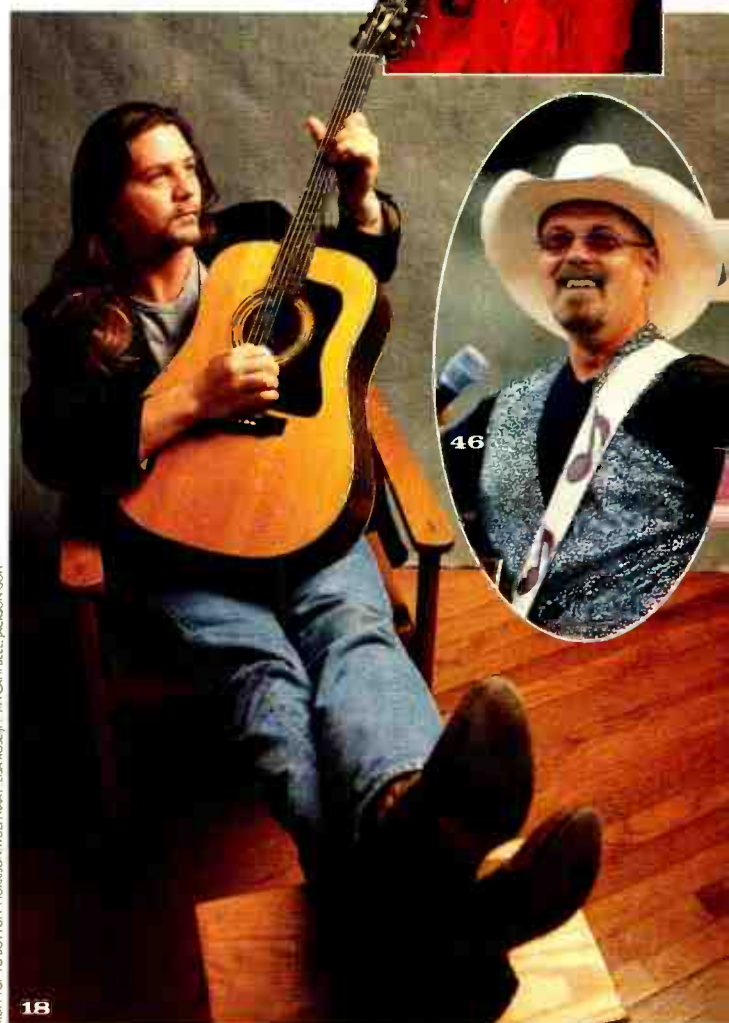
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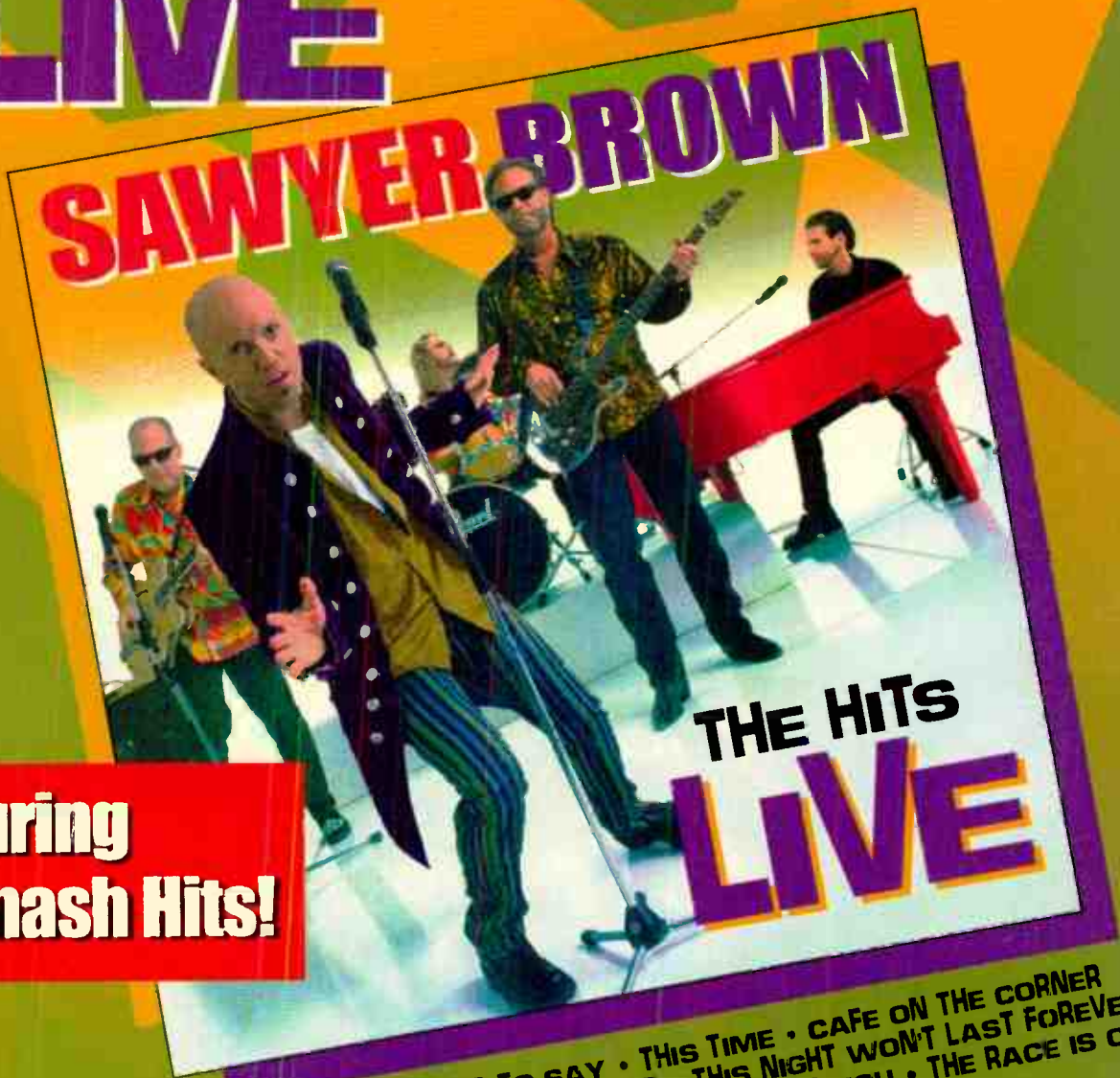


FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: MORRISON/WULFERRAT; LISA ROSE/J.P. TIM CAMPBELL; JACOBSON/GOFF

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## GILL GETS GRADED; RAVES FOR RAYE

While I am still a huge fan of Vince Gill ("Brand New Man," October/November), there is just no getting away from the fact that his latest musical release falls short of his previous work and ranks right down there with his releases from the RCA days. I completely disagree with his view that the fans think his best work is made when he is personally miserable. The quality of his productions does not depend on his



state of mind; it depends on the amount of time and creativity that was devoted to the art's preparation. The musical integrity that we have come to expect from Vince revolves around his innovative musicianship and a writing style that is best described as *poetic*. The fans will never be satisfied with anything less.

Furthermore, I want to commend Collin Raye for his comments in the recent issue. It takes great courage for someone in the entertainment business to speak openly and honestly about their personal convictions. Regardless of whether or not you agree with his point of view, he is clearly a person of integrity and worthy of respect.

**MARIBEL HERNANDEZ**

VIA E-MAIL

## CONTROVERSIAL COLLIN

I have been to a Collin Raye concert and think he is a terrific performer.



# LETTERS

However, some of his comments in a *Country Music* article ("The CM Interview: Collin Raye," *October/November*) inspired me to write. His stance on alternative lifestyles is quite rigid. I do not believe that a person would willingly choose the gay lifestyle, any more than you would choose to be straight. There are just too many negative attitudes towards the lifestyle, and I don't think anyone in their right mind would choose it when they can, literally, be murdered because they are gay. I also don't think environment is a major factor. Mr. Raye needs to rethink this issue.

**LUCILLE OLSEN**  
VIA E-MAIL

Thank you for the wonderful article on "Political Party Boy," Collin Raye. With the sick way our society is today, it is refreshing to hear someone in the public eye actually voicing his opinion on today's issues and not worrying about whether his views are going to be well accepted by anyone. You go, Collin! You not only have my support with your wonderful voice and dynamic concerts, but you also have my support with your standing up for what is right.

**LINDA RUSSELL**  
GAHANNA, OHIO

## NAME THAT TUNE

Thank you so much for the well put-together "25 Songs That Shaped Country" (*October/November*). Reading it brought back a lot of fond memories for me. It seems most major events in my life have a country song tied to them. You had one oversight, though: Shenandoah's "Two Dozen Roses" was the honky-tonkin' theme of the '80s. I doubt there was a dance floor that wasn't packed when that song was played. It's the perfect two-step, even for those of us with two left feet! Thanks for the trip down memory lane.

**CAROLINE CAWTHON**  
BILLINGS, MONTANA

## POPPING OUT COUNTRY

I don't see how crossover can be good for country music. I grew up listening only to country music. As the music changed, I changed with it. I now only listen to the pop stations, and I recently realized that I haven't bought a country

CD in at least three years – and I buy, on average, a new CD every week.

Like most true pop listeners I know, I usually change the station when I hear a country-singing-pop wannabe on a pop station. I think people should have a choice of what they want to listen to – and if you want to hear country, listen to a country station. If you want to hear pop, listen to a pop station. Just don't jumble it all together so people don't have a choice.

When I'm in the mood to listen to true country, I'll just pull out my old Hag, Tillis and Jones cassettes. It won't be today's pretty-boy pop country. I'm only 26, so it's not just older folks who have a gripe with today's "country music."

**TINA BABINO**  
VIA E-MAIL

## STRAIT RATES

Thanks for the wonderful write-up about my favorite country singer, George Strait ("All Hail King George," *August/September*). I admire him for his professional approach to entertaining his fans. I feel something is lacking in entertainers' deliveries when they must resort to having special effects or trickery. George simply walks onstage, smiles ... and sings. Pure country. Purely professional. No flying trapeze. No screaming. No smashing guitars. No clouds of smoke. Just pure country. Lead on, king of country music – George Strait.

**M. HALL**  
MESA, ARIZONA



George Strait

I know I'm not alone when I say your George Strait article was great – just like *he* is. I love George's music so much, and not just because of the music. When someone has the class he has, it can make a so-so song better. And sometimes the quiet, good guys don't get the attention they deserve.

**CHRIS KRUKOW**  
ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

Regarding a letter by Connie Fellows, in the *October/November* issue, and with all due respect to Randy Travis (who's a good country singer with many achievements), I would like to set the record Strait: Before Mr. Travis appeared on the scene in 1986, Mr. Strait had already charted 9 No. 1 country singles, received four gold albums and two Album of the Year awards (for *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*) from the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music, and received three Male Vocalist of the Year awards from the CMA and the ACM. So if any *one* person can honestly be said to have "brought back real country music out of the urban cowboy daze" it is King George Strait.

**SYLVIA CONNOR**  
VIA E-MAIL

## SIZING UP FEMALE ARTISTS

Beverly Keel's article, "Country's Incredible Shrinking Women" (*August/September*), was *itself* incredible. Comparing various female artists, whether tall or short, big-boned or small-boned, without providing complete statistics (height, weight, frame) was apparently supposed to have value: informative, entertainment, etc.

The visual then-and-now comparison of three artists, I believe, demonstrated Keel's belief that your readers can't differentiate between weight loss and how clothing gives various illusions of weight. Truth is, even thin or petite or slender artists have just as much right to be themselves as wide or tall or plump artists, male or female.

**BARBARA HASS**  
PENTWATER, MICHIGAN

I'm writing because of the story by Beverly Keel. I couldn't believe what I was reading. I can't believe country music has come down to a size. What does size have to do with someone

singing their heart out on a beautiful song? Are these women starving for attention? Well, someone looking like they have anorexia will get attention, but not the kind they think. Sunken cheeks and showing your ribs looks awful, not at all healthy.

Wynonna Judd, on the other hand, is beautiful and what I would call a healthy woman. She also sings like an angel. Is it because she looks so healthy that her songs aren't getting played?

**SHELBY JEAN CARPENTER**  
DREXEL, NORTH CAROLINA

To all those people putting down the female country music stars because they think they are too skinny: I'm sorry, but if you were a star, wouldn't *you* want to look good, too? About their nakedness: If they wanted to pose for *Playboy*, I for one wouldn't hold that against them, either.

As for Faith Hill, I love her music. I think she's a very special person, and I've read that she gives money to a literacy program. She probably does more than we know about, so please quit worrying about how she looks. Listen to her music and go out and buy some of her CDs.

**TIMMY KIRBY**  
VIA E-MAIL

### VINCE MISSES

I am a new subscriber to your magazine but a longtime lover of the traditional country music sound – heartbreak, honky-tonk and all. My mom gave me subscription to *Country Music* as a Christmas gift, and I must admit I wasn't sure I would read it since I figured the contents would include nothing but promotions of that sappy, contrived, over-produced stuff that my traditional country DJ, Ron Gibson, so aptly labels "generic music." I'm so happy to see that I was wrong in my assumption. Your magazine is objective and, more importantly, still inclusive of authentic country performers.

My compliments to Bobby Reed, who had the integrity to review Vince Gill's new album and tell it like it is – *not* country and *not* good music (*Reviews, October/November*). I am here to say I still love traditional country and I still know it when I hear it – and *Let's Make Sure We Kiss Goodbye* is not it! So how about a review of some really original, great music, such as the Amazing Rhythm Aces' new album, *Chock Full*

*Of Country Goodness?*

Thanks again for the honest reviews and for *The Journal* section. What a treat.  
**BETHANY BRALEY**  
PINE, ARIZONA

### GOOD 'N' NASTY

I read the August/September issue and I sure agree with Terry Long, who wrote in about the Dixie Chicks (*Letters*). The Dixie Chicks are good singers – but *nasty* dressers! They dress like homeless girls. I think that if they dressed better they would have a lot more fans.

I love the magazine!  
**BRENDA HENSLEY**  
SAN PABLO, CALIFORNIA

### RUDE REVIEWERS

I read the review of The Wilkinsons (*Reviews, June/July*), and after reading some of the other reviews, I have come to the conclusion that the critics you use are rude. I'm not a big Wilkinsons fan or anything, but under no circumstances should anyone be so rude. You can be critical without being mean.

**LEANN MURPHY**  
BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

### ERNEST THANKS

Thank you for printing my request for the Ernest Tubb song, "Time After Time" in your Collections section of *The Journal*. The response has been great. I've heard from 12 states. I've received five tapes of the song, and all the others offered to tape it if I still needed it. Some people sent me as many as 12 different tapes. Country music fans are great!

**VIOLET SILVA**  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

### TERRIFIC TERRI

I love reading your magazine and want to say I am a huge Terri Clark fan. I would love to see more of her in your magazine. She has tremendous talent and is so mellow about her music. *Fearless*, her new album, is awesome. It is new, fresh and shows quite a bit of talent with her songwriting. She has the potential to be the next queen of country. People need to wake up and see the effort she puts into her music. She is a very hardworking individual who deserves more credit than has been given. She is *total* country!

**ROBIN E. FRYMAN**  
PARIS, KENTUCKY

### DONE WITH DEAN?

I enjoy *Country Music* magazine, but why isn't there anything in it about Billy Dean? Out of all the recent magazines I have received, there hasn't been one article or centerfold on him. I am one of the many Billy Dean fans and would appreciate that you recognize his hard work, wonderful voice and all that he puts into his music.

There needs to be more about this wonderful singer/songwriter in upcoming issues.  
**SHANA WILSON**  
JUNIOR, WEST VIRGINIA

### TRACES OF TRACE

We need more on Trace Adkins and his family. He is the best of the best. He makes great music. It doesn't get old.

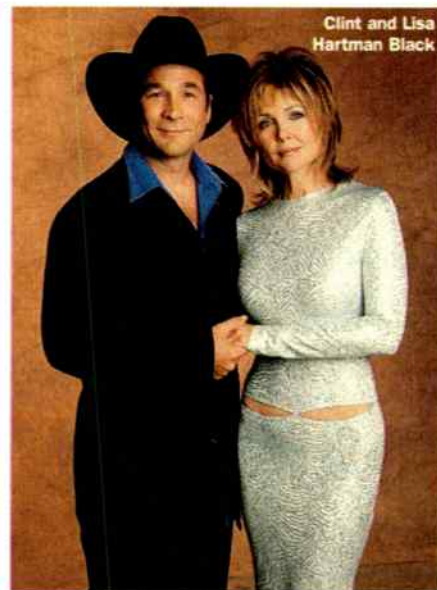
**JOANN TOWNSEND**  
COLUMBIA, MISSISSIPPI

### LEARNING ABOUT LISA

I love your magazine! Recently, while watching the *TNN/Country Weekly Awards*, I saw Clint Black and Lisa Hartman Black win an award for a song he had written. They seemed so happy. I would like to know more about them. I remember her from *Knots Landing* and several TV movies. Is Lisa Hartman her real name?

**FLOYDEE MYERS**  
LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA

*Yes, indeed, Lisa Hartman is her birth name. She now officially goes by Lisa Hartman Black. – The Editor*



Clint and Lisa Hartman Black

## LOVING LOVELESS, CHICKS

I want to thank my favorite female country singer, Patty Loveless, for her new album, *Strong Heart*. I've been waiting for this a long time. Patty, keep up the good work. I simply love your voice.

Also, the Dixie Chicks' *Fly* blew me away. Natalie Maines, you are terrific. You girls did one heck of a job on this album. I love "Cold Day In July," "Hello Mr. Heartache" – the whole tape is awesome. Thank you.

**AL BAISLEY**

HIGHLAND MILLS, NEW YORK

## NO BILLY RAY - THROW IT AWAY!

I just received your latest issue of *Country Music*, and this is about the sixth one I had to toss in the trash after going through it. You have a missing artist. Where is Billy Ray Cyrus? His video "You Won't Be Lonely Now" was the most requested video for six weeks in a row. He has a new album out that everyone is

talking about, and his song "We The People" is the Republican theme song. There are a lot of fans who only buy your magazine for him, and



Billy Ray Cyrus

COURTESY SONY

we would really love a cover story on this superstar.

**DENISE MARTINSON**

VIA E-MAIL

## FORGIVING TRACY

I read the letter section of your June/July issue, and it made me very mad how some people can be so judgmental. I love Tracy Lawrence. He is a great singer, and I will buy every CD that he puts out.

As for what happened between him and his wife, I think he should be commended for knowing he needed help – and he got it. Most men won't even admit that they have a problem. I applaud Tracy for getting help. If you just look in his eyes, you will see what a kind and loving person he is. So I'm all for Tracy Lawrence. He is the only one that puts butterflies in my stomach when he sings. I hope he makes it all the way, and I think radio stations should play his song "Unforgiven." Maybe it would make people stop and think.

**JOANNA VALERIO**

VIA E-MAIL



EVERYBODY NEEDS A 5 MINUTE VACATION.

# COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

PARTIES • PEOPLE • NEWS • HAPPENINGS



## New Duo On The Opry

▲ **BRAD PAISLEY** and **CHELY WRIGHT** duet on "Hard To Be A Husband, Hard To Be A Wife," a song that appears on two new albums: RCA's *Bill Anderson Hosts Backstage At The Grand Ole Opry* and MCA's *75 Years Of The WSM Grand Ole Opry, Volume Two*. Both are in stores now, and both of them celebrate *The Grand Ole Opry's* 75th anniversary.



## Tipping The Scale

► **TIPPER GORE**, wife of Al, takes up a different beat with **WILLIE NELSON** at Farm Aid 2000 in order to drum up support for the nation's farmers. Farm Aid raised more than \$500,000 for the cause.



## Running With The Pack

▲ **LEANN RIMES** gets 'N Sync with pop-group heartthrobs Justin Timberlake (top), Joey Fatone (middle) and Lance Bass after the New York premiere of *Coyote Ugly*.



### Cookin' Up A Birthday

▲ Alabama's **JEFF COOK** blows out the candles with wife **LISA**, and celebrates with good pals **JEANNIE SEELY** (below left) and **IRLENE MANDRELL** at the Alabama Grill in Nashville's Opry Mills Mall.



### Yearwood's Big Year

▲ **TRISHA YEARWOOD** wins Performer of the Year at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Awards, and celebrates her induction into the Hall of Fame with Georgia governor Roy E. Barnes and his wife Marie.



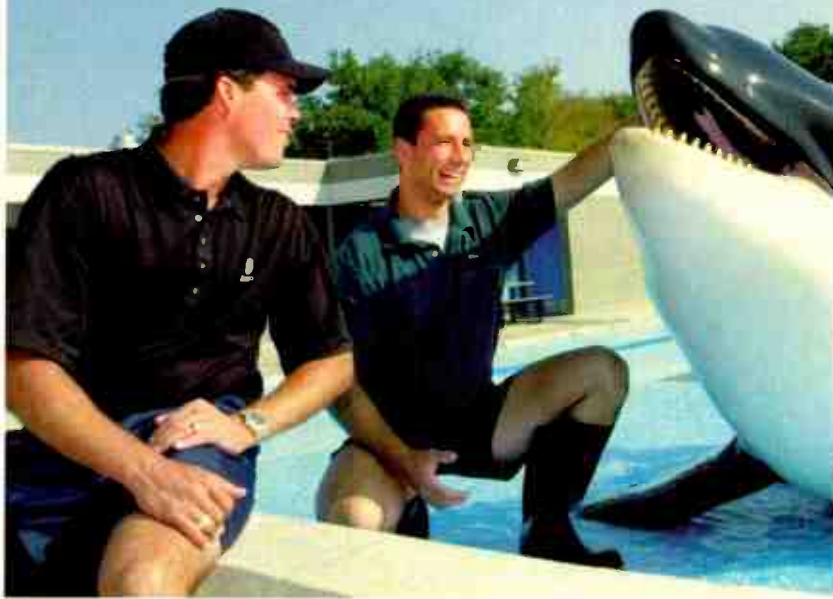
### Pamtanstic Celebration!

▼ When **PAM TILLIS** was inducted as the Grand Ole Opry's newest member, ol' friend **MARTY STUART** was there to lend musical and moral support. According to Marty, it was a piece of cake.



CLOCKWISE: MORELLO/GHERGIA; TAMMY VAN WINKLE; CURTIS HILDURN; CIRIS HOLLO

# COUNTRY ON THE TOWN



## A Whale Of A Time

▲ **CLAY WALKER** visited Sea World for some killer whale karaoke.

## Billy Bob's Blessing

▼ Actor, director and jack-of-all-trades **BILLY BOB THORNTON** (right) reckons **ERIC HEATHERLY** is one entertaining hombre after witnessing Heatherly's performance at L.A.'s House Of Blues. "Son, you're Sun Records and the Grand Ole Opry all wrapped up in one," Billy Bob declared.



## Celebrities Shoot For Charity

▲ **LOUISE MANDRELL** was joined by actress Leslie Easterbrook (above left), big sis **BARBARA** (right) and **REBA MCENTIRE** (below) at the 7th Annual Louise Mandrell Celebrity Shoot. The gun-fest benefit has raised over \$1 million for the Boy Scouts Of America.



## Softballin'

▲ Pitcher **T. GRAHAM BROWN** and swinging **VINCE GILL** were among the country stars batting for the Joy And Jennifer Barnett Memorial Softball Benefit sponsored by the Nashville Police Department and local radio station WSM. Other participants included catcher **DANNI LEIGH** and fielders **CRAIG MORGAN** and South Sixty-Five's **LANCE LESLIE**.

CLOCKWISE: COURTESY SEAWORLD; SAN ANTONIO; LESTER COHEN/MERCURY; MORELLO/GHERGA; CHRIS HOLLO; ROSE MASON



john michael  
**MONTGOMERY**  
BRAND NEW ME

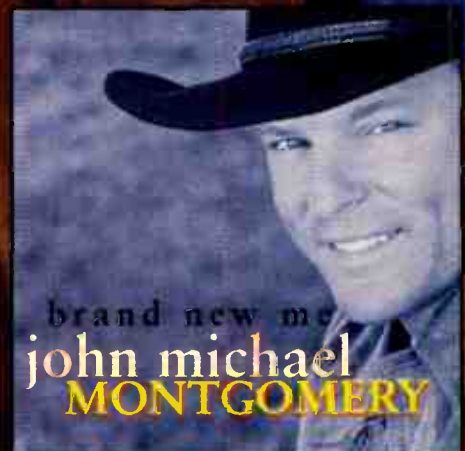
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World Radio History

# COUNTRY ON THE TOWN



## Magnificent Mom

▲ **LINDA DAVIS** proudly presents the newest addition to her family, Rylee Jean Scott. As you can see, both mother and daughter are doing fine.



## \$10,000 From Toby

▲ **TOBY KEITH** bestowed \$10,000 to the Nashville Songwriters Association's newly created Artist Endowment Fund, to help fight copyright protection around the world. In appreciation, they honored him with a personalized plaque.



## Beauty Unleashed

▲ **CHELY WRIGHT** and **JAMIE O'NEAL** proudly display their pooches at the 2nd annual Dog Days Of Summer benefit held at RCA Nashville. The event raises funds for ACT Now, a non-profit organization committed to improving conditions at the metro animal control facility.



## Honoring A Legend

▼ Bluegrass legend **JOHN HARTFORD** (left) was honored in Nashville by a host of well-wishers, including bow-string maestro **VASSAR CLEMENTS** (right) and **KATHY MATTEA**.



## All Wet

▲ **BROOKS & DUNN** arrive by jet-ski in Memphis for their annual Churn 'N Burn charity race, which benefits St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.





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# THE INSIDER

BY HAZEL SMITH



the Ryman Auditorium, the new Country Music Hall of Fame, Gaylord Entertainment Center, the Wildhorse Saloon and many clubs, restaurants and hotels.

## The Gambler Wins Again

When **Kenny Rogers** first came to Twang Town in the mid-'70s he was so far in the red he thought he'd never get all his bills paid. It took two country songs to resurrect his floundering career: The marvelous "Lucille" gave him a proverbial kick in the pants but the incredible "The Gambler" carried him across the threshold of success around the world, all the way to Hollywood and back. Now the 62-year-old Rogers' *She Rides Wild Horses*, on his own Dreamcatcher label, is the first country record on an independent label to go platinum in more than two decades. Congratulations to Kenny and his partners in music. Backing down hillbilly lane, I recall Kenny's first appearance at the Exit/In after he'd recorded "Lucille." I was seated

## Billy Ray to the Rescue

**Billy Ray Cyrus** has once again proven there's no heart like hillbilly heart. When he heard about the horrible drought conditions in Throckmorton, Texas, he rented a semi truck, hired a driver and sent a whole load of bottled water to the area for the residents. God bless Billy Ray Cyrus.

## Their 26 Cents Worth

**The Wilkinsons** sang their way into the hearts of country fans with just 26 cents. Now 26 cents is used to help others. Of course, "26 Cents" is the title of the marvelous song that introduced the Canadian trio to Music Row and radio. Every time they performed the song, fans would come down the aisles in droves and place a quarter and a penny on the stage. Steve, Amanda and Tyler decided to put a container onstage during their shows to hold the money. After each show they total up the amount collected, and at year's end the group will match the funds and all the money will be donated to Second Harvest Food Bank. Another case of good hillbilly hearts.

## If You Got the Money, They've Got the Guitars

The Martin Guitar Company has honored the great **George Jones** with a Signature Edition D-41GJ guitar. During his entire 45-year career, The Possum's guitar of choice, whether onstage or in the recording studio, has always been a Martin. The George Jones model is made of pine and Indian rosewood with pearl inlays, and each of 100 limited-edition



Guitar buffs Vince Gill and Amy Grant hold a prized possession, their Ryman Limited Edition Washburn.

WOODIE S. KNIGHT

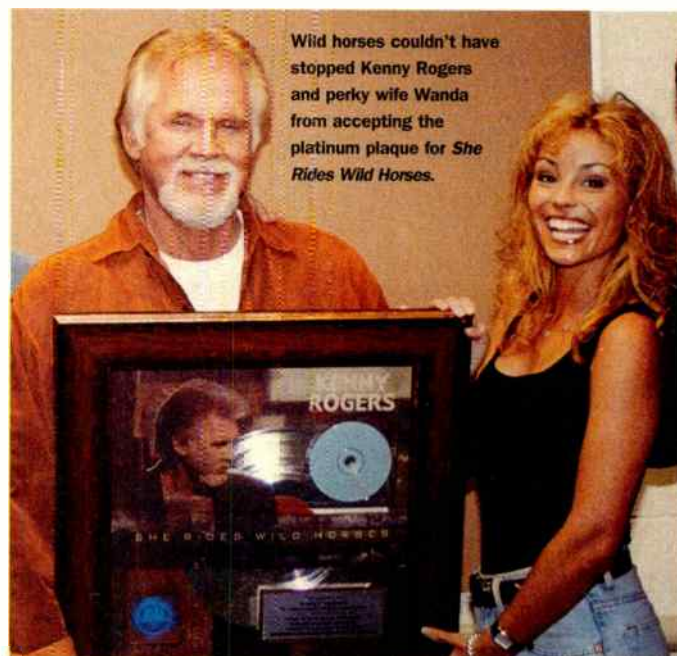
reproductions of the instrument is signed by the star. A portion of the proceeds from sales will be donated to Vanderbilt Children's Hospital.

**Vince Gill** and **Amy Grant** unveiled The Ryman Limited Edition Acoustic Guitar during ceremonies at the Ryman Auditorium. The 243 guitars manufactured by Washburn Guitars were made from old wooden church pews taken from the Ryman. Vince and Amy shelled out \$6,250 for the first one. Vince quipped, "I hope my guitar was made from the back of the bench and not from the place where people sat!" The legendary **Loretta Lynn** bought two of the guitars.

## Fan Fair Makes a Move

Since I hate change, I feel a little sad that Fan Fair will move from the Tennessee State Fairgrounds. But if it has to move, I think the Country Music Association made a great location choice. Fan Fair

2001 will be held in downtown Nashville, where it began. The main stage shows will be at the new Adelphia Coliseum, and the exhibits and autograph booths will be in the Convention Center. This will allow Fan Fair to accommodate as many as 50,000 fans, or more. In walking distance are



Wild horses couldn't have stopped Kenny Rogers and perky wife Wanda from accepting the platinum plaque for *She Rides Wild Horses*.

JULIA GILLARD

beside a cute writer for a now-defunct trade magazine named **Luke Lewis**, who leaned over to me and said, "I don't think Kenny knows what he's got with 'Lucille.'" I agreed. Lewis, now the president of Mercury Records, must have made more right turns than I did. Of course, being male always helps, too.

### Making Up Big-Time

**Faith Hill** had a travel makeup kit especially built for the Soul 2 Soul Tour 2000. It weighs 300 pounds, rolls on seven wheels and costs \$4,200. Carlos Cases in Chattanooga designed the kit especially for the singer's sold-out tour with hubby **Tim McGraw**. The kit is so big and elaborate it wouldn't fit on a commuter flight, so the designer had to drive it to Nashville. Ladies, it has double doors, padded shelves, three mirrors, 16-inch-deep drawers, full power outlets and a timer that shuts off automatically after 30 minutes. Sources say Faith has a hair and makeup person on the road. Daughters Gracie and Maggie and all their toys are along for the ride. Tim has his exercise equipment, his basketballs and footballs. Being Tug McGraw's son, surely he has baseball gear, too. Oh, and there are a hundred employees on tour with the couple. The crew requires 12 dozen eggs and six pounds of sausage to feed 'em each morning. It's sure good they're making a half-mill-plus a night.

### Bare Facts

Nominees for VH-1/Vogue Fashion Awards include our own **Faith Hill** and others like **Jennifer Lopez**. Miss Lopez proves you don't have to wear a lot of clothes to make that list.



Two under five: Little Jimmy Dickens and Billy Gilman

PHILA GERGIA

### Four Feet, 11 Inches

Three stars of country music stand 4 feet, 11 inches tall: Hall of Famers **Brenda Lee** and **Little Jimmy Dickens** ... and 12-year-old newcomer **Billy Gilman**. Gilman recently broke Lee's record of being the youngest singer to have a record on the *Billboard* charts. And he's also become the youngest solo artist to ever earn a platinum album.

### Shania Saddles a New Game

Equine lover **Shania Twain** has purchased several new horses for her Swiss estate. Recently the singer and her hubby/co-writer/producer, Mutt Lange, went on holiday in Portugal, where she discovered a new game called horseball and has fallen in love with the sport. Horseball is played with all players on horseback. The game is a cross between rugby, polo and basketball. The basketball-sized ball has handles, making it easier to catch. Players shoot at a goal located at either end of the court. The game has spread to Britain and is becoming a popular sport.

### Good News

Following the **Dixie Chicks'** two sold-out performances at Radio City Music Hall in New York City, a *Rolling Stone* reviewer perceptively wrote: "Shania and Garth may have brought country to the masses in the

'90s, but the Dixie Chicks are the first act to inspire kids to pick up hillbilly instruments and play them." Right on. Once again, I encourage parents to put mandolins, fiddles, guitars, Dobros and banjos in the hands of youths. I am convinced that kids who hold instruments are not apt to hold guns. You cannot play music and shoot at the same time. Placing musical instruments in every public school in America – that would be good news.

### Garth Gets a 'No'

It made front-page headlines in Music City when **Garth** and **Sandy Brooks** announced they wanted to turn their Goodlettsville estate into a museum. The couple purchased the property from former mayor Richard Fulton in the early '90s for \$435,000. It is reportedly valued at \$1.1 million today. According to their attorney, the Brookses want to create a Graceland-type tourist attraction for fans to view the house and barn, their personal effects and what their home life was like for 10 years at "Blue Rose Estate." During a meeting, 100 neighbors voted against a tourist attraction in the neighborhood. The meeting moved that plan off the table, according to Garth's attorney. Garth and family have moved from Nashville to Yukon, Okla., near Garth's dad and Sandy's parents. Sources say they are building a house there and

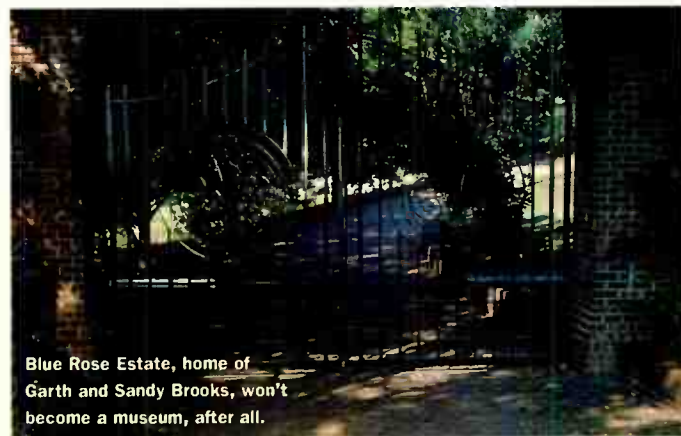
have plans for a recording studio, sound stage and museum with memorabilia. Yukon is about 15 miles from Oklahoma City. Meantime, Blue Rose is on hold until they come up with a decision.

### Sweet but Sugar-Free

I wasn't surprised to learn that good guy **Steve Warner** had agreed to serve as Celeb Chair Person for the Walk To Cure Diabetes in Nashville. Steve is an honorary board member for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation and knows about the disease firsthand. His stepdaughter, Holly, developed diabetes when she was only 8 years old. She is now 25 and has to prick her finger every morning to check her blood-sugar levels and give herself insulin shots. I, too, developed a mild case of diabetes this year, so I appreciate Steve's good work. (To contribute, write the American Diabetes Association office at 4205 Hillsboro Pike, Nashville, Tennessee, 37215.)

### Darryl is Real Deal

That handsome **Darryl Worley** has caught my attention big-time. When I first heard him sing, my heart skipped a beat. "That is the real deal!" I yelled. Darryl is the kind of guy who said the first time he heard his songs on the radio, he'd fall to his knees and thank God. When it finally did happen, good as his word, he pulled off the street and thanked the Good Lord. We need more like him in country music. \*



Blue Rose Estate, home of Garth and Sandy Brooks, won't become a museum, after all.

LARRY HILL

## EXPLORING NEW PATHS

Texas renegade Walt Wilkins takes *Fire, Honey And Angels* to the Internet since he doesn't write conventional country songs.

**W**hen he started scouting ways to put out a new album, Walt Wilkins wanted to go beyond conventional record company channels.

An adventurous songwriter and performer, Wilkins has hooked up with a progressive Internet-based record label, GrooveTone Music. As GrooveTone's flagship artist, Wilkins hopes to blaze a trail toward the future with the release of his new CD, *Fire, Honey And Angels*, which is being sold through [www.groovetone.com](http://www.groovetone.com).

"There's now another way to get the music out besides the model we've had for 50 years," says the thirtysomething Wilkins, whose earlier songs were recorded by the likes of Ty Herndon and Ricky Skaggs. "Now there's a

new model. It's so new, we're building it as we go."

Wilkins wanted to control how his music was presented, and he realizes most major record companies get involved in the selection of songs and musical direction of an album by a new artist. Recording for GrooveTone gave him the freedom to make his music without outside interference.

"I did a record that no one else had a say in – not one note," Wilkins boasts. "The band and I made every decision."

A proud Texan, Wilkins didn't pursue music full-time until after his first experience as a solo artist at age 29. "I had a great life in Austin working for the Texas Film Commission scouting locations, with benefits and all the

*(continued on p. 20)*



JACOBSON GUFF

# BILLY GILMAN CLASSIC CHRISTMAS

FEATURING THE CLASSICS

"WHITE CHRISTMAS"

"SILENT NIGHT"

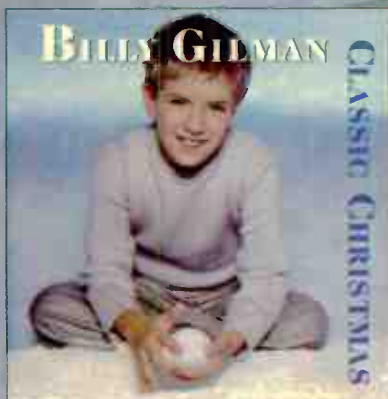
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World Radio History

# EASY DOES IT

**P**hil Vassar strides down the hall of his record label's Nashville office and offers a friendly hand. With his athletic build and icy blue eyes, he doesn't look like the average piano player – whatever that might be. With his easy smile and a gentle vibe, he also doesn't seem like the average singer climbing that long, hard ladder to stardom.

Perhaps it's his considerable success as a songwriter, and that already-made-it confidence that gives him the experience and wisdom to not take it all too seriously. His attitude comes across as unshakably positive, like a guy who loves life and knows how to enjoy himself. He's serious about his daughter, too, and he's undoubtedly passionate about his music. Everything else, well ...

"I'm really laid back about things right now," declares the Virginia native. "I don't get too excited, good or bad, anymore. I used to get really upset when things didn't work out, or really excited when they did. I've learned to be on an even keel. That's the one good thing I've got going for me right now."

Another thing he has going for him is a solid work ethic. Vassar moved to Nashville in 1987 to pursue his dream of becoming a singer. Then he saw his competition.

"The talent here, it freaked me out," he says. "I could have cashed it in, but I said, 'I'm going to work at this and try to get better.'"

Vassar took a job bartending at a restaurant/nightclub, Nathan's Italian Restaurant and Hard Day's Night Club, which he eventually bought. He wrote songs during the day, kept bar and performed at night. For a decade, he not only played his own club, but nearly every club in town.

In the late '90s, when his songwriting efforts began paying off, they paid off big. He racked up a head-spinning string of hits, including Collin Raye's "Little Red Rodeo," Jo Dee Messina's "Bye Bye" and "I'm Alright," Alan Jackson's "Right On The Money" and Tim McGraw's "For A Little While." Then he got a record deal. And that's when his work really began.

Still running his restaurant, he'd cook breakfast from

After years of hard work, Phil Vassar accepts success with relaxed charm.



COURTESY: ALC MEDIA

6 to 10 a.m., take off his apron and go write songs, then spend afternoons and evenings recording his album. On weekends, he'd play his club.

As he's relaying his history, a record company publicist sticks her head in the door to see how he's doing. Languid and stretched out on a cozy couch, Vassar is quick on the take:

"And so, we were all naked that day ... " he says without missing a beat. The publicist, obviously used to his high-jinks, just rolls her eyes.

Whether it's that fun-loving spirit or the years of labor, it's all paying off for Vassar. His first single as an artist, "Carlene," reached the Top 5 this spring. He opened solo for Tim McGraw and Faith Hill this summer, as well as Kenny Chesney and Jo Dee Messina in the fall. He admits, as calmly as a guy can, that he's living his dream. And he says it with his feet firmly planted on the ground – or at least on the couch.

— Charlene A. Blevins

## Walt Wilkins

trappings," he says with a laugh. "Then I played an open mic [show] in Austin. From that moment it was 'Oh, my God – this is bad news.'" He was bitten by the performing bug.

His distinctive take on the Texas roots-music sound, an earthy combination of rock, blues, country and folk, complement lyrics that are rich with stories about real people living real lives.

"Working people trying to make rent, falling in and out of love, having dreams, some that don't work out – real life –

that's what I always loved about country music." Wilkins says.

Wilkins' favorite song on *Fire, Honey And Angels* is "Ruby's Two Sad Daughters." It took six months to complete and, over time, the characters became real to him. "It's a song I'll play for anyone for the rest of my life," he says. "I'm proud of it."

Although he lives in Nashville, Wilkins no longer is trying to score hits with country music stars or to enter their world. "Writing for the 'market' has pretty much been an abject failure," he contends. "It's not where my heart is."

— Lori Shaw-Cobene

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THE ATTRACTION IS LEGENDARY

World Radio History

# MMO BRAND NEW

*I'm a brand new me  
I've been shattered by the storm  
But I survived  
I'm a brand new me  
I found a revelation in the tears I cried  
I opened up my eyes  
Oh, what a change I see  
I'm a brand new me.*

**O**n the surface, John Michael Montgomery appeared to have the world on a string.

The year was 1995, and the dimpled singer from Danville, Ky., was one of country music's hottest commodities. His first three albums – *Life's A Dance*, *Kickin' It Up* and *John Michael Montgomery* – sold a staggering 12 million copies combined. He was riding a streak of four consecutive chart-toppers: “Be My Baby Tonight,” “If You’ve Got Love,” “I Can Love You Like That” and “Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident).” And he was about to embark on his first sold-out tour as a headliner.

But while he was celebrating on the outside, he was hurting on the inside.

“I didn’t want to be out there on tour. I was totally depressed,” Montgomery candidly reveals.

The source of his funk? The 1994 loss of his father, Harold, to cancer. When he died, the younger Montgomery lamented that he had lost his “best friend.”

“I here’s a guy who paved the way for my whole life,” the 6-foot-2-inch singer says. “I had to hide my depression, and I had to go out and do all my shows.”

Although the mourning Montgomery ceaselessly put on a brave face, his personal downward spiral continued when he strained his voice.

“I blew out my throat at the end of ‘95,” he admits, his face grim as he relives the frustration. “I was having tremendous pain in my throat starting back in ‘93. After *Life’s A Dance* hit, I overdid it. I saw a voice doctor, who warned me that I wouldn’t be able to reach my notes and that my throat would go out on me. He recommended I take it easy, but I was just starting my headlining tour. So I sucked it up in ‘95 and grinded it out.”

During one particular concert that fall, Montgomery’s voice dropped out three songs into his show. “I went back to the doctor. He said the cords were irritated and cut out an infected gland.”

He sighs.

“I was *this* close to walking away from it all.”

If you’ve heard his recent smash hit single “The Little Girl,” the devoted “Home To You” or any of the other 17 Top 5 hits the proud father of two has compiled in the past few years, you’ll know that John Michael Montgomery certainly didn’t walk away. But as he reached the end of his rope, he did something else almost as unthinkable.

In the middle of it all, he slammed on the brakes. Retreating to his 900-acre farm located just outside Lexington, Ky., Montgomery took the whole year of 1996 off.

“I told my booking agency and my label, ‘Don’t call me up. I’m taking the year off.”

**John Michael Montgomery bounces back with a heart-tugging new single – and a vow to not sweat the small stuff.**

---

**BY NICK KREWEN**



# N

I'm not singing. I'm not doing anything. I just feel like I've mentally and physically hit bottom. I need a break.' ”

Not everyone shared his concerns, especially those dependent on his paycheck.

“I was a money-making machine, man, selling all these albums and doing 150 - 200 dates a year,” he says. “Obviously, everyone was like, ‘Well, we don’t think it’s a good idea. It’s gonna be bad for your career. Blah blah blah.’ ” Montgomery pauses. “I thought, ‘What’s more important, me or my career?’ ”

He already knew the answer. He spent the year shoring up his personal life, marrying the former Crystal White that January on a cruise ship, welcoming his daughter Madison Caroline into the world in late August, and plotting his eventual re-entrance into the public eye.

“I had a whole year to think about it, and I set goals for myself,” he says sternly. “I thought, ‘I may not sell four million copies of an album again and that’s fine. I may not have any more back-to-back No. 1 hits, and that’s fine. I’m not out to be John Michael, the big superstar. I’m in this business because I love it.’ ”

So Montgomery made some changes, resulting in a reduced schedule he knew wouldn’t be popular with his associates. He was aware of the industry whispers.

“I’m sure people thought I wasn’t working hard enough,” he says. “I wasn’t doing enough. So I’m sure they pulled back the reins, too. Who knows? Still, I had hit records off all my albums. A couple of them went platinum and sold a million. That’s nothing to sneeze at.



“I’m not out to be John Michael, the big superstar,” says John Michael Montgomery. “I’m in this business because I love it.”



PAMELA SPRINGS/TEEN/ATLANTIC RECORDS

**“I do the best that I can, within what I feel are my limitations – and I’m still learning every day what they are.”**

“I decided I was only going to do 50 concerts a year instead of 150 and take the winter off. I felt like it was time for me to settle down. I’d hit 30, been running hard in my 20s and thought it was time to grow up.”

For a man stung so deeply by the loss of his father, it was also time to heal.

*That morning sun  
Was burnin’ in my eyes  
I could see a brand new day  
And all the hurt and anger  
Weighin’ on my heart  
Had begun to drift away ...*

To call Harold Montgomery his son’s idol wouldn’t be an exaggeration. With his band, The Hired Hands, the elder Montgomery and his wife, Carol, would spend virtually every weekend performing

at local clubs in and around Nicholasville, Ky. John and older brother Gerald (who would later use his middle name, Eddie, as a part of the hit duo Montgomery Gentry) dreamt of the day they could join their parents onstage.

“When I turned 14, I got a job on a farm and bought a guitar,” Montgomery recalls, smiling at the memory. “Dad taught me good rhythm, and when I was 15 he allowed me to play with him at a bowling alley and sing a couple songs.”

The first song Montgomery ever sang publicly was Jimmy Buffett’s “Margaritaville,” a natural choice considering his musical diet at the time: Southern Rock staples like Lynyrd Skynyrd and The Marshall Tucker Band, spiced with a little Bob Seger, Buffett and some Eagles thrown in on the side.

“From then on, I was hooked,” says Montgomery. “After that, I couldn’t stand it if a weekend went by that I wasn’t out playing or singing.

“So I got thirsty with desire. My brother and I started a band called Montgomery Ambush.”

**W**hen he reached 17, his parents divorced and quit the road. “I think it was too painful for them,” he frowns. Montgomery Ambush broke up shortly thereafter, and Montgomery started fronting another band. “We played around central Kentucky,” he says. “I didn’t need a whole lot of money. I just needed to put gas in the car to see me through tough times. I was happy.”

Montgomery relives the memories of that blissful yesteryear through “Thanks For The G Chord,” a song on his new album, *Brand New Me*.

“The song talks about my life as if the writers [Byron Hill and Mark Narmore] wrote it specifically for me,” he explains. “I felt that I never really thanked my father enough for what he gave me. He’d been following my career and giving me good advice the last 15 years, and the song says it all.”

As he evolved, Montgomery gained a reputation as a consummate stylist, challenging himself and stretching his abilities.

“I’ve always had good vocal range,” he says. “I learned to hold notes for a long period of time, and breathe in the right places.”

Think he’s kidding? Remember the impressive, 100 m.p.h. “Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)”? Although typically thought of as a sensitive balladeer, Montgomery is more of an all-around vocal technician than many are willing to give him credit for being.

“I love songs that push me vocally,” he admits. “It makes me work harder in the studio.”

Montgomery says that the only time his voice fails him is when he gets fatigued.

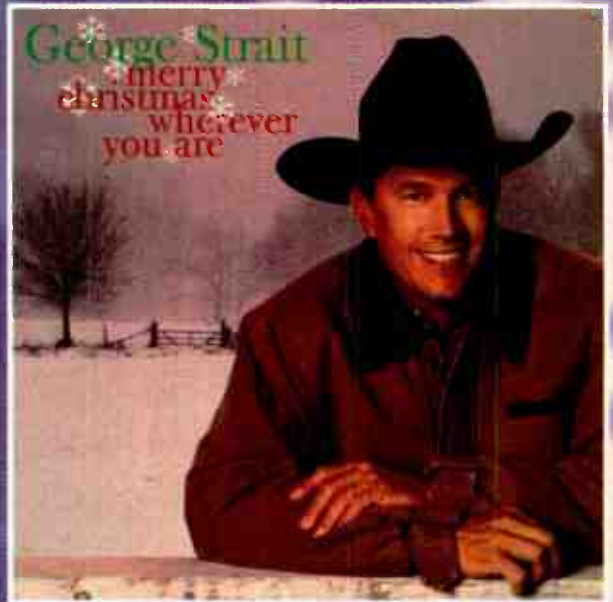
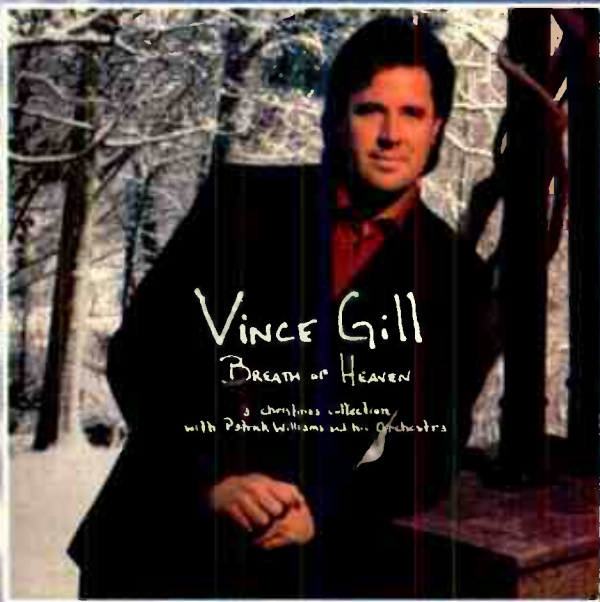
“I get hoarse, and I blow through an hour and a half, and I feel like I’m on cruise control.”

As a result, he takes extra steps to keep his voice in shape.

“I need to hum and stuff to keep my vocal cords loose,” he says. “I need plenty of rest and I can’t overdo it. I try not to talk during concert days, and there are no interviews the day of show. Being fresh I can endure an hour and a half, ‘cause when I sing, I can sing hard.

“I tend to be throaty rather than sing from my diaphragm. I’m not a trained singer. I’m a honky-tonker.”

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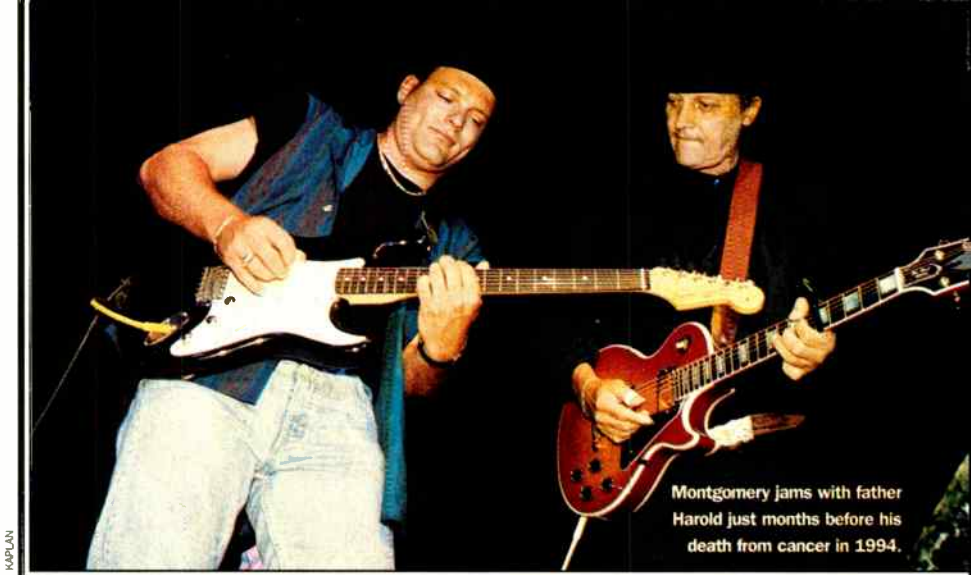
His immediate success – “I Love The Way You Love Me” and “I Swear,” two of his first four singles, spent seven weeks at No. 1 – also led him to discover one of his pet peeves: touring.

“Actually, I like to tour,” clarifies Montgomery. “It’s the *traveling* I’m not happy about. I’ve never been a person who likes to travel a whole lot. There’s a lot of downtime, and playing golf helps a lot. But when the fans are screaming for an encore, I completely forget I’ve spent the day in a hotel.”

*There’s a warrior and a victim  
Living deep inside all of us  
We have to choose to fight or surrender  
When the world beats us up  
I know where my weakness lies  
But I know it’s a fight that I can win  
I may get broken trying to get up  
But I can’t wait to start again,  
I’m gonna start again*

Fast forward to the present. “The Little Girl,” a Harley Allen song about a youngster who receives a miracle of sacred protection as she survives her parents’ murder/suicide, has touched a public nerve. It pole-vaulted up the charts as Montgomery’s biggest hit since his enchanting 1994 CMA Single of the Year, “I Swear.”

“When I heard that song, it tore me up inside,” says Montgomery. “I visualized my daughter behind that couch [where the little girl huddled during the traumatic event described in the song]. The love that I have for my daughter ... to imagine that she would be in that situation tore me up even more. She’s the only girl I could visualize, because I don’t know the little girl in the song. My daughter gets hugs and kisses every day, and we tell her we love her.



Montgomery jams with father Harold just months before his death from cancer in 1994.

We’re a very fortunate family.

“Whether that song is a legend or it’s true, there are children that have gone or are going through those experiences, and I can’t even fathom that someone my daughter’s age is hiding behind a couch while her parents are doing the things this song is saying. It shouldn’t be that way. It needs to be changed.”

**M**ontgomery knows that he can only be the messenger, but he’s proud of the opportunity.

“Somebody might look in the mirror after they hear this song and go, ‘Wow, that’s me.’ And some child out there might have a better life because of it.”

As for himself, Montgomery is feeling rejuvenated. His *Brand New Me* album shipped 350,000 units its first week of release – and should be gold by the time you read this, making it potentially Montgomery’s biggest album since his 1995 self-titled four-million-seller that spent 13 consecutive weeks at No. 1.

“*Brand New Me* is more about

reality,” he says. “The albums I sang on previously are more about what I hoped life would be like one day. On this one, it’s how life is. It’s got a little more storytelling depth to it. I miss songs that tell stories. They’re great for radio, great to listen to and a side of country that has gotten lost over the years.”

He’s also got a new philosophy.

“I don’t let things get to me,” he sighs. “I just don’t sweat the small stuff. I do the best that I can, within what I feel are my limitations – and I’m still learning every day what they are. Music is supposed to be fun, enjoyable and part of peoples’ lives. I’m just trying to look at it with common sense, and make the choices that make sense.”

Or, as he sings on the new album’s title cut ...

*Days come and go, yeah they come  
And go like a road with no end  
Hope fades but never dies  
Just look at me catchin’  
My second wind. \**

from “Brand New Me,” written by Lee Thomas Miller & Kris Bergsnes, c 2000 Hamstein Cumberland Music/Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp./Green Ivy Music, BMI. All rights adm. by Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

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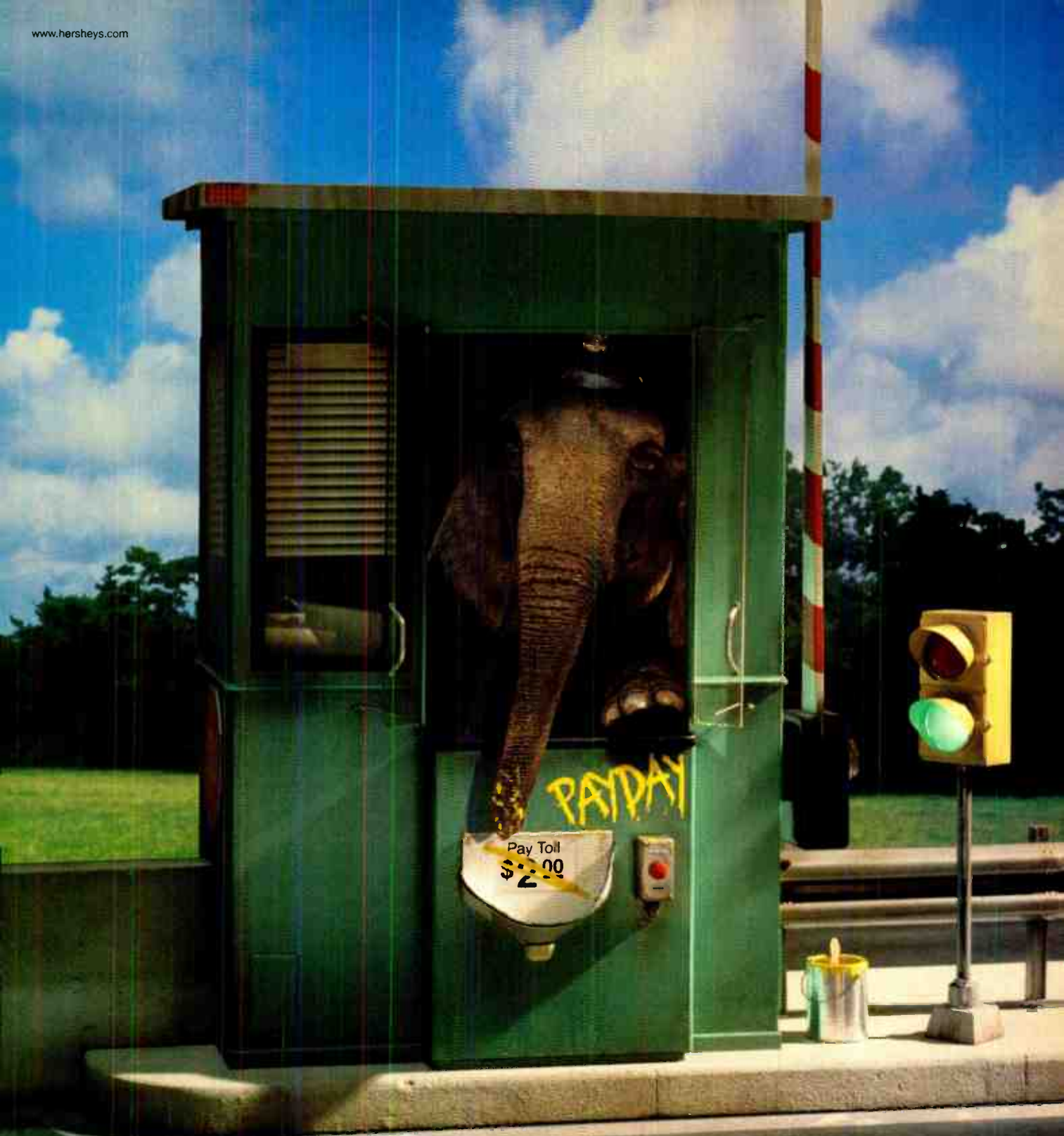
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Scott Price, Secretary, September 22, 2000



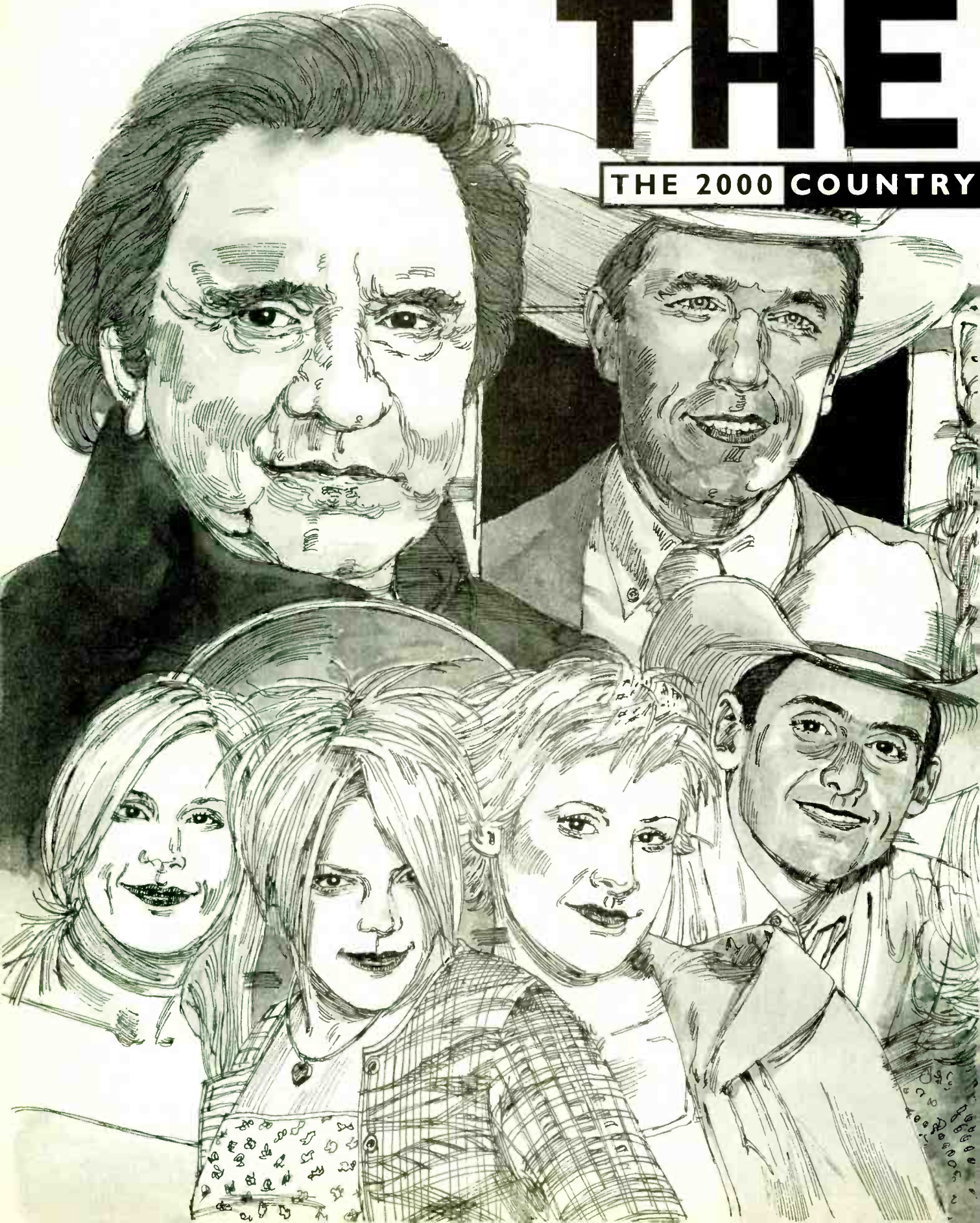
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# THE

THE 2000 COUNTRY



# BEST &

MUSIC CRITICS POLL

# THE REST

*Compiled by Geoffrey Himes*



We asked 32 critics about country music in the past year. The verdict: Sometimes there's a *big* gap between "quality" and "popularity."

**T**he critics have spoken, and at first glance of this premiere *Country Music Critics Poll*, it might appear that "new country" is in trouble. Of 800 votes cast in nine categories, Shania Twain received just one (for 10th Best Single of the Year), and Garth Brooks got only half a vote (for a duet with Steve Wariner). Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, Lonestar, Billy Gilman, LeAnn Rimes and Mark Wills didn't get a single vote. Zero. Zilch. Nada.

Does this mean the 32 participating music critics hate mainstream country? Not at all.

In fact, the biggest winners in the poll were such chart-topping acts as the Dixie Chicks, Lee Ann Womack, Alan Jackson and Trisha Yearwood, as well as country legends like Johnny Cash, Emmylou Harris, Bill Monroe and Willie Nelson.

What's going on here? How can these esteemed correspondents turn their

that portrays them as bearded, professorial snobs who harumph at the suggestion of mainstream acts, Garth and Shania be damned?

Okay, maybe we're stretching it a bit. But the reason most writers devote their lives to country music is the thrill of sharing a great song with hundreds of thousands of their readers, readers who feel as passionate about the music as they do. That's why music authorities argue so fiercely for their favorite songs

the music is so good that its lifespan lasts a couple years. For instance, although *Fly* was out in '99, its shelf life was extended through this year. Thus, singer Natalie Maines and partners-in-crime Emily Robison and Martie Seidel were voted the Critics Poll's Best Overall Act, Best Live Act and Best Group or Duo. The Chicks also hatched four hits to dominate the Top 15 singles. Lee Ann Womack was three times lucky, capturing Best Female Vocalist, Best Album for *I Hope You Dance* and Best Single for its inspiring title track.

These four Texas women offer the most promising route out of Music Row's current crisis. They've proven that you don't have to be a middle-of-the-road pop

backs on half of the biggest names in country music and then throw their arms around the other half? Why are they breaking the stereotype of the boot-licking, spin-doctoring industry weasel who will bend to the dictatorial whim of record companies as long as he's plied with free review CDs and free drinks at parties? Why are they shattering the *other* conventional stereotype, the one

and performers; they want their definitions of the best records to top the charts and to dominate radio.

When their wishes occasionally come true – as they did with the Dixie Chicks' *Fly* last year and with Womack's *I Hope You Dance* this year – critics are usually the first to pop the corks off champagne bottles ... or at least guzzle down a Bud.

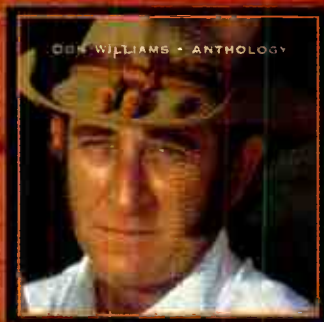
Sometimes, we're lucky enough that

singer dressed up in a rodeo outfit to top the charts; you can do it with country music as authentic as these women's Lone Star accents, and as absolute as their love for fiddle and steel. They've shown that you can sing great songs (both albums feature a Buddy Miller tune) without being relegated to the fringes of alternative-country or the netherworld of independent labels.

## CRITICS POLL



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## CRITICS POLL

They've also confirmed that they don't have to act as if they're trapped in the '50s to make genuine country music. Womack and the Chicks realize that a song's authenticity has nothing to do with how much it sounds like Hank Williams' "Your Cheatin' Heart" and everything with how it articulates the hopes and heartaches of its salt-of-the-earth listeners.

**A**t the turn of this century, music needs snare drums and electric guitars to reach that audience. However, music doesn't shine any light on peoples' lives by feeding them romantic fantasy, comedic one-liners and maudlin sentiment – the unfortunate ingredients of so many country radio hits today. Instead, music can touch people with irreverent honesty and unabashed passion, even if artists end up riding a "Sin Wagon," or telling their daughters "I Hope You Dance."

For the runner-up single behind the

## SINGLE OF THE YEAR

1. **Lee Ann Womack:** "I Hope You Dance" (MCA)
2. **George Strait & Alan Jackson:** "Murder On Music Row" (MCA)
3. **Dixie Chicks:** "Goodbye Earl" (Monument)
4. **Trisha Yearwood:** "Real Live Woman" (MCA)
5. **Allison Moorer:** "Send Down An Angel" (MCA)
6. **Brad Paisley:** "Me Neither" (Arista)
7. **Eric Heatherly:** "Flowers On The Wall" (Mercury)
8. **Alan Jackson:** "It Must Be Love" (Arista)
9. **John Michael Montgomery:** "The Little Girl" (Atlantic)
10. **Dixie Chicks:** "Cold Day In July" (Monument)
11. **Lee Ann Womack:** "Ashes By Now" (MCA)
12. **Gary Allan:** "Smoke Rings In The Dark" (MCA)
13. **Dixie Chicks:** "Cowboy Take Me Away" (Monument)
14. **Dixie Chicks:** "Sin Wagon" (Monument)
15. **Tammy Cochran:** "If You Can" (Columbia)



## ALBUM OF THE YEAR

1. **Lee Ann Womack:** *I Hope You Dance* (MCA)
2. **Steve Earle:** *Transcendental Blues* (E-Squared/Artemis)
3. **Allison Moorer:** *The Hardest Part* (MCA)
4. **Emmylou Harris:** *Red Dirt Girl* (Eminent)
5. **Jimmie Dale Gilmore:** *One Endless Night* (Windcharger/Rounder)
6. **Shelby Lynne:** *I Am Shelby Lynne* (Island)
7. **Kasey Chambers:** *The Captain* (Asylum)
8. **Trisha Yearwood:** *Real Live Woman* (MCA)
9. **Rhonda Vincent:** *Back Home Again* (Rounder)
10. **Joe Ely:** *Live At Antone's* (Rounder)
11. **Merle Haggard:** *If I Could Only Fly* (Epitaph)
12. **Kathy Mattea:** *Innocent Years* (Mercury)
13. **John Hiatt:** *Crossing Muddy Waters* (Vanguard)
14. **Eric Heatherly:** *Swimming In Champagne* (Mercury)
15. **Darryl Worley:** *Hard Rain Don't Last* (Dreamworks)
16. **Neko Case & Her Boyfriends:** *Furnace Room Lullaby* (Bloodshot)
17. **Various artists:** *Big Mon: The Songs Of Bill Monroe* (Skaggs Family)



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# SEASONS GREETINGS FROM BASIC



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Womack hit, colleagues chose the Alan Jackson/George Strait duet "Murder On Music Row," writers Larry Cordle and Larry Shell's provocative collaboration about country music's death by homicide on Nashville's 16th Avenue.

But by casting their votes for the Dixie Chicks, Womack, Jackson (Best Male Vocalist) and Trisha Yearwood (fourth-best Single, eighth-best Album), critics suggest that mainstream country certainly isn't dead yet. It may be on life support, but as long as Womack can get a song like Rodney Crowell's "Ashes By Now" on country radio, the prognosis is cautiously optimistic.

**T**he critics who participated in this poll are unwilling, however, to do what voters in country music's many awards shows do: equate *quality* with *popularity*. The Country Music Association, the Academy of Country Music and other award shows make no such distinction, serving up near-perfect echoes of the *Billboard*

## REISSUE OF THE YEAR

1. **Johnny Cash: Love God Murder** (Columbia/Legacy)
2. **Johnny Cash: Complete Live At San Quentin** (Columbia/Legacy)
3. **Willie Nelson: Red Headed Stranger** (Columbia/Legacy)
4. **Emmylou Harris: Last Date** (Eminent)
5. **The Monroe Brothers: What Would You Give In Exchange For Your Soul?** (Rounder)
6. **Keith Whitley: Sad Songs & Waltzes** (Rounder)
7. **The Flying Burrito Brothers: Hot Burritos: The Flying Burrito Brothers Anthology, 1969 - 72** (A&M)
8. **Emmylou Harris: Cimarron** (Eminent)
9. **George Jones: I Am What I Am** (Epic/Legacy)
10. **The Carter Family: In The Shadow Of Clinch Mountain** (Bear Family)
11. **Various artists: Harry Smith's Anthology Of American Folk Music, Vol. 4** (Revenant)
12. **Hank Penny: Crazy Rhythm: The Standard Transcriptions** (Bloodshot)
13. **Hank Williams: Alone With His Guitar** (Mercury)
14. **(tie) Hazel Dickens: It's Hard To Tell The Singer From The Song** (Rounder)
- (tie) Roger Miller: Oh Boy Classics Presents Roger Miller (Oh Boy)**



18. **Ronnie McCoury: Heartbreak Town** (Rounder)
19. **Willie Nelson & The Offenders: Me & The Drummer** (Luck)
20. **Willie Nelson: Milk Cow Blues** (Island)
21. **Dwight Yoakam: dwightyoakamacoustic.net** (Reprise)
22. **Kelly Hogan & The Pine Valley Cosmonauts: Beneath The Country Underdog** (Bloodshot)
23. **Billy Bragg & Wilco: Mermaid Avenue, Volume 2** (Elektra)
24. **(tie) Patty Loveless: Strong Heart** (Epic)
- (tie) Christy McWilson: Lucky One** (Hightone)
26. **(tie) Kieran Kane & Kevin Welch:**

- 11/12/13: Live In Melbourne** (Dead Reckoning)
- (tie) Slaid Cleaves: Broke Down** (Rounder)
28. **Lonesome River Band: Talkin' To Myself** (Sugar Hill)
29. **(tie) Johnny Cash: American Recordings III: Solitary Man** (American)
- (tie) Loretta Lynn: Still Country** (Audium)
- (tie) Ray Price: Prisoner Of Love** (Justice/Buddha)

**Note:** A number of critics voted for Alan Jackson's *Under The Influence* (Arista) and the Dixie Chicks' *Fly* (Monument) even though they were ineligible because they were released in 1999.



# CRITICS POLL

charts and other "hot country" playlists. That's why this magazine launched a poll in the tradition of *Downbeat's* jazz critics poll and the *Village Voice's* pop critics poll; we wanted to provide a uniquely different perspective on the best of country music.

Unlike the association-sponsored ballots, we critics weren't subject to industry politics or swayed by impressive chart numbers. If the stars made a boring record, we ignored it. If we felt that someone should be deserving of more attention, we said so. Who were some of our lesser-selling favorites? Steve Earle, Buddy and Julie Miller, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Joe Ely, Kasey Chambers, Rhonda Vincent, Shelby Lynne, John Hiatt and Neko Case.

Earle was almost as big a winner as

Womack and the Dixie Chicks. He was voted Best Songwriter, second-best Overall Act, second-best Live Act and third-best Male Vocalist. His *Transcendental Blues* was voted second-best Album, right behind Womack. Husband-and-wife collaborators Buddy and Julie Miller were right behind Earle in the Best Songwriter category; the Millers also were voted second-best Group or Duo and third-best Overall Act.

The tall, thin, whippoorwill-voiced Gilmore was voted second-best Male Vocalist, right behind Jackson. His sometime collaborator in The Flatlanders, hard-rocking Joe Ely, was voted third-best Live Act, right behind Earle. Gilmore's album, *One Endless Night*, came in fifth, while Ely's *Live At Antone's* came in tenth.

Kasey Chambers, justly described as "the Lucinda Williams of Australia,"

didn't even have a U.S. album release when the poll was conducted, but she still landed seventh on the Best Album list with *The Captain*, which came out on Asylum Records in October. Rhonda Vincent made the strongest showing of any bluegrass artist, placing ninth on the Best Album list and tying Chambers as fourth-best Female Vocalist.

**Y**ou can explain the commercial limitations of an Earle, a Gilmore, an Ely, a Vincent or the Millers by citing their association with independent record labels, which lack the financial and promotional clout of the majors, or by their demanding, edgy material that's considered either too traditional or too creative for a mainstream audience. It's much harder to pinpoint the commercial resistance of someone as appealing and well

## MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

1. Alan Jackson
2. Jimmie Dale Gilmore
3. Steve Earle
4. (tie) Dwight Yoakam  
(tie) Buddy Miller



## FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

1. Lee Ann Womack
2. Emmylou Harris
3. Shelby Lynne
4. (tie) Kasey Chambers  
(tie) Kelly Hogan  
(tie) Martina McBride  
(tie) Rhonda Vincent



## LIVE ACT OF THE YEAR

1. Dixie Chicks
2. Steve Earle
3. Joe Ely
4. Robbie Fulks



rounded as an Allison Moorer.

Critics voted Moorer's *The Hardest Part* as third-best Album and her "Send Down An Angel" as the fifth-best Single. Yet these records barely dented the charts, even though they were released by MCA, a label heavyweight.

Inexplicable anomalies such as these reveal why critics pull out their hair. Moorer and her husband Doyle Primm have penned sharp, smart songs about the most enduring topic in country music: a dissolving marriage. Moorer's smoky voice is one of the most compelling to come along in years, but has so far been met with deaf ears at radio.

Misery seems to travel with the Moorer siblings, as sister Shelby Lynne seems to be suffering the same fate with her acclaimed new album *This Is Shelby Lynne*, Album No. 6

### SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

1. **Steve Earle**
2. **Buddy and Julie Miller**
3. **Jim Lauderdale**



### GROUP OR DUO OF THE YEAR

1. **Dixie Chicks**
2. **Buddy and Julie Miller**
3. (tie) **Del McCoury Band**  
(tie) **Wilco**

### BEST ACT OVERALL OF THE YEAR

1. **Dixie Chicks**
2. **Steve Earle**
3. **Buddy and Julie Miller**
4. **Dwight Yoakam**
5. **Willie Nelson**



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# CRITICS POLL

on our *Country Music* poll.

Lyle Lovett, Kim Richey and many other fine country singers must have bits of Music Row brick walls embedded in their heads from banging them so frequently in frustration. And a good portion of them have headed to more appreciative pop labels. And if a pop label really, *really* likes them, the artist just might get a shot at the broadest country audience possible without having to compromise his or her artistic vision.

The other thing that drives country music journalists crazy is Music Row's wholesale abandonment of its older generation of performers. Those who cover rock music are accustomed to an industry that routinely pushes old-timers overboard with each new generation. But country music used to be different.

In the past, country cherished performers of all ages and thus reflected the real world better than other genres, which were trapped in an artificial fountain of youth. But that changed in recent years. Now Nashville's industry elite have become as infatuated with the young as New York, Los Angeles and London, and are now seemingly treating the majority of their elders with a perceived disrespect and disdain.

To make matters worse, this bull-

## COLIN ESCOTT'S BEST REISSUES

1. **The Carter Family: *In The Shadow Of Clinch Mountain*** (Bear Family)
2. **Bob Wills: *The Columbia Years*** (Bear Family)
3. **The Monroe Brothers: *What Would You Give In Exchange For Your Soul?*** (Rounder)
4. **Doc Watson: *Foundation: Doc Watson Guitar Instrumental Collection, 1964-1998*** (Sugar Hill)
5. **Moon Mullican & The Showboys: *Showboy Special*** (Westside)

Colin Escott is author of *Hank Williams: The Biography* and other music books.

dozed older generation is still making great music. Merle Haggard's new personal and compelling *If I Could Only Fly*, out on California punk-rock label Epitaph, scored the 11th position on our critics' list. Comeback albums by Ray Price and Loretta Lynn also made the Top 30.

Willie Nelson's *Me & The Drummer*, released on tiny Luck Records and featuring an all-star band led by Jimmy Day, Johnny Bush and Floyd Domino, is his best straight-ahead country album in years. The few critics who got a copy voted it the 19th Best Album of the Year; the others opted for Nelson's all-blues *Milk Cow Blues*, which came in 20th. Add those votes together, and Nelson is in the Top 10. On top of that, Nelson's

“The other thing that drives country music journalists crazy is Music Row's wholesale abandonment of its older generation of performers”

## GEOFFREY HIMES' BEST ALBUM

1. **Lee Ann Womack: *I Hope You Dance*** (MCA)
2. **John Hiatt: *Crossing Muddy Waters*** (Vanguard)
3. **Willie Nelson: *Me & The Drummer*** (Luck)
4. **Joe Ely: *Live At Antone's*** (Rounder)
5. **Kasey Chambers: *The Captain*** (Asylum)
6. **Allison Moorer: *The Hardest Part*** (MCA)
7. **Steve Earle: *Transcendental Blues*** (E-Squared/Artemis)
8. **Chalee Tennison: *This Woman's Heart*** (Asylum)
9. **Rhonda Vincent: *Back Home Again*** (Rounder)
10. **Merle Haggard: *If I Could Only Fly*** (Epitaph)

Geoffrey Himes writes about music for *Country Music*, *No Depression*, *The Washington Post* and other publications.

## BILL FRISKICKS-WARREN'S BEST ALBUMS

1. **Allison Moorer: *The Hardest Part*** (MCA)
2. **Shelby Lynne: *I Am Shelby Lynne*** (Island)
3. **Lee Ann Womack: *I Hope You Dance*** (MCA)
4. **Trisha Yearwood: *Real Live Woman*** (MCA)
5. **Kasey Chambers: *The Captain*** (Asylum)
6. **Ray Price: *Prisoner Of Love*** (Justice/Buddha)
7. **Jimmie Dale Gilmore: *One Endless Night*** (Windcharger/Rounder)
8. **Jerry & Tammy Sullivan: *Tomorrow*** (Ceili)
9. **Willie Nelson & The Offenders: *Me & The Drummer*** (Luck)
10. **Rhonda Vincent: *Back Home Again*** (Rounder)

Bill Friskicks-Warren writes about country music for *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *Nashville Scene*.

## NICK KREWEN'S BEST ALBUMS

1. **Steve Earle: *Transcendental Blues*** (E-Squared/Artemis)
2. **Johnny Cash: *American Recordings III: Solitary Man*** (American)
3. **Slaid Cleaves: *The Very Best Broke Down*** (Rounder)
4. **Emmylou Harris: *Red Dirt Girl*** (Eminem)
5. **Rhonda Vincent: *Back Home Again*** (Rounder)
6. **The Sadies: *Pure Diamond Gold*** (Bloodshot)
7. **Robbie Fulks: *The Very Best Of Robbie Fulks*** (Bloodshot)
8. **Stacey Earle: *Dancin' With Them That Brung Me*** (Gearle)
9. **Trisha Yearwood: *Real Live Woman*** (MCA)
10. **Joe Ely: *Live At Antone's*** (Rounder)

Nick Krewen is the associate editor of *Country Music* magazine.



## MICHAEL GRAY'S BEST CATEGORIES

**Male Vocalist:** Ralph Stanley  
**Female Vocalist:** Lee Ann Womack  
**Group or Duo:** The Del McCoury Band  
**Live Act:** Robbie Fulks  
**Songwriter:** Steve Earle  
**Overall Act:** The Del McCoury Band

Michael Gray writes about music for  
[www.country.com](http://www.country.com).

## HAZEL SMITH'S BEST CATEGORIES

**Male Vocalist:** Alan Jackson  
**Female Vocalist:** Lee Ann Womack  
**Group or Duo:** Dixie Chicks  
**Live Act:** Dixie Chicks  
**Songwriter:** Brad Paisley  
**Overall Act:** George Strait

Hazel Smith writes The insider column for  
 Country Music magazine.

## HOLLY GEORGE-WARREN'S BEST SINGLES

**Female Vocalist:** Lucinda Williams  
**Group or Duo:** BR5-49  
**Live Act:** Steve Earle & The Dukes  
**Songwriter:** Lucinda Williams  
**Overall Act:** Steve Earle

Holly George-Warren is editorial director of  
 Rolling Stone Press.

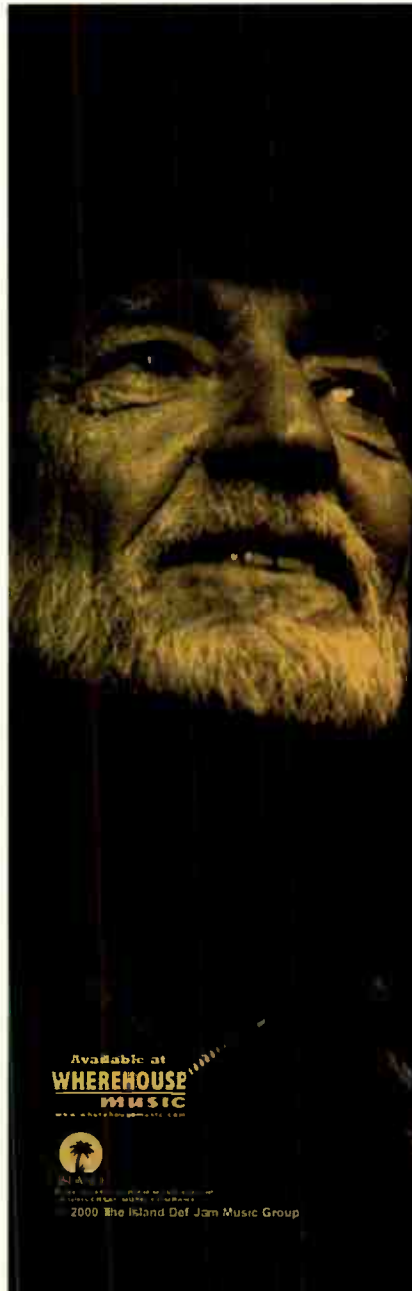
groundbreaking *Red Headed Stranger* was voted third-best Reissue of the Year.

The Reissue list was topped by Johnny Cash, who dominated it with *Love, God, Murder*, a three CD-box set that summarized country music's quintessential themes. Cash's flinty baritone also revived his classic *Complete Live At San Quentin* as a Reissue favorite, while his new *American Recordings III: Solitary Man* crept into the Top 30 Best Album category.

Bill Monroe also had a good year, especially for a dead guy. An anthology of his early recordings with his brother Charlie, *What Would You Give In Exchange For Your Soul?*, was voted fifth-best Reissue. And *Big Mon: The Songs Of Bill Monroe*, a star-studded tribute album organized by Ricky Skaggs, finished in the Top 20.

Perhaps the strangest sensation of the past year was realizing that Emmylou Harris – the Sweetheart of the Rodeo of our youth – has become as neglected a legend as Haggard, Nelson and Cash. She, too, has been dropped by the major labels, although reissues of her old music in new packages fared strongly. (Harris' *Last Date* was voted the year's fourth-best Reissue, and her 1981 album, *Cimarron*, came in as eighth-best). She continues to make new, vital music as well. *Red Dirt Girl*, her first disc of mostly self-written music since 1985's *The Ballad Of Sally Rose*, was voted the fourth-best Album of 2000.

Music Row may have pushed Harris out to pasture, but the best artists in contemporary country still look to her for inspiration. Womack's new single, for example, is an affectionate but strikingly updated version of Harris' old



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# CRITICS POLL

recording of Rodney Crowell's "Ashes By Now." It's as if the younger singer was emphasizing how important it is to keep the circle unbroken from one generation to the next.

For this writer, the most telling country music event of 2000 came during Fan Fair, that annual four-day ritual of flashbulbs, autographs and T-shirts in Nashville. When Womack took the racetrack stage on June 13, "I Hope You Dance" was already atop the singles charts and the album was climbing toward No. 1.

**T**hat evening her voice had an extra edge as she locked in with her crackerjack road band and belted out the lyrics without worrying about being studio perfect. The song was no longer a list of platitudes, but a secular hymn driven by all the passion that working-class dreams can muster. Spotlights swept across the sea of fans in the racetrack grandstand and folding chairs, as everyone stood and soaked it in as if they were sponges.

I was there too, thrilled by the spectacle of this tiny East Texas

**THE CRITICS:** Bob Allen, Ken Barnes, Charlene Blevins, John F. Butland, Bob Cannon, Paul Cantin, David Cantwell, John Conquest, John T. Davis, Kerry Dexter, Kerry Doole, Dan Durchholz, Colin Escott, A.J. Flick, Bill Friskics-Warren, Holly George-Warren, Michael Gray, Geoffrey Himes, Nick Krewen, John Lomax III, Miriam Longino, Michael McCall, Rick Mitchell, Stuart Munro, Chris Neal, Bob Paxman, Rick Petreyck, Bobby Reed, Tamara Saviano, Hazel Smith, David Sokol, Jon Weisberger, Kent Wolgamott.

The voting critics represent a spectrum of publications, including Country Music Magazine, Rolling Stone, No Depression, the Oxford American, Variety, Request, Pulse, USA Today, The Washington Post, The New York Times, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Austin American-Statesman, the Tucson Citizen, the Journal of Country Music, Country Weekly, Country Standard Time, Words & Music, Country Music International, Bluegrass Unlimited, Bluegrass Now, Third Coast Music, Dirty Linen, www.sonic.net, www.country.com, www.amazon.com, and the Nashville Scene.

woman absorbing all the hopes and desires of the crowd before her and reflecting them back in the communal art that is country music. And then, in her moment of absolute triumph, Womack did the unexpected. She introduced a number most of the crowd had never heard. "This is a song by Buddy and Julie Miller," she announced, "who are making some of the best music here in Nashville."

She then sang "Does My Ring Burn

Your Finger," giving this tale of divorce a mass appeal it never found on Buddy Miller's original version. Miller is a rare talent – he played guitar on Harris' new album and produced Gilmore's – and it's only when idiosyncratic geniuses like him link up with charismatic populists like Womack that country music can truly flourish. So her generous gesture at Fan Fair may be the best news country music has had in years. ★

## JON WEISBERGER'S BEST SINGLES

1. George Strait & Alan Jackson: "Murder On Music Row" (MCA)
2. Sonya Isaacs: "I've Forgotten How You Feel" (Lyric Street)
3. Lee Ann Womack: "I Hope You Dance" (MCA)
4. Dixie Chicks: "Cold Day In July" (Monument)
5. Dixie Chicks: "Goodbye Earl" (Monument)
6. Darryl Worley: "When You Need My Love" (Dreamworks)
7. John Michael Montgomery: "The Little Girl" (Atlantic)
8. Patty Loveless: "That's The Kind Of Mood I'm In" (Epic)
9. Alan Jackson: "It Must Be Love" (Arista)
10. Brad Paisley: "Me Neither" (Arista)

Jon Weisberger is a Kentucky-based freelancer who writes for No Depression, Bluegrass Now, Bluegrass Unlimited and other music publications.

## JOHN LOMAX III'S BEST SINGLES

1. Dixie Chicks: "Goodbye Earl" (Monument)
2. George Strait & Alan Jackson: "Murder On Music Row" (MCA)
3. Eric Heatherly: "Flowers On The Wall" (Mercury)
4. Clay Davidson: "Unconditional" (Virgin)
5. Loretta Lynn: "Country In My Genes" (Audium)
6. Brad Paisley: "Me Neither" (Arista)
7. Gary Allan: "Lovin' You Against My Will" (MCA)
8. John Michael Montgomery: "The Little Girl" (Atlantic)
9. Kacey Jones & Delbert McClinton: "You're The Reason Our Kids Are Ugly" (Igo/E Squared)
10. Charlie Robison: "Poor Man's Son" (Lucky Dog)

John Lomax III is a columnist for Country Music International and author of Nashville: Music City USA.

## MICHAEL MCCALL'S BEST SINGLES

1. Trisha Yearwood: "Real Live Woman" (MCA)
2. Lee Ann Womack: "I Hope You Dance" (MCA)
3. Dixie Chicks: "Sin Wagon" (Monument)
4. Tammy Cochran: "If You Can" (Epic)
5. Brad Paisley: "Me Neither" (Arista)
6. George Strait & Alan Jackson: "Murder On Music Row" (MCA)
7. Phil Lee: "Les Debris, Ils Sont Blancs" (Shanachie)
8. Allison Moorer: "Send Down An Angel" (MCA)
9. John Michael Montgomery: "The Little Girl" (Atlantic)
10. Dixie Chicks: "Goodbye Earl" (Monument)

Michael McCall is the senior editor of Country Music magazine.

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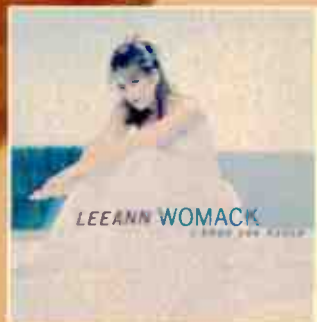
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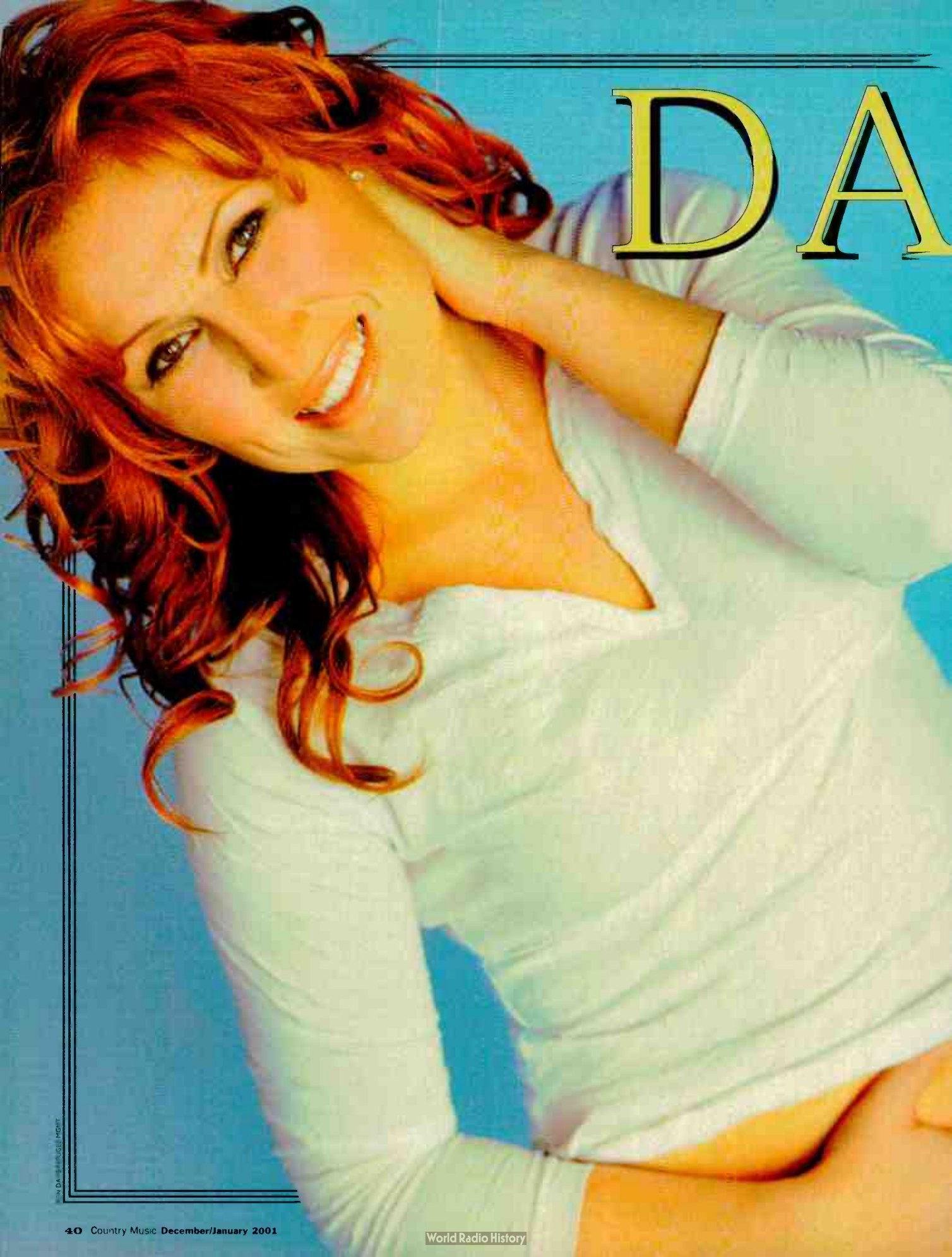
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# NCING

## As Fast As She Can

Jo Dee Messina burns some calories delivering her latest success

**J**o Dee Messina appears simultaneously calm and bubbly as she awaits the signal to take her spot in front of the camera. She looks flawless, clad in skintight dark jeans, white boots and a white tank top covered by a white shirt. Her blazing red hair hangs in loose ringlets, framing an impeccably made-up face that flatters her porcelain skin and razor-sharp cheekbones. Only the beating of her right foot – at a staccato pace of about four times a second – reveals her anxiousness and belies her cool demeanor.

It's noon on a muggy Nashville day, four hours after Messina was told to report to a no-frills warehouse to shoot "That's The Way," the debut video from her new album, *Burn*. She's eager to finally display on film the dance steps that she's become known for in her live shows, but because an overnight storm robbed the warehouse of its power, she's forced to wait while the equipment is switched to a generator.

Finally, everything is ready for her. Facing a mirror surrounded by lights, she patiently allows makeup artist Melanie Shelley to touch up her powder.

"Can we fix you a plate, dear?" a caterer asks Messina. In only a few moments, three other people ask if she would like something to eat.

"Everybody wants to

feed her," cracks her New York stylist, Jamie Kimmelman. "She wants to work."

No truer words have ever been uttered. Don't be fooled by her irresistible one-liners delivered in a cartoonish, girly voice, followed by ear-shattering peals of laughter: Messina is a fiercely driven woman who is unapologetically dedicating virtually every waking moment to her career.

Her drive comes from fresh memories of what it takes to move ahead in the music business. Just three years ago, she vetoed an attorney's advice to sign bankruptcy papers, even though she was half a million dollars in debt from her self-titled first album and could barely afford a meal at McDonald's. Instead, she bravely struggled forward, spending 18 months recording her second album, *I'm Alright*.

The extra work proved worth it. When *I'm Alright* came out in 1998, her career kicked into overdrive. Three successive singles – "Bye Bye," "I'm Alright" and "Stand Beside Me" – hit No. 1. The album eventually sold two million copies and

By Beverly Keel

led to bigger concerts and larger nightly fees, enabling the hardworking singer to begin crawling out of the pit of debt.

However, a string of hits, a double-platinum album, the Country Music Association's 1999 Horizon Award and the Academy of Country Music Top New Female Vocalist statue still haven't placated the fear that pushes her to do one more show, one more interview. She didn't relax after becoming *Billboard's* Most Played Female Artist in 1999 or after becoming the first woman in all of country music to have three consecutive multiple-week No. 1 hits. Even a brief hospitalization for exhaustion after 1999's Fan Fair didn't dampen her inner drive. The way she sees it, she still faces the prospect of losing it all.

"It can go away so quickly that every day I realize it's a blessing, and every time a song is played, it's a gift," Messina says, remembering how her career started with a big hit, "Heads Carolina, Tails California," but then spent nearly two years in the doldrums until the release of her second album. "That fear will be there because I know how quickly it can go away. For that reason, I work extra, extra hard and I really try to do my best. When I don't, I beat myself up."

In other words, Messina wakes up every morning driven by a desire to keep her success moving forward. "I spend every day scratching and clawing," she confides. "My perspective is: 'I still gotta get there, I still gotta get there, gotta work harder, gotta do more.' That's probably why I ended up in the hospital with exhaustion after Fan Fair. I can't say no, I can't turn things down. I went through hell to get here. When you have walked through fire, you don't forget what it feels like to be burned."

Messina devoted two years to creating her third album, *Burn*, with co-producers Tim McGraw and Byron Gallimore. As the months grew into years, she became nervous about waiting so long between albums, but she wouldn't sacrifice quality for an earlier release date.

"We were ready to go into the studio, but we didn't have the songs [we wanted] so we had to cancel," she says. "We

wanted to put something together that would show growth lyrically and progression musically, like Tim McGraw's records. There's always something in his records that is different, and that's what we were hoping to do with this record."

Although *Burn* ventures into new musical areas with different grooves and rhythms, the album remains in other ways consistent with her previous work. For instance, "That's The Way" repeats her mantra of being a survivor, rolling with the punches, an attitude that she became known for with her former hit "I'm Alright." In "Downtime" she predicts that she'll be fine after a little R & R. "Dare To Dream" tells the story of a young couple who strive to stay open to

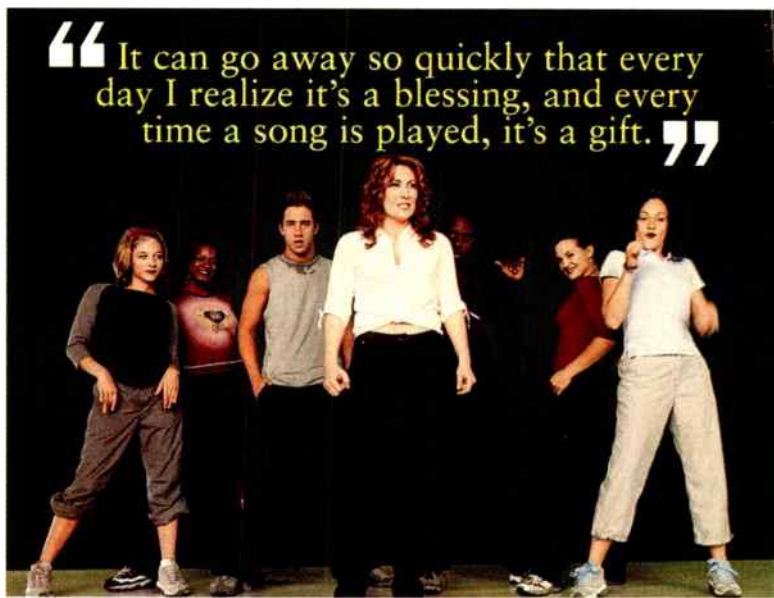
Shania Twain and Faith Hill, Messina possesses the necessary attributes: a mainstream voice and music palatable to pop ears; a hip, trendy style; good looks; an irresistible personality; and a compelling life story.

If the video shoot for "That's The Way" is any indication, Messina is positioning herself to appeal to the pop market. Young, sneaker-wearing dancers with bare midriffs sit in a circle on a nearby trampoline, waiting for their next call.

Most of the 25 crew members are gathered around a small monitor to catch a glimpse of Messina's solo choreography. Wearing black sweatpants and sneakers and a white T-shirt with the word SUGAR embossed in glitter, Messina climbs into a makeshift 8 x 10 red box with two grey chairs glued to the ceiling. She begins on her hands and knees, pretending to walk on the ceiling, and then waves her arms side to side. Somewhere in between, she spins on her rear.

Messina, for her part, says she isn't purposely altering her music or image to appeal to the pop audience. "This music is not any more pop or mainstream than my first album," she says. "I'm not all of a sudden going to the left. I'm still doing the same thing, I'm still making my music. If somebody [in the pop market] picks it up and wants to play it, God bless them."

She's distressed at the division forming between traditional country and pop-country artists, evident at the recent ACM Awards. "Somehow, there has been a line drawn down the center that shouldn't exist," she says. "Country music is the one genre of music where everyone got along, we were all one big family. If one of your brothers is a doctor and one of your brothers is an auto mechanic, are you going to disown the auto mechanic? Or better yet, are you going to disown the doctor because he's not following the family business of owning a gas station? No, you're going to love them all. That's the beauty of country music. It shouldn't be a battle, and I don't want to play a part in it. It's silly to bicker back and forth within the family. We should focus our energy on



"It can go away so quickly that every day I realize it's a blessing, and every time a song is played, it's a gift."

life's possibilities. "The songs that I sing, I tend to relate to," she says. "A song is like a painting: If I've never seen something, I can't paint it. With a song, if I haven't experienced it or I don't know what it's talking about, I can't sing it."

As an example, she cites the title track of *Burn*. "I loved it because it's a love song, but it's also a strong song," Messina explains. "It's like, 'You know that I love you, but I'm going to stand my ground. You want to do whatever you want to do in life, that's great and I'll support you. But when it comes to our relationship, I want you to give your all. Anything less than that is not acceptable.'"

Messina and her associates hope that the star will become the next country female to woo the pop world. Like

# Dixie Chicks

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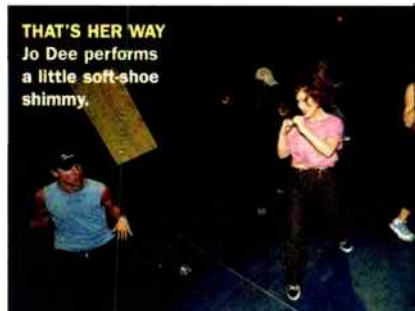
World Radio History

something else, like helping the kids of the world not carry guns to school.”

She quickly points out that country legend Tammy Wynette had a pop hit with “Stand By Your Man,” and Dolly Parton found pop success with “9 To 5.” “There’s a difference in crossing over and leaving the format,” she says. “If you are asking about me directly, I can say as many friends and family that I have in country radio, to think for a moment that I would even consider leaving the format, I think everybody would laugh. They are my family.”

However, like Twain and Hill, Messina wouldn’t mind being embraced by both country and pop audiences. “As far as getting the music heard by other people, I don’t see that there’s anything wrong with that. I’m a huge fan of Shania Twain. Some 14-year-old in Michigan listens to Shania Twain and listens to pop radio. One day she’s driving down the street with her mother and hears ‘Honey I’m Home,’ and stops the radio [on that channel]. Afterward, here’s my record or Tim McGraw’s, and she says, ‘Oh man, I love it.’”

When that happens, she says, country music makes a new fan.



“Nowadays, country has a broader audience than ever,” Messina says. “When I was in the eighth grade, I was one of two kids in a 10,000-seat arena to see George Strait, Alabama and The Judds. Now half the audience is kids. I would be lying if I said I don’t want my music to be heard by as many people as possible. That’s why I make it.”

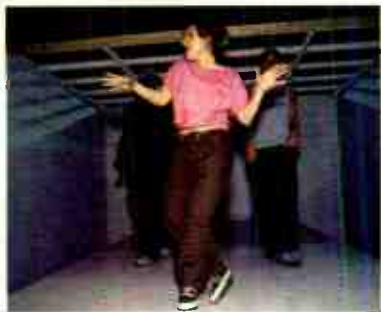
Messina feels country’s appeal to mainstream America has been underestimated for too long. “I don’t want to offend anyone, but country music is not strictly hay bales and people who can’t read,” she says. “For some reason, the mainstream people think that. We are intelligent. That’s like thinking a model is an airhead. Cindy Crawford was what, a valedictorian? Give us some

credit. I’ll stand up for country music as a whole, facing every other genre and say, ‘Hello! We work our butts off.’”

**A**fter she released her first album, the Massachusetts native discovered that the music industry is much more than recording and performing. As more singers become celebrities, more attention is paid to what they wear and how they look. “The image has been my biggest struggle,” she says. “I didn’t have a lot growing up and I’m the first one to say I’m fashion illiterate. I don’t know the names of clothes; I don’t know what’s in or not. I’m totally happy in sweatpants and a T-shirt, so being honest to everyone around me and

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RUSTY ROSS/REX

to myself [about my image] is a struggle.”

In other words, glamour doesn't come naturally to Messina. "I don't see myself as beautiful," she says. "I see myself as a clumsy kid, always. Whenever I get an ice cream cone, the bottom leaks. The image is a very difficult thing for me because I want to be me and I want to believe that what I am is good enough. The music is what connects me to the people. I hope they like what I'm wearing, but hopefully they like the music more."

Still, as Messina has learned, people will notice what she's wearing and how she looks. "It hurts when people don't like your clothes," she says. "It's just like in third grade, when people ragged on your clothes. I have feelings, but I want the music to be honest. I would be more picky

about a song than I would an outfit."

As Messina examines her musical body of work, she sees a personal journey that feels as if it has already lasted a lifetime. "At the beginning of *I'm Alright*, I was beyond broke, and song by song gave me more ammunition to defend myself," she says. "With each song, it gave me more ability to get out there and work and try to get myself back on my feet again."

Messina's personal life also has improved along with her financial situation. She recently became engaged to longtime road manager Don Muzquiz, who gave her a monstrous five-carat diamond ring set on a heavy gold band. The two were friends for two years before deciding to wed. No date has been set; they both want a long engagement.

"We both joke that we'll have to take a day off to get married, and we don't see that anytime soon," she says. "I think that is beautiful because when I'm up at 3 a.m. writing notes to radio or fans, he totally understands how important it is to me. If a song is having a problem at a certain market and I'm up all night crying, he doesn't say, 'What's your problem?' He gets it. He knows that this is my life and my heart."

Since she can't even set a date, she certainly isn't ready for children. "I'm trying to lose weight here," jokes the 30-year-old. "Of course, if I looked like Faith, I'd have 10 of them!" She laughs, then turns serious. "I don't know. There is a part of me that would love to, but there's a part of me that says I've got to be able to give a kid a lot of time and energy and I'm not ready to do that yet."

Then Messina returns to her concerns about the music industry and financial security.

"Until I am at a point financially where I can take care of them and not have them go through what I did growing up," she says, "I want to just hold out."

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# KEEP ON WILLING

BY MICHAEL MCCALL





"I've made a lot of mistakes, but that's way behind me," says Shelton. "Now I just go out there and have fun."

**S**ITTING IN A QUIET OFFICE amid Nashville's Music Row business district, Ricky Van Shelton fires up his anger as he comments on country music's obsession with youthful performers and pop-oriented sounds. His words rush out as he accuses Nashville of neglecting country's traditional sounds and its core audience.

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## **RICKY VAN SHELTON DOESN'T BITE HIS TONGUE WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT COUNTRY MUSIC**

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Suddenly, Shelton stops mid-sentence. He leans back and quietly draws a slow breath.

"I don't want to be negative," he says with a sigh, his thick Southern drawl delivered with measured calmness. "It's so easy for me to get that way. I don't know why."

Perhaps it's because Shelton feels strongly about his profession. Perhaps it's because he's a country boy accustomed to speaking his mind.

"When I'm hanging out with friends, I never put people down or talk bad about things," he continues. "But when I talk about music, I get negative."

As the veteran points out, he doesn't

SENIOR PICTURE

put on a face for the public. Unlike some entertainers, he doesn't assume a different personality when he steps in front of a crowd or a camera. He is who he is – a down-home guy from Grit, Va., whose dedication to country music transformed him from a knuckle-busting pipefitter to one of the biggest Nashville stars of the late '80s and early '90s.

However, at the height of his success, Shelton's outspokenness got him into trouble with the country music establishment. He feuded backstage with the producer of the CMA Awards. He blasted the radio consultants who control what songs get played on major country music stations. And he

# “ I've always said what I felt, and it got me in trouble.”

learned one thing: You can't tell the truth in this business or it will hurt you.”

These days, Shelton is trying to toe the line in order to rebuild his career around the release of a new album, *Fried Green Tomatoes*. Ignoring recent trends, his new album sticks with what initially made him famous: a solid combination of neotraditional honky-tonk,

faces when contemplating the consequences of motherhood and abortion. Her answer is never aired, which underscores the fact that there are serious repercussions either way.

“I've played a tape of this song for people all over this country, and 100 percent [of them] like it,” he says. “It could be the biggest song I ever recorded



**TRUE GRIT** Ricky Van Shelton accepting a CMA Award at the height of his popularity in the late '80s (left), sitting on top of his classic car with a gold record signifying 500,000 sales of his first album *Living Proof* (center), and in concert today (right).

criticized record companies and managers for pressuring artists to maintain a back-breaking schedule that leaves little time for writing songs or resting between shows.

At the time, Shelton received private calls from other stars who commended him for speaking against corruption and greed.

Looking back, Shelton believes his mouth, ironically, got his voice silenced. Radio consultants – who determine in large part what songs make it to the airwaves – punished him by not supporting his singles. Invitations to appear on major awards shows dried up. And he eventually lost his record contract, a situation that removed all traces of him from the upper ranks of country stardom.

“I've always said what I felt, and it got me in trouble,” Shelton admits. “I've

soul-stirring ballads and rocked-up country tunes with a down-home flavor.

“We found so many good songs for this album,” he suggests. “There are still a lot of great writers and great songs floating around Nashville. I've heard people say there are no good songs in country music anymore. Well, you just don't hear 'em. But they're out there if you go looking for 'em.”

However, the boldest song on *Fried Green Tomatoes* comes from Shelton's pen.

“The Decision,” about a 17-year-old single woman who discovers she's pregnant, was written in 1986 with Jerry Thompson, a Nashville newspaper columnist who initially helped Shelton secure his record contract with Columbia Records. The song displays the crisis of conscience the teenager

if it got played. But I don't know if it'll get played, because people in this industry are afraid of taking chances.”

That's his nutshell opinion, he concludes. “If the record companies and radio stations would take more chances, the radio would be so full of flavor. I guarantee you, if the artists could get in there and make the records they want to make, country radio would just blossom with flavor and sounds. It would be so fresh. It wouldn't all sound alike, like it does today.”

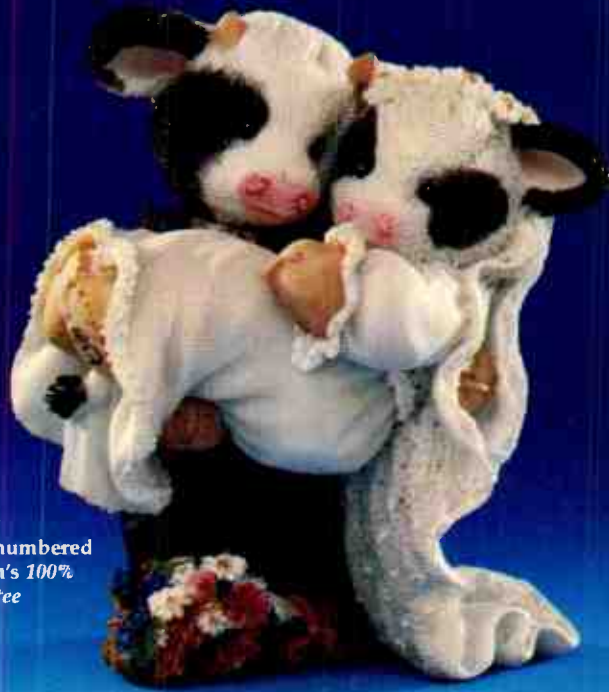
There he goes, getting negative again, he points out with a grin. “I guess some people have a real knack for communication,” he says with a smile. “I don't have that. I can't help but say what I feel. That's just how I am.” ★

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# THE 4 FACES

**C**all Faith Hill one of the most beautiful women in country music, if not the world, and you won't get much of an argument from anyone. At a statuesque 5 feet 9 inches tall, her blonde tresses and slender figure seem to have been divinely sculpted for Parisian runways. When she flashes that million-watt smile, heads turn and men stop in their tracks. It is no wonder Cover Girl snagged her for a multi-million dollar cosmetics campaign.

From barefoot princess to cover-girl queen, Faith Hill's star trek continues. But is it leading her away from country music?

But to country music and its legions of followers, Faith Hill has always been more than a pretty face. Her sparkling warble, a stirring alchemy of Southern Gospel and Mississippi sass, was an immediate favorite with fans. Her first song, "Wild One," topped the charts to christen 1994; in the ensuing years, her four Warner Bros. albums have sold an impressive 13 million copies. Over the years, she radically refined her voice to balance the

robust demands of country with the slick finesse of pop.

Then, with 1998's *Faith* and last year's *Breathe*, Hill entrenched herself even further into the masses. Yet even as she climbs the pop charts and cavorts around the desert in clingy silk (as she did in the "Breathe" video), country music is where the 33-year-old mother of two started her career and it's where her celebrity remains rooted.

---

by Tamara Saviano, Nick Krewen & Michael McCall

---

# OF FAITH



"There might be some people who don't like what I'm doing or don't agree with it," says pop-leaning diva Hill. "But I can't worry about those people."

ROCCO LASPINA/WARNER BROS. RECORDS

More importantly, it's where she *perceives* that it remains.

"I haven't left country music," Hill says, relaxing on her tour bus during a stop on the Soul 2 Soul Tour she's sharing with husband Tim McGraw.

"The word 'crossover' is hard to swallow, because to me when you cross over, you've left something and you're not going back. I don't feel that way at all."

However, hits like the infectiously hummable "This Kiss" and the smoldering "Breathe" may sound like pop-direction maneuvering to a loyal country fan base that considers Hill and McGraw to be their format's royal couple. The singer is aware that she has detractors who accuse

unparalleled accomplishment. (Even Shania Twain stumbled with a pallid, low-selling debut before shooting through the stratosphere with 50 million in sales worldwide for *The Woman In Me* and *Come On Over*.) Some of Hill's success can be attributed to her evolution, which finds her increasingly exploring the mainstream – i.e. less country – side of life.

"I've just grown up," Hill says. "Remember, I was 25 years old when I recorded my first album. I was young. I'm 33 now and more confident. Having more life experience has certainly played a part in the albums I have made. It's fun to change, and boring to be the same

for the relatives at family reunions. If it was a big family reunion, it went up to 50 cents because there were so many people. I'd sing songs like 'Brand New Key,' 'Jesus Loves Me' or 'Delta Dawn.'"

She smiles.

"The truth is I always wanted to sing and would have done it anyway. Everybody knew that was what I really wanted to do."

Originally an Elvis disciple (Presley's *Legendary Performer Vol. 2* was the first album Hill recalls owning), she found a new role model in high school.

"I loved listening to Reba McEntire," recalls Hill, who eventually worked for McEntire's Starstruck Entertainment after



The evolution of a superstar: "I've just grown up," says Hill. "It's

her of leaving behind her country roots.

"Not everyone has embraced the fact that my music has expanded or that my image has changed," Hill readily admits. "For the most part, I feel the industry is very proud. There might be some people out there who don't like what I'm doing or don't agree with it, but I can't worry about those people."

Nor is Hill about to apologize for the chrysalis of her artistic transformation. In the four phases of Faith, our heroine has evolved from the caterpillar of barefoot wholesomeness of *Take Me As I Am* to the seductive, stiletto-wearing butterfly of *Breathe* without missing a step. Along the way, she has never sold less than 2 million copies of each of her four albums, an

person all the time."

Hill has always been ambitious. Adopted as an infant by factory worker Ted Perry and his wife Edna, Audrey Faith Perry was raised morally and properly in the tiny community of Star, Miss. – pop. 2,500 – about a 10-minute drive down I-49 from Jackson.

"The first time I ever sang publicly was at Star Baptist church when I was 3 years old," Hill recalls. "My mother said that I held the hymnal upside down, and sang as loud as I could, pretending I could read the words off the book."

Edna, a retired bank employee, also handed the young Audrey her first paying gigs: family gatherings.

"She started paying me 25 cents to sing

she relocated to Nashville. "I remember coming home after school and playing her records in my room over and over until it was time for supper."

Citing Patsy Cline, Emmylou Harris and Amy Grant as additional influences, Hill could no longer resist a performer's life when she hit 17.

"I just loved the way singing made me feel," Hill recently confessed to *Glamour*. "The excitement and energy that happens on stage is unbelievable. The only thing better than that is sex, I swear!"

Her band performed at rodeos, fairs, youth festivals and churches until she decided to depart for Music City at the age of 19.

"I remember the feeling, 'This is what I



always wanted to do my whole life and I'm just going to bite the bullet and go," she remembers. "That is where the wild child in me kicked in. I didn't worry about being safe or where I was going to get money. I just had faith that it was going to work."

Hill's father gave his blessing after he dropped her off in Nashville.

"I can still see his face to this day, sitting with empty boxes all around him," says Faith. "He had tears in his eyes. He just waved goodbye and said, 'Take care, I love you. We are behind you one hundred percent.' That's pretty awesome, and it still gets to me."

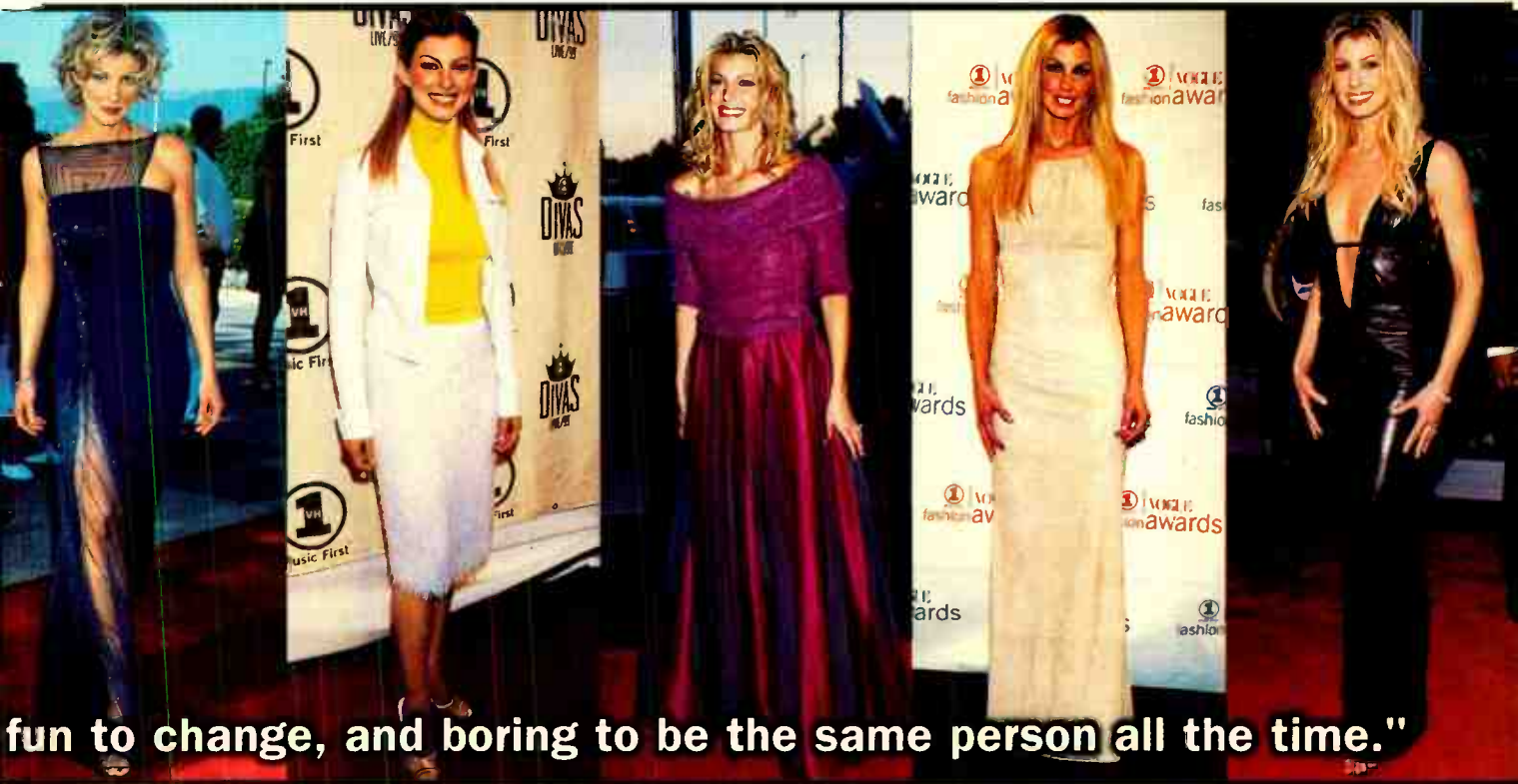
Her first job was selling T-shirts at Fan Fair. She quickly landed a gig as a recep-

tionist at Gary Morris Music, a publishing company owned by country singer Gary Morris. To get the job, she disavowed any designs of a musical career. "I was a closet singer around the office," she admits.

doing sitting behind a desk instead of trying to get her foot in the door of a singing career. "I think you need to get out there and get busy," Morris told her. Hill took his advice, eventually convincing songwriter Gary Burr to let her sing harmony during an informal performance at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe. Martha Sharp, senior vice-president of artist-and-repertoire development with Warner Bros., heard Hill sing at one of Burr's gigs and signed her to a solo deal. Sharp then took Hill to producer Scott Hendricks, a hot Nashville studio whiz responsible for hits by Brooks & Dunn, Alan Jackson, Aaron Tippin and John Michael Montgomery. Hendricks wasn't particularly enamored

enthusiastic twang on the tune, and elsewhere on her debut album – even her remake of Janis Joplin's "Piece Of My Heart" featured a bristling two-step rhythm. Country audiences loved her, propelling *Take Me As I Am* to her first two-million seller.

Hill's second album, *It Still Matters To Me*, presented a mature and confident sophomore follow-up that proved more varied than her debut. It also precipitated her first serious career crisis. A dilated blood vessel in her throat required surgery in February of 1995, forcing her to cancel 40 concert dates. It was an emotionally tumultuous time, and Hill balanced the stress by accepting Hendricks' marriage proposal on Valentine's Day. Months later,



fun to change, and boring to be the same person all the time."

with Hill's voice at first. However, seeing her perform "Just Around The Eyes" on TNN's *Nashville Now* changed his mind.

Songwriter David Chase heard her singing along to the radio one day and asked her to cut the demo for a song called "It Scares Me."

Chase eventually played the demo for Morris. "Gary approached me with this serious look on his face," she recalls. She thought her true ambitions had been revealed, and that her job was over. "I thought, 'This is it!'"

Instead, Morris asked her what she was

recovered from throat surgery, she took to the road as an opening act for Alan Jackson. By tour's end, the chart-topping hits "Let's Go To Vegas" and "It Matters To Me" pushed *It Still Matters To Me* to triple platinum. Life was peachy.

Shortly after completing the Jackson tour, Hill signed on for Tim McGraw's *Spontaneous Combustion* outing in the fall of 1996. Then things got complicated. Although betrothed to Hendricks, Hill was instantly smitten with McGraw. "Whenever I could, I would try to bump into him," Hill recalls. "I was so attracted to him, and though I didn't know it at the time, he was feeling the exact same thing." The romance was fast and furious.

"He heard me, and a few weeks later he called Martha Sharp and said, 'Martha, I just want to apologize for not listening to you when you tried to bring Faith Hill to me ... This is the first time I've turned down an artist where I really feel like I've made a mistake,'" Hill once told Nashville journalist Jay Orr. "Wild One" hit the charts on October 16, 1993, and the song made clear that she owned a strong allegiance to country. Paul Franklin's steel guitar underscored Hill's

recovered from throat surgery, she took to the road as an opening act for Alan Jackson. By tour's end, the chart-topping hits "Let's Go To Vegas" and "It Matters To Me" pushed *It Still Matters To Me* to triple platinum. Life was peachy.

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Before the tour was over, Hill had become Mrs. Tim McGraw, and their daughter Gracie was on the way. Obviously, a devastated Hendricks would no longer be involved in her career.

For a while, Hill retreated into marriage and motherhood. She spent two years tending to her growing family and shopping for songs for what was to become her third album, *Faith*.

While Hill was on hiatus, country music underwent momentous changes. Shania Twain and her magnificent midriff were rewriting the rulebook for female country singers as far as potential sales. As she prepared to return, Hill no doubt recognized the challenges Twain's success presented.

"I think we all had the knowledge that Faith had a big job in front of her," says Jim Ed Norman, president of Warner Bros. Nashville. "She was very responsive to that challenge. From the start, she came in ready to make substantive changes. She lead the charge."

Byron Gallimore, hubby McGraw's right-hand man, was brought in as a producer. Hill also hired Dann Huff – a well-regarded studio ace for Megadeth, Celine Dion, Barry Manilow and Amy Grant – as a second producer for the *Faith* sessions.

"Faith knew me," Huff says. "Obviously, you don't hire me because you want to make a traditional country album. When we started, we probably passed on a hundred songs. All of them sounded like her previous albums, and she rejected them all. She was very firm about wanting to go in a new direction."

Whether Hill felt any pressure to follow Twain toward a more pop-oriented sound is anyone's guess. But she clearly set a new agenda with "This Kiss," a bubbly pop anthem that became the biggest hit of Hill's relatively young career. The rest of *Faith* leaned more towards pop than her previous work, becoming the first album in which she mined the talents of such mainstream pop writers as Diane Warren, Aldo Nova and Sheryl Crow.

*Breathe* shifted even further away from her roots. Neil Strauss of *The New York Times* called it an "album of slick pop-rock ballads with a CD booklet that looks like a Victoria's Secret catalog."

Hill doesn't exactly disagree. "I consider *Breathe* a mixture of musical styles that reflects my love for country, pop, gospel and rhythm and blues," she declares. "I just need to stay true to who I am. I could never just go out and make

a pop record, or for that matter, a traditional country album. I can only do what seems natural to me."

At the same time, Hill's glamorous blossoming also indicates a new awakening. Lili Zanuck, director of the award-winning video for "Breathe," unleashed the full-blown breeze of Hill's sexuality on the California desert and steamed up TV screens everywhere.

"I love sexy outfits. Sexy dresses. Sensuality is the most glorious gift a woman has. And I think that's something to be celebrated," says Hill, who at one point claimed she would never use her sensuality to advance her career.

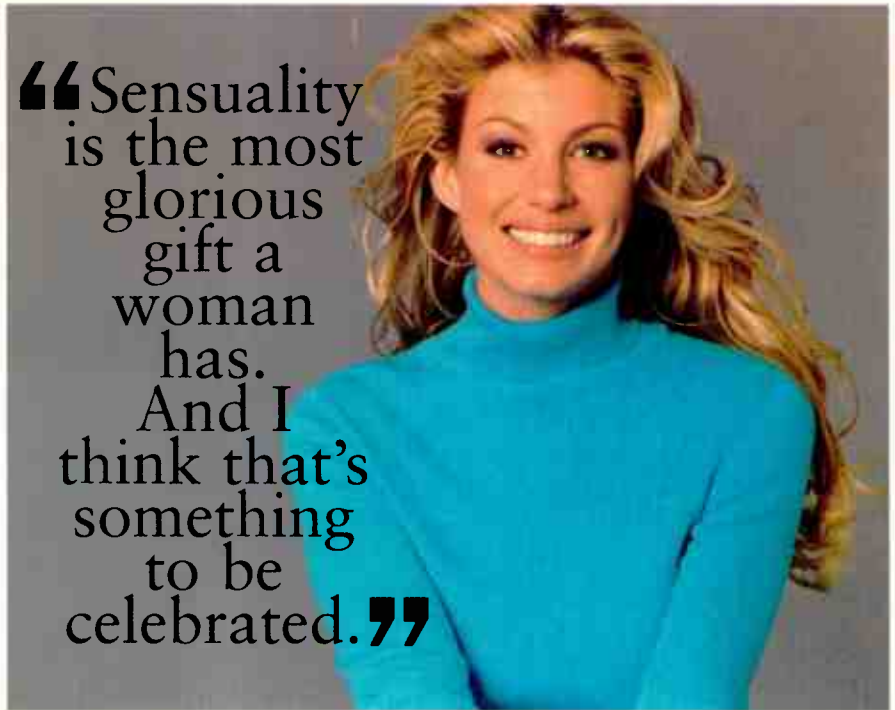
Love it or hate it, the sexed-up strategy certainly hasn't hindered her success.

vantage. The advantage is that I can get my foot in the door. The disadvantage is that I have to be really good."

Hill laughs. "That's why I'm searching for a movie that I feel wouldn't be too outside of who I am as a person," she says. "It would have to be a character I could relate to easily and be a natural thing for me to do. It doesn't necessarily have to be musical."

It may seem that country's loss would be pop's gain, but Hill doesn't necessarily see it that way. For instance, her country heart still rules her private life. "The most important thing to me is my family," she states emphatically. "Being a good wife and partner to Tim is so important. My career is important, but

“Sensuality is the most glorious gift a woman has. And I think that’s something to be celebrated.”



ROCCO LASPATA/ALTEL

*Breathe* is approaching *Faith*'s 5 million sales cap, and she and hubby McGraw sold out all 400,000 tickets for the first 25 dates of their joint Soul 2 Soul Tour. Global audiences in 1999 were introduced to Hill with a remixed version of *Faith* called *Love Will Always Win*, available outside of North America. International territories are also being eyed, as Hill has been introduced to Japanese and Australian audiences with the compilation album *Love Will Always Win*.

Not surprisingly, Hill's next career move is the big screen. "I'd like to do a movie – a really good movie," says the photogenic singer. "I've been reading a lot of scripts. That's a whole new world where I have an advantage and a disad-

my family means everything.

"Tim and I embrace life. We wake up, take one day at a time, and deal with what's in front of us at the moment. I've learned it's more rewarding just to deal with things with a smile on my face. I'm happy, and that's something to smile about."

But it's clear Hill continues to broaden her musical vision. "I just want to be an artist," she recently told writer Gary Graff. "I just want to be respected as an artist who's trying to do great music."

"I don't want to be pegged as anything. Just an artist. I don't see a crime in that."

Shortly afterward, her tour bus pulls out and steers down the highway. Faith may know where it's going, but the rest of us will just have to wait and see. \*

# *The* JOURNAL

OF TRADITIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC



## *Buried Treasure*

*George Jones is one of many legendary entertainers featured in a recently unearthed collection of photos and recordings from a bygone era – a treasure trove of songs, performances and unforgettable stars.*

Editor: Robert K. Oermann

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# WHO AM I?

How much do you know about your country music favorites? Here's your chance to find out. Test your trivia knowledge about one of the greats.

**CLUE #1** My daddy ferried a boat back and forth across the Mississippi River.

**CLUE #2** I was inspired to pursue a recording contract after hearing Elvis Presley on the radio.

**CLUE #3** My record labels, in order, were Sun, Mercury, MGM, ABC-Paramount, Decca, MCA, Elektra, Warner Bros. and MCA.

**CLUE #4** A then-unknown Naomi Judd once posed on an album jacket with me.

**CLUE #5** The harmony singer on many of my later records is Vince Gill.

**CLUE #6** My mascot was a cartoon canary.

**CLUE #7** Jerry Clower called me "The High Priest of Country Music."

**CLUE #8** I was also known as "the best friend a song ever had."

**CLUE #9** I died at age 59, en route from Branson to Nashville to attend Fan Fair in 1993.

**CLUE #10** My real name is Harold Jenkins.



★ Answer on page J16



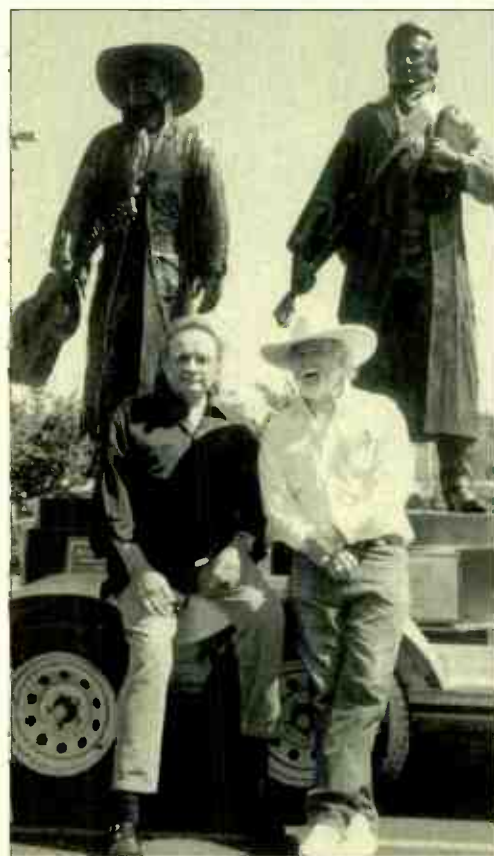
# SCULPTING THE GREATS

Statues have been in the news in Music City. Bronzes of Minnie Pearl, Owen Bradley, Roy Acuff and Chet Atkins are on display, and they were recently joined by three more.

PHOTOS BY LARRY HILL



Sculptor Bill Rains poses with his effigy of Ernest Tubb below. While he was en route to Nashville with his Buck Owens and Johnny Cash creations, a certain Man in Black paused to pose with him, below right. The unveilings of Owens, Cash and Hank Snow occurred on the Opry stage, above. Rains' bronze of Hank Williams is top right above.



COURTESY: BUCK OWENS CO.

# OUT OF THE

## A Country Music Treasure Trove Discovered



A lean-looking Johnny Cash entertains from the stage of the Maryland country-music park New River Ranch in 1961. Country fan Leon Kagarise captured dozens of stars at their peaks in both photos and tape recordings.

Even in the densely populated urban region that encompasses Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Philadelphia, it's easy to find country music on the radio. But it wasn't always that way. When country music's growth accelerated in the 1940s, many assumed the Northeastern states would have nothing but scorn for the rustic rhythms rising from the South.

But they couldn't keep the music down on the farm. By the mid-'40s, it was clear that a sizable Northeastern audience longed for country. Prominent radio stations such as WCKY in Cincinnati, WWVA in Wheeling, W.V., and WSM in Nashville hurled country music in northeasterly directions, building and consolidating a following for country music along the populous Eastern seaboard and on up into New England. Thanks to radio, the music of Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubb, Merle Travis and others leapt over the Appalachians.

Moreover, country musicians often met their growing audience on the grounds of country music parks and ranches that sprang up in the region. Standing well off the main byways, often hidden among groves of trees, the ranches drew hundreds of country fans on weekends during the summer months. From the '40s into the '70s, country entertainers regularly visited venues such as New River Ranch in Rising Sun, Md., Watermelon Park in Berryville, Va., and Sleepy Hollow Ranch in Quakertown, Pa. Dozens of other ranches were scattered throughout the Northeast, playing a significant role in disseminating Southern-bred country music to the region.

Piled atop the cramped, rickety stages, country and bluegrass musicians performed several sets daily. They chatted with fans between performances, gathering song requests and sharing picnics with them. In this front-porchlike setting, the contact between fan and performer was never more open – for better or worse.

Songwriter Danny Dill, who performed

# VAULTS

BY MICHAEL STREISSGUTH



comedy with Eddy Arnold in the late '40s, said the intimacy with fans sometimes became burdensome. "You were at their mercy all day long," he complains. "You'd get there early in the morning and play about four or five shows. But during the day, they could talk to you, they could come in the dressing room and you would have no privacy. They just wore you out."

The fans loved it, though. They left the ranches rejuvenated, having escaped their worries for a few hours before heading back to work on Monday. Their lingering joy was palpable. The music, too, lingered in the hazy ranch evenings, drifting off only when most of the fans had gone home.



Hank Snow  
1964

Were it not for one of those fans, Leon Kagarise, there would be no remaining trace of that ranch music. The bellow of Johnny Cash, the piercing voice of George Jones and the urgent harmony of the Louvin Brothers were all captured on Kagarise's tape recorder from the '50s through the early '70s. An employee of a high-end electronics shop in Baltimore and a ranch enthusiast, Kagarise and his state-of-the-art equipment frequented New River Ranch and Sunset Park in Oxford, Pa. Over the years, his recordings have gained historical importance as the ranches and the musicians who visited them have faded away.

A quiet, devoutly religious man, Kagarise grew up in Chambersburg, Pa., where he dodged a disapproving mother to listen to country music. "My mom tried to get me to listen to Glenn Miller and the other big bands," recalls Kagarise. So he stole moments with the disc jockeys and his favorite stars. As he listened, his love of country music blossomed. As an adult, he indulged his passion by driving to the hills and valleys of Virginia and Tennessee looking for country records. He was serious enough to invest in an expensive camera and recording equipment to document what he saw and heard at the ranches. His photographs of ranch performers, taken

"Were it not for Leon Kagarise there would be no remaining trace of ranch music. The bellow of Johnny Cash, the piercing voice of George Jones and the urgent harmony of the Louvin Brothers ..."



George Jones, backed by guitarist George Riddle, sings at New River Ranch in 1961.

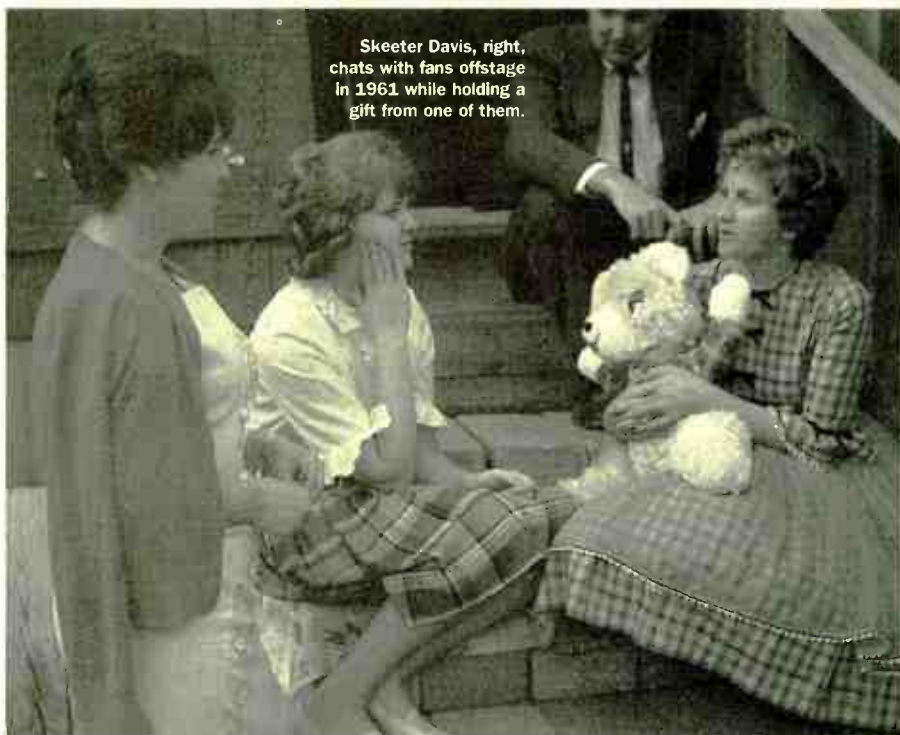
on a German Zeiss Ikon camera, caught the brilliance of Skeeter Davis' strawberry-blond hair and checkered skirt, the rambunctious onstage shenanigans of The Stoneman Family and the sky-blue color of Hank Snow's Western outfits.

When the ranch stages darkened on weekdays and in the winter, Kagarise soldered cables to his radio and television sets and recorded local and national country programs. Kagarise's extensive audio recordings of Washington, D.C., television shows capture electrifying performances by Roy Clark, Bill Harrell, Patsy Cline and other Washington-area-based performers. Kagarise's audiotapes also preserved the soundtracks of national TV shows that starred Porter Wagoner, The Stoneman Family, Jimmy Dean and Johnny Cash.

**K**agarise collected and stored his tapes until he had no more room. His suburban Baltimore home became a maze lined with reel-to-reel tapes, albums and boxes of photographs.

When the '70s ended, he added little to his archive. "Everything just sat there," he admits.

By the late '90s, Kagarise began looking to sell his enormous album collection. The news brought record store owner Joe Lee to his door. Lee, a well-known character around the Baltimore/Washington music world, flipped eagerly through the vinyl. But



Skeeter Davis, right, chats with fans offstage in 1961 while holding a gift from one of them.

when he happened to look up among his host's tape boxes, his ardor rose.

Scrawled on a spine was the name JOHNNY CASH. The box came down from a shelf and the tape was delicately threaded onto a playback reel. When Lee turned on the recorder, he discovered to his delight that it was Johnny Cash recorded at New River Ranch. The tape filled the room with a crystal-clear

recording of the Man in Black in concert — a rare gold mine.

With Cash rumbling in their heads, Lee and Kagarise set about listening to enough tape to stretch from Baltimore to Nashville and back, hearing bygone performances by Tammy Wynette, Ernest Tubb, The Stanley Brothers, Reno & Smiley and scores of others.

Today, the two men have formed a partnership and are working with recording companies to release Kagarise's amazing work. In addition, various archives gaze keenly at the collection; reporters from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and NBC have lined up to tell the story; and a book featuring the vivid color photographs may soon be on the horizon. "It would be nice to get a lot of money," says Kagarise, "but I'm just glad to be making this stuff available to the world."

In the back of Joe's Record Paradise vintage-vinyl store in Rockville, Md., Kagarise, 62, stretches his back as he sits in his chair, projecting slides of his photos and listening to music he recorded 40 years ago. The pictures and music are transporting him back to the ranches in their heydays, a time when stars who would go on to become legends were still working the meat-and-potatoes circuit, a nearly forgotten time when their fans could get close enough to touch them.

"I never dreamed it would go away," he murmurs. "But it did." ❁



Ernest Tubb, left, signs autographs in 1964. Ray Price, right, poses with a fan while wearing his "Cherokee Cowboy" slacks in 1961.





# THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

## DECEMBER

**December 1**  
**1954** Fred Rose dies  
**1966** Carter Stanley dies  
**December 2**  
**1898** Opry star Herman Crook born  
**December 3**  
**1916** Rabon Delmore of the Delmore Brothers born  
**1927** Ferlin Husky born  
**1957** Don Gibson cuts "Oh, Lonesome Me" and "I Can't Stop Loving You"  
**1968** Elvis Presley's comeback TV special on NBC



**Eddy Arnold**  
**December 4**  
**1944** Eddy Arnold inaugurates modern recording in Nashville  
**1956** Million Dollar Quartet (Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash) records at Sun Records  
**1981** Lila McCann born  
**December 5**  
**1987** Molly O'Day dies  
**December 6**  
**1988** Roy Orbison dies  
**December 7**  
**1948** Gary Morris born  
**December 8**  
**1914** Floyd Tillman born  
**1962** Flatt and Scruggs perform at Carnegie Hall  
**1982** Marty Robbins dies  
**December 9**  
**1956** Sylvia born  
**December 10**  
**1951** Johnny Rodriguez born  
**1996** Faron Young commits suicide  
**December 11**  
**1944** Brenda Lee born  
**1946** Hank Williams makes his first record  
**December 12**  
**1998** Elvis soundalike Orion (Jimmy Ellis) dies  
**December 13**  
**1949** Alabama's Randy Owen born  
**1954** John Anderson born

**December 14**  
**1899** DeFord Bailey born  
**1932** Charlie Rich born  
**December 15**  
**1891** A.P. Carter of the Carter Family born  
**December 16**  
**1950** "The Tennessee Waltz" tops the pop charts for Patti Page  
**1978** "The Gambler" hits No. 1 for Kenny Rogers  
**December 17**  
**1910** Spade Cooley born  
**1999** Singing cowboy Rex Allen dies  
**December 18**  
**1904** Wilf Carter, aka "Montana Slim," born  
**1966** Tracy Byrd born  
**December 19**  
**1908** Bill Carlisle born  
**1920** Jimmy Dickens born  
**1945** John McEuen born  
**1947** Janie Fricke born  
**1999** Former Opry star Marion Worth dies  
**December 20**  
**1986** Randy Travis joins the Opry cast  
**1999** Hank Snow dies  
**December 21**  
**1926** Freddie Hart born  
**1956** Lee Roy Parnell born  
**December 22**  
**1921** Hawkshaw Hawkins born  
**December 23**  
**1967** Jack Greene joins the Opry cast  
**December 24**  
**1913** Lulu Belle (Wiseman) born  
**1960** NBC radio airs its last Opry broadcast  
**1969** Willie Nelson's Nashville home burns to the ground; he moves to Texas  
**December 25**  
**1946** Jimmy Buffett born



Orion (Jimmy Ellis)

**1948** Barbara Mandrell born  
**1949** Actress Sissy Spacek, who won an Oscar for playing Loretta Lynn in the movie *Coal Miner's Daughter*, born

**1954** Steve Wariner born  
**1971** George Jones and Tammy Wynette's first duet record hits the charts  
**December 26**  
**1911** Brother Oswald (Pete Kirby) born  
**December 27**  
**1925** Nashville's morning newspaper announces that WSM is having a weekly barn dance show every Saturday night.  
**1931** Elvis guitarist Scotty Moore born  
**1997** Songwriter Kent Robbins dies  
**December 28**  
**1958** Joe Diffie born  
**1985** - Marty Stuart debuts on the country charts  
**December 29**  
**1922** Rose Lee Maphis born  
**1940** Ed Bruce born



Skeeter Davis

**December 30**  
**1931** Skeeter Davis born  
**1944** Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys debut on Opry - with drums  
**1956** Suzy Bogguss born  
**December 31**  
**1920** Rex Allen born  
**1947** Roy Rogers and Dale Evans wed  
**1985** Rick Nelson dies  
**1997** Floyd Cramer dies

## JANUARY

**January 1**  
**1953** Hank Williams dies  
**1958** Johnny Cash performs at San Quentin, with inmate Merle Haggard in audience  
**1997** Townes Van Zandt dies  
**January 2**  
**1926** Harold Bradley born  
**1936** Roger Miller born  
**1974** Tex Ritter dies  
**January 3**  
**1917** Steel guitarist Leon McAuliffe born  
**January 4**  
**1923** WBAP in Ft. Worth, Texas, airs the first known radio barn-dance show  
**1953** 23,000 fans attend Hank Williams' funeral in Montgomery, Alabama  
**1957** Patty Loveless born  
**1966** Deana Carter born  
**January 5**  
**1923** Sam Phillips of Sun Records born



Sam Phillips

**January 6**  
**1924** Earl Scruggs born  
**1979** Randy Traywick, later known as Randy Travis, debuts on country charts  
**January 7**  
**1930** Jack Greene born  
**1933** WWVA's *Wheeling Jamboree* begins  
**1998** Owen Bradley dies  
**January 8**  
**1815** Andrew Jackson's victory at the Battle of New Orleans inspires the fiddle tune "The Eighth of January"  
**1935** Elvis Presley born  
**1979** Sara Carter dies  
**January 9**  
**1960** Patsy Cline joins the Opry  
**1951** Crystal Gayle born  
**January 10**  
**1948** Loretta and Oliver "Mooney" Lynn wed  
**1956** Elvis begins recording in Nashville  
**January 11**  
**1946** Naomi Judd born  
**January 12**  
**1905** Tex Ritter born  
**1926** Ray Price born  
**1952** Ricky Van Shelton born  
**1976** *Wanted! The Outlaws*, country's first platinum album, is released  
**January 13**  
**1948** WLW's *Midwestern Hayride* goes on TV in Cincinnati  
**January 14**  
**1929** Billy Walker born  
**1937** Billie Jo Spears born  
**January 15**  
**1995** Vic Willis dies  
**January 16**  
**1943** Ernest Tubb joins the Grand Ole Opry  
**1943** Ronnie Milsap born  
**January 17**  
**1955** Steve Earle born  
**1986** Reba McEntire joins the Opry cast  
**1998** Cliffie Stone dies

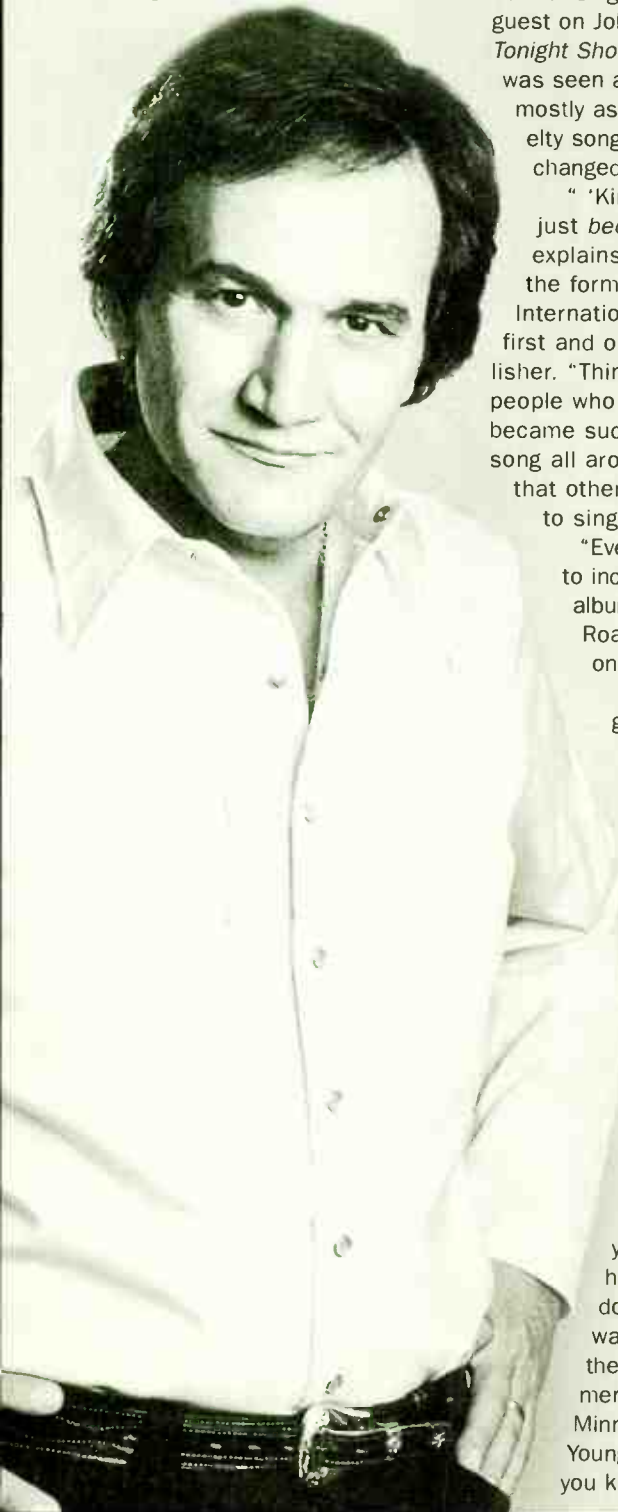
**January 18**  
**1941** Bobby Goldsboro born  
**1956** Mark Collie born  
**January 19**  
**1939** Phil Everly born  
**1946** Dolly Parton born  
**1953** Marty Robbins debuts on Opry  
**1954** George Jones makes his first records, for Starday in Texas  
**1998** Carl Perkins dies  
**January 20**  
**1924** Slim Whitman born  
**1965** John Michael Montgomery born



John Michael Montgomery

**January 21**  
**1942** Mac Davis born  
**1957** Patsy Cline wins on *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* on CBS with "Walkin' After Midnight"  
**1997** Col. Tom Parker dies  
**January 22**  
**1999** Steel guitarist Jimmy Day dies  
**January 23**  
**1940** Johnny Russell born  
**January 24**  
**1939** Ray Stevens born  
**1998** Justin Tubb dies  
**January 25**  
**1992** Emnylou Harris joins the Opry cast  
**January 26**  
**1900** Fiddler Clayton McMichen born  
**1956** Buddy Holly's first recording session held in Nashville  
**January 27**  
**1937** Steel guitar pioneer Buddy Emmons born  
**1956** RCA releases "Heartbreak Hotel" by Elvis  
**1968** Tracy Lawrence born  
**January 28**  
**1984** Honky-tonk great Al Dexter dies  
**January 29**  
**1928** Little Jimmie Sizemore born  
**January 30**  
**1937** Jeanne Pruett born  
**January 31**  
**1989** Alabama's *Southern Star* LP is released

By 1965, Roger Miller had arrived as a writer and recording artist. He'd ascended by the strains of such witty and irresistible songs as "Dang Me," "Chug A-Lug" and "Do Wacka-Do," dotted with what could be called "country scat" singing.



Aside from an early Top 10 hit with "When Two Worlds Collide" (co-written with Bill Anderson), Miller's successful songs had been uptempo and uniquely, quirkily syncopated. While popular, they were difficult for the Average Joe to hum or sing in the shower. A favored guest on Johnny Carson's influential *Tonight Show* in the early '60s, Miller was seen as irrepressibly talented, but mostly as a writer and singer of novelty songs. "King Of The Road" changed all that.

"'King Of The Road,' well, it just became Roger Miller," explains Buddy Killen, the former owner of Tree International, Miller's first and only song publisher. "Think about the people who recorded it. It became such a popular song all around the world that other artists wanted to sing it, too.

"Every artist wanted to include it on their album. 'King Of The Road' became synonymous with Roger Miller."

In those days, Miller was good friends with fellow Nashville newcomer Willie Nelson. A story – possibly apocryphal – says there was a sign in front of the rundown trailer court where Willie lived that said, TRAILERS FOR SALE OR RENT, thereby inspiring Miller's opening line.

"Well, it could have been, but that's everywhere," allows Killen.

"Roger could have been riding along the highway ... because you know how it is, in every little town you've got trailers. I know he got that from a sign, but I don't know where the sign was. I know that he was on the road, working as a drummer and as a fiddle player with Minnie Pearl, Ray Price, Faron Young and different ones. And you know a songwriter, every-

## "KING OF THE ROAD" (Written by)

thing he sees is a song title."

In Dorothy Horstman's book *Sing Your Heart Out. Country Boy*, Roger Miller essentially confirmed Killen's version of the song's genesis.

"I was driving from Davenport, Iowa, to Chicago," Miller is quoted. "and somewhere along the way I saw a sign on the road which read, TRAILERS FOR SALE OR RENT, and for some reason, that

phrase stuck in my mind. It wasn't until later that I really sat down and made something out of it."

Killen says Miller "spoke in song lyrics all the time." Miller spun off so many catchy hook lines, simply as clever punctuation to his constant bantering, that other writers of the period are said to have followed him around to "pick up his droppings" and fashion their



own songs. Without realizing it, Miller tossed out commercial song hooks right and left. But when it came time to turn his rapid-fire flow of ideas into finished tunes for his own recording sessions, the songwriter struggled.

"So many times we'd be recording and Roger would come in with ideas, maybe with a lyric, one verse or just a verse and chorus, and he'd have to go downstairs and finish it up," reports Killen, who usually attended Miller's sessions for Smash Records, produced by Jerry Kennedy.

"We'd have to send him down there to that room for a few minutes. It didn't take long. In many cases, he'd go down there and take himself a pill to activate his brain a little bit. When he'd come back, his voice would be a little higher, but he'd have a song.

"What a character he was," chuckles Killen affectionately. "But, boy what a talent."

Despite his customary speed as a composer, "King Of The Road" took Miller a little longer to write, Killen believes. "I think what he did was just go along and come up with a line here and another one

# THE ROAD” (Roger Miller)

A young  
Roger Miller



there, you know. He could write a song very, very fast if he really wanted to. But he was very popular by then and he couldn't set a good idea aside for some later time because there was always the next record coming up. A song like 'King Of The Road,' you don't just sit down and write."

Miller recounted in Horstman's book, "I had to induce labor to get it completed. I got stuck after the first verse, so I went out to a Boise [Idaho] store and bought a statuette of a hobo. I sat and stared at it until the rest of the tune came to me."

Miller seemed to write better under pressure, although he hated being pushed. In many ways he was an overgrown kid, and Killen says he rarely was a good judge of his own material.

"I went through hell and high water with him because he would call me at three or four o'clock in the morning

and say, 'Bud, I just wrote this great song!' I'd say, 'Roger, go to bed and I'll see you about nine o'clock.' 'No,' he'd insist. 'I want to play it for you now!'

"So he'd make me get up and drive into town and meet him at the office or somewhere, and he'd play me the worst junk. Because they'd been out there high all night long, you know, and thought they'd written something great. It'd be awful.

"[Other times] he'd come in and I'd say, 'Have you written anything?' And he'd say, 'Nah, nothing good. But I've got this little ol' .... whatever. He'd play it for me and it would be this *monster!* It would be 'Husbands And Wives' or something [big] like that."

At his peak, Roger Miller provided Killen and Tree with approximately 130 tunes. All of them were recorded. "That's just unheard of," marvels the song publisher.

Miller's Tree catalog includes "Invitation To The Blues," "Lock, Stock And Teardrops," "England Swings," "Kansas City Star," "(In The Summertime) You Don't Want My Love," "Half A Mind," "Billy Bayou," "Engine Engine #9," "Walkin' In The Sunshine," "Don't We All Have The Right" and "Walkin,' Talkin,' Cryin,' Barely Beatin' Broken Heart."

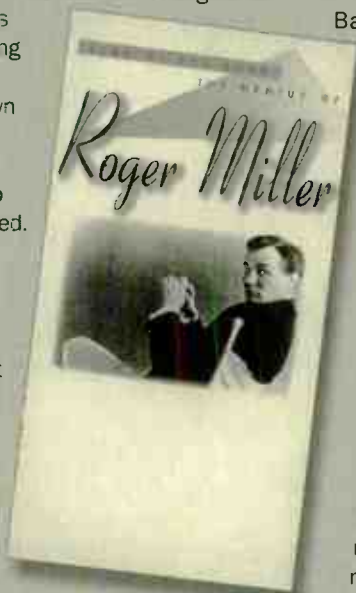
But it was "King Of The Road" that elevated Roger Miller to legendary status. He swept the 1965 Grammy Awards ceremony with six awards.

The songwriter would go on to multimedia stardom, providing his voice to the 1973 animated film *Robin Hood* and composing songs for the Tony Award-winning 1985 Broadway musical *Big River*.

He died of cancer in

1992. But he remains one of the most brilliant, inimitable musical talents of the 20th century.

— Bob Millard



## “King Of The Road” Roger Miller

Trailer for sale or rent  
Rooms to let 50 cents  
No phone, no pool, no pets  
I ain't got no cigarettes

Ah but two hours  
of pushing broom  
Buys an eight by twelve,  
four-bit room  
I'm a man of means  
by no means  
King of the road

Third boxcar, midnight train  
Destination Bangor, Maine  
Old worn out suit and shoes  
I don't pay no union dues

I smoke old stogies I have found  
Short but not too big around  
I'm a man of means, by no means  
King of the road

I know every engineer  
on every train  
All of the children  
and all of their names  
And every hand-out  
in every town  
And every lock that ain't locked  
When no one's around I sing  
Trailer for sale or rent  
Room to let 50 cents ...

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**M**ost American musical styles have a famous father figure, an artist whose success slapped an infant style on the behind like a newborn baby and set a school of music off toward greater commercial successes and stylistic evolution.

Jimmie Rodgers gets credit as the father of commercial country music. Bill Monroe called himself the Father of Bluegrass, and rightly so. For the blues, it's W.C. Handy; for jazz, Louis Armstrong. And Elvis Presley, goaded by Sun Records producer Sam Phillips, put it all together to push rock 'n' roll into the American consciousness.

But what about Gospel music? Southern Gospel is just as seminal and unique as the other idioms, even if it gets less notice these days. In the 1950s, groups like The Statesmen and The Blackwood Brothers were enormously popular. Presley was among those who loved Southern Gospel, and the sound infiltrated his music through his famous collaborations with The Jordanaires, The Imperials, J.D. Sumner and The Stamps.

Perhaps Southern Gospel quartets get short shrift because James D. Vaughan, the Father of Southern and Country Gospel Music, was never a star. This humble, dynamically innovative man started music schools, a record label, a radio station, many gospel quartets and a newspaper. He wrote songs and ran a publishing company that bore his name. Vaughan not only created the Southern Gospel quartet as a commercial entity; he led the way in marketing and promoting the music via every medium available in his lifetime.

Today, however, we rarely hear Vaughan's name. But he deserves recognition for the barriers he broke and the trends he started.

James David Vaughan was born two weeks before Christmas, 1864, somewhere near the border of Giles and Lawrence Counties, in Davy Crockett territory of rural southern Tennessee. Vaughan had three brothers: John, Will and Charles Wesley. All four got better educations than was common for that time and place, and all attended a neighbor's homespun music school, where they learned the rudiments of the *do-re-mi* eight-note scale of formal music, as well as the elemental scales of "shape note" religious vocal music. They formed the first Vaughan Quartet for fun and family entertainment, with James singing soprano and each brother taking a different part.

By the time Vaughan reached adulthood, he had developed a love for music, teaching and Bible studies; he also owned

# The Father of Southern Gospel

By Bob Millard

**James D. Vaughan was never a star, but his work influenced every gospel performer that followed**

an inextinguishable desire to make a difference in all three areas. He married in 1890 and soon moved to Cisco, Texas, to teach and to test the waters for setting up a music school. Two years later, the Vaughans lost everything in a massive hurricane. Downhearted but not defeated, he returned to Giles County, where he became a public-school principal.

In the late 1890s, Vaughan began to write gospel songs. After some of his compositions were published in a Hilderbrand Barnet songbook, Vaughan decided to publish a book of his own. *Gospel Chimes* came out in 1900. In 1902 he took a leap of faith, quitting his job, moving his family to Lawrenceburg and establishing the James D. Vaughan Publishing Company. By networking with music students and church organizations, he began to garner sales. It was slow at first, but Vaughan soon began buying buildings on the Lawrenceburg town square.

Vaughan continued to write, building a catalog of hundreds of gospel songs, including "I Feel Like Traveling On," "My Loved Ones Are Waiting For Me," "I Dreamed I Searched Heaven For You" and "Do You Know Him?" But it was as publisher, businessman and educator that he put Southern - Country Gospel Music on the map. He moved from the original four-shape notation of Civil War-era Sacred Harp music to a more modern seven-shape system of notation being taught with increasing prevalence in Virginia's best "normal schools" - two-year, post-high school institutes for preparing and certifying teachers.

Old-time Sacred Harp singings, named after *The Sacred Harp* tunebook used, were a capella and featured large groups of varying singing skills, facing inward toward a



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BY PERMISSION OF BIRDSONG PHOTOGRAPHY

and joined the firm to become a vital cog in the family business machine.

Other relatives who worked for the Vaughan business included Kieffer's wife, Stella, and W.B. and Grace's son James D. Walbert, a celebrated gospel pianist with a two-octave finger reach who still occasionally records today. The women were particularly important contributors to the company's monthly gospel-quartet trade newspaper, *The Vaughan Family Visitor*, a folksy and extremely effective avenue for promoting songbooks and quartet performances. The publication was launched in 1912 as *The Musical Visitor*. It evolved quickly into *The Vaughan Family Visitor* and bore the motto "Onward and Upward."

Vaughan understood the necessity of market reach in selling songbooks. To expand his empire, he founded a series of satellite normal schools and sent out traveling instructors to put on weeklong singing schools around the South. Moreover, he was the very first to embrace the phonograph and radio to spread his gospel music far and wide.

Vaughan Quartets began recording the company's copyrights for Vaughan Phonograph Records beginning in 1921. The first song waxed was "I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray," making it the debut Southern Gospel quartet record. The records were typically found in furniture stores, where Victrolas were sold.

A chance conversation with an electrical engineer in 1922 gave Vaughan a rudimentary understanding of wireless radio, then in its infancy. Vaughan wrote the engineer a check and within a few days the engineer was off buying components for what would become WOAN in Lawrenceburg, Tenn., the state's first radio station. Because so few radios stations were in existence at the time, Vaughan's relatively low-powered station reached adjoining states and could be heard as far away as Michigan. Because there were so few radio receivers in the South, he sold those, too. And the tuxedo-clad Vaughan Radio Quartet gained fame and sold songbooks by mail-order to even farther reaches of the country.

The quartets proved to be the core of it all: They recorded, they broadcast, they toured, they held singing schools and they sold songbooks. Their travels were duly reported in *The Vaughan Family Visitor*. By the mid-1920s, Vaughan had

song leader. Vaughan introduced the concept of the gospel quartet, where four polished singers face an audience and sing in intricate harmony. Sacred Harp songs tended to be dour, focusing on sin and guilt; Vaughan's four-part praise music was upbeat, joyful and exciting. The quartets usually featured accompaniment by rollicking piano playing, sometimes augmented by horns and stringed instruments. Even though Vaughan didn't invent four-part harmony singing, he reconfigured it through promotion and merchandising.

Composers of melodies and writers of inspirational poems were assembled by Vaughan to fill his songbooks, though there were many who could do both.

Some of the best up-and-coming gospel songwriters were recruited to teach at the normal music school he opened in 1911 in Lawrenceburg, including members of the legendary singing Speer Family. His writers created hundreds of lively, memorable songs, such as "Cabin On The Hill" and "I Need The Prayers Of Those I Love." Sales of Vaughan songbooks grew from 30,000 in 1909 to 85,000 in 1912 and later to a peak of 500,000.

The Vaughan endeavors were very much a family affair. James D.'s youngest brother, Charles Wesley, became his partner in 1903, sang in the first quartet Vaughan sponsored, and served throughout his life as his brother's right-hand man. "Uncle Charlie," as he became known, was a hard-nosed businessman who managed several of the company's different wings. James D.'s son Kieffer was a fine musician who managed and performed in a number of top Vaughan Quartets. W.B. Walbert married James D.'s daughter Grace



This edition of the Vaughan Quartet sang on WSM in Nashville in 1928.

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16 quartets on his payroll, each built for vocal blend, each professionally managed ... and each driving a new Dodge sedan he provided.

The quartets carried the company name not only throughout the rural South, but also to urban centers such as New York. He also saw to it that the men who sang in his traveling quartets were well compensated. For instance, Vaughan singlehandedly stopped the practice of gospel-convention organizers demanding that top quartets cover their own expenses and perform for free. Vaughan quoted from the Bible to the effect that "a workman is worthy of his pay." Largely due to him, gospel quartets turned "pro."

Vaughan's radio venture WOAN closed in 1927; it was too low-powered to compete with bigger stations. The Vaughan Radio Quartet shifted to Nashville's WSM and its tremendous broadcast reach. Vaughan needed radio exposure desperately, due to increasing heat from the Stamps/Baxter Company, a direct competitor that had sprung up and whose quartets broadcast from the 50,000-watt stations on the Texas/Mexico border. But the competition between Vaughan and the upstart Stamps/Baxter Company drove the quartets from both companies to even greater levels of showmanship and professionalism.

In another milestone, Kieffer Vaughan and his WSM Vaughan Quartet took part in the first recording sessions in Nashville history. They recorded eight songs for Victor on October 5, 1928, including "What A Morning That Will Be," "I Want To Go There Don't You" and "His Charming Love," which featured Kieffer's striking baritone.

It wasn't long before the individual quartets from the publishing houses became stars on their own. This is how the Southern Gospel industry was born. Today, more than 2,000 groups are said to be performing in this style, including The Freemans, Dixie Melody Boys, Kingsmen, Bishops, Perrys, Gaither Vocal Band, Florida Boys and Gold City.

Vaughan was more than a music business magnate; he lived and believed the message he purveyed. He taught Bible studies at his school, and he turned a large Lawrenceburg auto shop garage into a Nazarene tabernacle. He and Charles also initiated the great proliferation of singing conventions, with Charles becoming the first president of the National Gospel Singing Convention in 1936.

James D. Vaughan had a reputation for being positive, generous, upright and a straight-shooter, traits that eventually resulted in his election as mayor of Lawrenceburg.



Vaughan's radio station, WOAN, in Lawrenceburg, Tenn., carried his gospel tunes as far as Michigan.

Brother Charles W. served two mayoral terms and wound up in the state legislature. "Uncle Charlie" once threw his political weight in Lawrence County behind a gubernatorial candidate on the promise of a new road through the county. The new governor kept his pledge, and Lawrence County got Uncle Charlie's Highway – which began and ended on the eastern and western boundaries of the county, and went nowhere else.

When James D. Vaughan died suddenly at age 76, February 9, 1941, undertakers were puzzled to find quarter-sized calluses on his knees. But there was an easy explanation. Vaughan started every day the same way: He came into the office as early as 4 a.m. and prayed for an hour or more, on his knees, in a back room. Those calluses were the stigmata, if you will, from years of pious supplication – the marks of the father of Southern Gospel music.

## Vaughan's Carter Family Ties

Not the least of the accomplishments of James D. Vaughan was providing The Carter Family with songs. Although A.P. Carter's name is listed as writer, the following cornerstones of The Carter Family repertoire in fact originated in such James D. Vaughan songbooks as *Perfect Praise* (1904) and *Crowning Praises* (1911):

- ☛ "Anchored In Love" ☛ "Room In Heaven For Me"
- ☛ "The Grave On The Green Hillside"
- ☛ "My Old Cottage Home" ☛ "School House On The Hill"
- ☛ "No Depression" ☛ "Heaven's Radio"

**TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:**  
**The James D. Vaughan Southern Gospel Music Museum,**  
**Public Square & Main Street, Lawrenceburg, Tenn.**  
**Opened in 1999, the museum is dedicated to the**  
**Father of Southern Gospel Music, a renowned**  
**Southern Gospel songwriter, publisher and broadcaster.**  
**It's located on the Lawrenceburg Square. Open by**  
**appointment – call (931) 762-2484.**

# NEW AGAIN NOTEWORTHY DISCOVERIES

## THE CARTER FAMILY

### In The Shadow Of Clinch Mountain

(Bear Family, 12 CDs)

This is unquestionably the most important country reissue recording of the year – and possibly of any year. Bear Family has done nothing less than bring us every commercial recording ever released by the original Carter Family, compiling the trio's enormously influential sides for Victor, ARC, Bluebird and Decca of 1927 - 41.

These 292 performances provided country music with a bedrock repertoire – "Keep On The Sunny Side," "Will The Circle Be Unbroken," "Wabash Cannonball," "Wildwood Flower," "Foggy Mountain Top," "Gold Watch And Chain," "I'm Thinking Tonight Of My Blue Eyes," "Lonesome Valley," "Worried Man Blues," "I Never Will Marry," "Are You Lonesome Tonight" and

"Jealous Hearted Me" all entered our musical vocabulary from this fountainhead act. Maybelle Carter's guitar playing helped elevate the instrument to country's front ranks, and her style is still the standard for folk players everywhere. Sara's lonesome alto and the homemade quality of the Carter arrangements are light years away from what country music sounds like today. For novices, this music will seem almost as foreign as Slovenian folk dances. But there is something so haunting, so profoundly soulful about the Carter Family that it is easy to become addicted to its sound once you've immersed yourself in it. That is why tunes like "Hello Stranger," "Lover's Return," "Over The Garden Wall," "The Winding Stream," "No Depression," "The Storms Are On The



Ocean." "Faded Coat Of Blue," "Sweet Fern," "Give Me The Roses While I Live," "Will You Miss Me When I'm Gone," "You Are My Flower" and "Dixie Darling" keep bubbling up in revival, year after year. This is a set to treasure. In addition to the complete music, it includes a splendid hardcover biography by outstanding country historian Charles Wolfe. And in an embarrassment of riches, it also includes every known photograph of A.P., Sara and Maybelle Carter, the parents of us all. In a word, *essential*.

## THE SPECTACULAR JOHNNY HORTON



### JOHNNY HORTON The Spectacular Johnny Horton

(Columbia)  
"Spectacular" hits the nail on the head: Horton was simply one of the most thrilling singers in country music history. This straight-ahead reissue of a 1960 LP proves it. Whether performing rockabilly ("Got The Bull By The Horns"), folk ("All For The Love Of A Girl"), honky-tonk ("Lost Highway"), country boogie ("Golden Rocket," "Cherokee Boogie") or one of the saga songs that made him a superstar

("The Battle Of New Orleans"), Horton commanded the mic like few before or since. Included are three bonus tracks, including a "New Orleans" version tailored for the British point of view.

### JOHNNY CASH Johnny Cash At San Quentin

(Columbia)  
This landmark album's reissue on CD is cause enough



for rejoicing. But the music – "A Boy Named Sue," "Folsom Prison Blues," "Wanted Man" and

the rest – is only part of the reason. The bonuses here are written reflections and recollections by Cash, manager Lou Robin, Marty Stuart, June Carter Cash and Merle Haggard that give enormous insight into this electrifying event and into the character of this extraordinarily charismatic superstar. The booklet is also crammed with loads of previously unpublished photos taken at the prison.

### ROY ROGERS The King Of The Cowboys

(BMG Special Products)  
Can't afford Rhino's splendid Roy Rogers boxed set? Here's a 14-track sampling of his RCA Victor sides of 1947 - 52, including "Blue Shadows On The Trail," "Roll On



Texas Moon," "Don't Fence Me In," "Along The Navajo Trail" and his TV theme song "Happy Trails." It's for sale, for \$19.95 from Concept Productions, P.O. Box 3151, Murfreesboro, TN, 37133-3151.

DALE EVANS  
Queen Of The West  
(BMG Special Products)  
This is the new companion volume to the Roy hits set. It is the first Dale Evans album of her RCA sides. This is surprising, since they

were recorded at the height of her popularity as a TV cowgirl icon in 1949 - 58. Included are the humorous "Don't Ever Fall In Love With A Cowboy," her gospel standard "The Bible Tells Me So" and such evergreens



of her repertoire as "Texas For Me," "Cowgirl Polka" and "San Angelo," as well as six duets with Roy, including "May The Good Lord Take A Likin' To You." Order information is the same as for the Roy Rogers CD above.



# PRECIOUS MEMORIES

FROM THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

## MOUNTAINEER JAMBOREE

West Virginia songbooks at the Country Music Hall of Fame

The Country Music Hall of Fame's Library and Media Center houses the world's largest collection of country music songbooks. From the 1930s to the 1950s, songbooks were nearly as popular as records with music fans, and radio artists frequently sold the colorful, soft-cover books over the airwaves and at concerts.

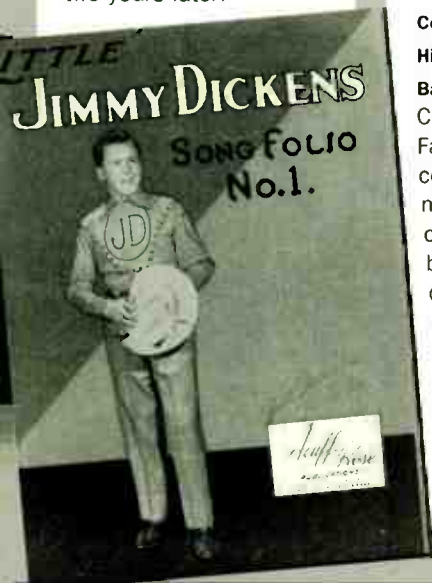
West Virginia has a particularly rich history as a country radio center, as documented in Ivan Tribe's book *Mountaineer Jamboree*. Based on the performers cited in its pages, the staff of the Hall of Fame has gathered some especially vivid Mountain State examples from the thousands in its collection.

### LITTLE JIMMY DICKENS

"Little" Jimmy Dickens

Song Folio No. 1, 1951

Bolt, W.Va., native Dickens began his career at WJLS in Beckley, then graduated to WMMN in Fairmont. After radio stints in Indiana, Ohio, Kansas and Michigan, he was discovered by Roy Acuff and brought to Music City. He joined the Opry in 1949 and issued his first Nashville songbook two years later.



### GRANDPA JONES

Grandpa Jones: The Kentucky Yodeler's Greatest Collection Of Cowboy,

Hillbilly And Mountain

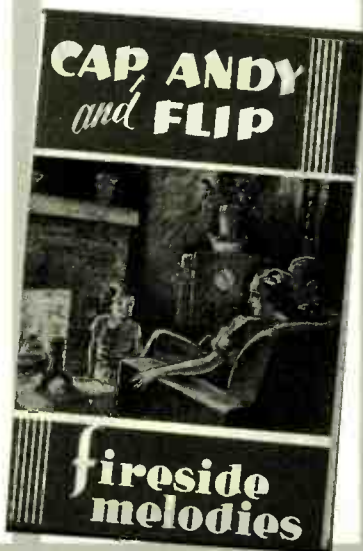
Ballads, 1936

Country Music Hall of Famer Grandpa Jones is certainly one of the most famous graduates of WWVA. This songbook was published during his first season at the *Jamboree*. He returned to the cast in 1941 - 42 and again in 1945, after serving in World War II. As the title suggests, Jones was a Kentucky native.

### CAP, ANDY AND FLIP

Fireside Melodies, 1936

Warren Capliner (Cap), Andy Patterson and William Strickland (Flip) arrived at the powerhouse WWVA radio station in Wheeling in 1932. Tribe's book cites the trio as one of the first polished and professional acts on the station. The team's early songbooks featured only lyrics. This was their first to feature melodies as well.



### Hawkshaw Hawkins

Hawkshaw Hawkins

Song Folio, 1950

Huntington native Hawkins signed with WWVA in 1945 and became its most charismatic honky-tonk star. The handsome heart-throb moved to Nashville in 1955, married Jean Shepard in 1962 and issued his biggest hit, "Lonesome 7-7203," in 1963. He died in a plane crash with Patsy Cline and Cowboy Copas on March 5, 1963.

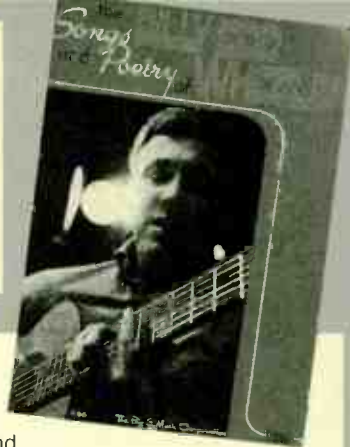




## Stoney And Wilma Lee Cooper

**Stoney And Wilma Lee Cooper's Song Folio, 1946**

Fiddler Stoney Cooper and his wife, singer Wilma Lee Cooper, electrified *Jamboree* audiences with their passionate Appalachian sound. Around the time of this songbook's publication, Wilma Lee was billed as "the she-Roy Acuff." The team migrated to Nashville in 1957 and became Opry members and recording stars.



## Billy Edd Wheeler

**The Songs And Poetry Of Billy Edd Wheeler, 1972**

Best known as the composer of such hits as "Jackson" and "Coward Of The County," this West Virginia native is also notable as a recording artist ("Ode To The Little Brown Shack Out Back") and as the composer of the outdoor musical drama *The Hatfields And McCoys*. Wheeler now lives in North Carolina.

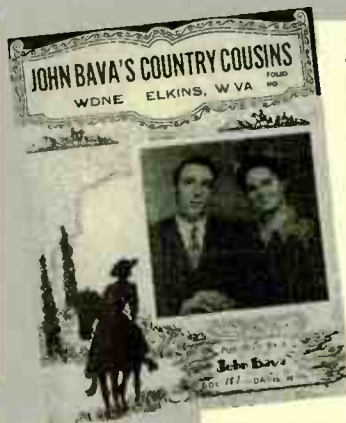


## The Buskirk Family

**Old Fashioned Songs As Sung**

**By The Buskirk Family, 1939**

This songbook was not only compiled in West Virginia, it was published there as well. The Buskirks were natives of Parkersburg, home of the Scholl Printing Company, which put out J. Everett Buskirk's compilation in 1939. Son Paul Buskirk later gained fame as a sideman for Lefty Frizzell and Willie Nelson.



## John Bava

**John Bava's Country Cousins WDNE Elkins, W.Va. Folio No. 1, 1948**

Former coal miner John Bava was the biggest star at the Elkins station. The year that WDNE went on the air he published his own

songbook in nearby Davis, W.Va. Bava then made the town something of a hillbilly headquarters with his magazine *Musical Echoes* and his label Cozy Records.

## WWVA Jamboree

**Deluxe Edition WWVA World's Original Radio Jamboree Famous Songs, 1942**

Wheeling's radio barn dance beamed from the Capitol Theater downtown beginning in 1933. The cast began to tour regionally in the early 1940s, which is when this songbook appeared. Along with the *Opry* and the *Renfro Valley Barn Dance*, WWVA's *Jamboree* is the only surviving radio barn dance. The radio station also sponsors Jamboree USA, America's largest annual country festival.



## The Bailes Brothers

**Johnnie And Homer, The Bailes Brothers, Song Folio, 1947**

West Virginia natives The Bailes Brothers were the state's trailblazers to Nashville. Roy Acuff lured them to his Acuff-Rose song publishing company shortly after he founded it in 1944, and they soon provided such standards as "Dust On The Bible" and "I Want To Be Loved But Only By You."



# COLLECTIONS

**ATTENTION, READERS!** The Collections page is your source for buying, selling or trading country music-related merchandise and memorabilia. Entries are printed at the discretion of the editors. Please keep in mind the following guidelines when submitting your entry: 1) Entries must be kept to 40 words or less. 2) Only one entry per member per issue. 3) We reserve the right to edit for space and style. Please write each other directly about information or items.

## QUESTIONS

I recently came across the words to an old song, "The Way You Are Living Is Breaking My Heart." I remember it on radio, probably in the 1950s, but for the life of me I can't remember who sang it. Any readers out there who can help me?

I have been looking for this song for years. Here are the lyrics I can remember: *Be faithful darling while you're away/For when it's summer hearts can stray/And though I'll miss you have a wonderful time/But remember, darling, remember you're mine. If you go dancing and she holds you tight/When lips are tempting on a summer's night/Your heart beats faster as the stars start to shine/Just remember, darling, remember you're mine.* Ann Shank, 8648 San Antonio Ave. #8, South Gate, CA 90280.

## I AM LOOKING FOR A SONG BY

a female country artist called "Country Man." Some of the words are: *Callous hands, old blue jeans, a suntanned brow/And there is no sound sweeter to his ears than his John Deere running smooth/Country man.* Clarence Kimmet, 16231 East Alabama Dr., Aurora, CO 80017

## WANTED

I'm looking for Brenda Lee's 45 rpm single "Waiting Game"/"Think" made in 1964, Decca 31599. Call 561-564-7571 or write Sherrie Jardine, P.O. Box 952, Hermiston, OR 97838.

## WANTED: GEORGE HAMILTON IV

45s "Good Side of Tomorrow"/"Leavin' London" (RCA 2542), "Follow Me"/"Cape Breton Lullaby" (RCA 2615) and "I Still Do"/"Good Ole Days"

(Broadland International NR 18777). Reasonable prices. Philip Paulson, 2517 E. 19th St., Apt. 3, Indianapolis, IN 46201-2154.

## I AM DESPERATELY SEEKING

the sheet music to "I Won't Go Huntin' With You Jake (But I'll Go Chasin' Women)," written by Stuart Hamblen. Does anyone have it, even in poor condition? If unwilling to part with the original, I'd be happy to obtain a copy. Help please! Mary Zimmerman, 712 E. Third, Hastings, NE 68901.

## I AM SEARCHING FOR A SONG

by Ronnie Milsap titled "The Girl Who Waits On Tables," and a song that I think was by Kitty Wells in the late 1950s titled "Dear John," an answer to the original "Dear John Letter." Jay C. Knepp, 739 Rogers Road, Romeoville, IL 60446.

*Editor's note: Jean Shepard and Ferlin Husky recorded "Forgive Me John" as well as the original "Dear John Letter." Both were released in 1953.*

## I'M TRYING TO FIND A CASSETTE

tape or a record of Conway Twitty singing "Jason's Farm." Every place I've checked says he never sang this song; however I remember my mother playing it all the time when I was small. Beverly Chapman, 119 Hollingsworth Manor, Elkton, MD 21921.

*Editor's note: Cal Smith had a hit with "Jason's Farm" in 1975.*

## CAN SOMEONE HELP ME FIND

the song by Melba Montgomery, "No Charge"? I'd like a copy for each of my four grown-up children. Lucy Curnette, 1200 Hartman Road, Ft. Pierce, FL 34947.

**CAN YOU HELP ME FIND THE** sheet music to "The Last Letter," "The Letter Edged In Black," "Moonlight And Skies," "When The Work's All Done This Fall," "Strawberry Roan," "I Can Dream Can't I" And "Somewhere My Love"? Am I asking too much? I love the old songs. Lorna Murray, 502-221 Ellendale Street, Saint John East, New Brunswick, Canada E2J 3S4.

## DOES ANYONE OUT THERE HAVE

a cassette tape of Joe Stampley singing "Two Weeks And A Day"? I've been searching and searching. Dorothy J. Leonard, 2022 N. El Molino, Altadena, CA 91001-3010.

## IN THE JUNE/JULY ISSUE OF

The Journal there is a list of the beautiful World War II patriotic songs. I would be so happy if anyone could share the words and music of those with me. Mary R. Clevenger, 20620 NE 206th Street, Luther, OK 73054.

## IF SOMEONE HAS A COPY OF

Sammy Kershaw's VHS tape of his video hits, I would love to buy it. It has been discontinued. Diane Voney, 195 Starling Community, Arnold, MO 63010.

## I'M LOOKING FOR THE VIDEO

*This Is Garth Brooks Too.* Also copies of *The Believer* magazine, all issues, the live version of "In Another's Eyes" with Trisha Yearwood on CD or video and any video footage featuring Garth interviews or TV specials. Will pay any reasonable price. Olive Livingstone, Coolaney, County Sligo, Ireland.

## AM LOOKING FOR THE CMT

All Access special with Jo Dee Messina that aired July 2nd. This also includes the question-and-answer Internet portion that followed the music portion. Also looking for two Dixie Chicks CDs: *Thank Heavens For Dale Evans* and *Little Ol' Cowgirl*. David Berens, 1000 Orleans, Topeka, KS 66604.



Trivia answer: Conway Twitty

If you guessed correctly after hint #1, consider yourself a country music authority.

If you guessed by hint #5, you're a bona-fide country expert.

If you guessed by hint #7, you are absolutely a fan.

If you had to go all the way to #10 to find out this person's identity, you need to buy some Conway Twitty records immediately!

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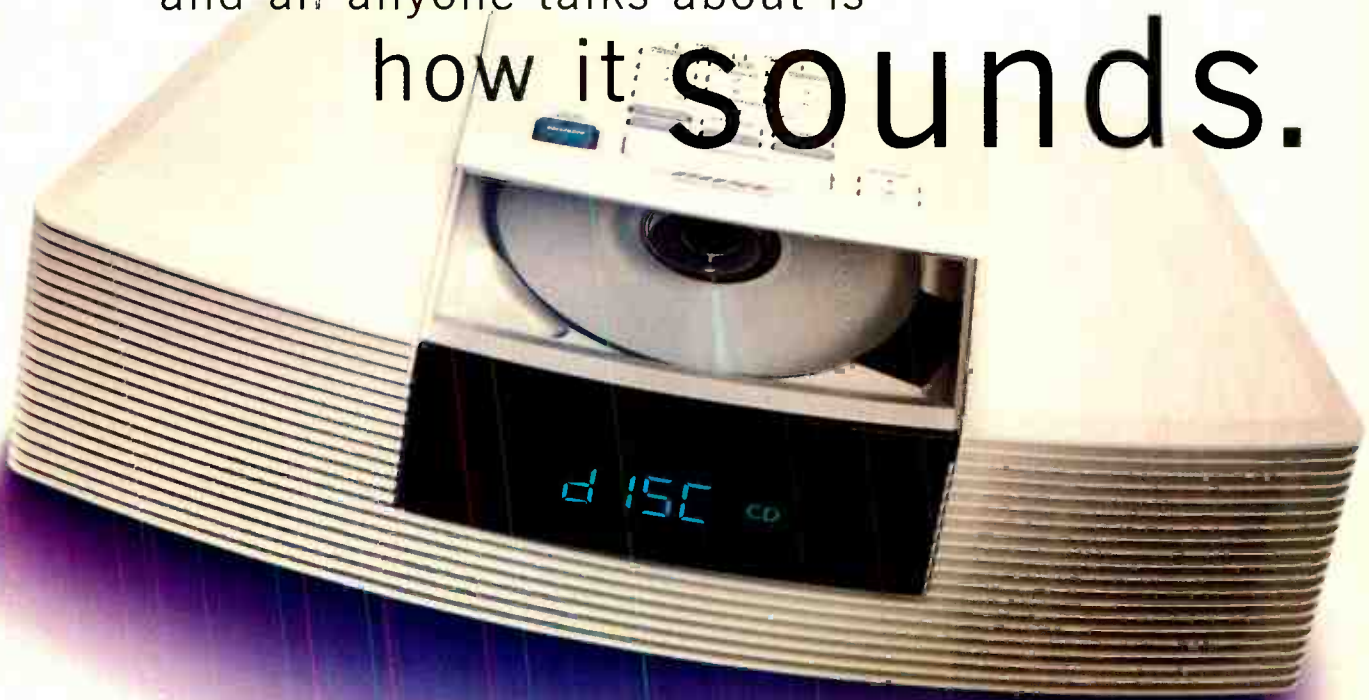
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# PAISLEY POWERS

In getting back to his roots, young guitar slinger Brad Paisley points towards country's future

**S**tanding on the fairway at an exclusive Nashville golf course, 28-year-old Brad Paisley reaches into his bag and pulls out ... *his guitar*. As golf balls swoosh and clack in the background, Paisley leans against a tree trunk near a fairway and talks about ... *guitars*.



Of course, it's no wonder the rising country star speaks about his instrument rather than his golf swing, or his current 18-stroke handicap. After all, an assistant keeps hoisting Paisley's rare 1968 Fender Paisley-model Telecaster – a beautiful instrument with a polished surface bursting with bright, psychedelic swirls – in front of the star's face as a photographer snaps away.

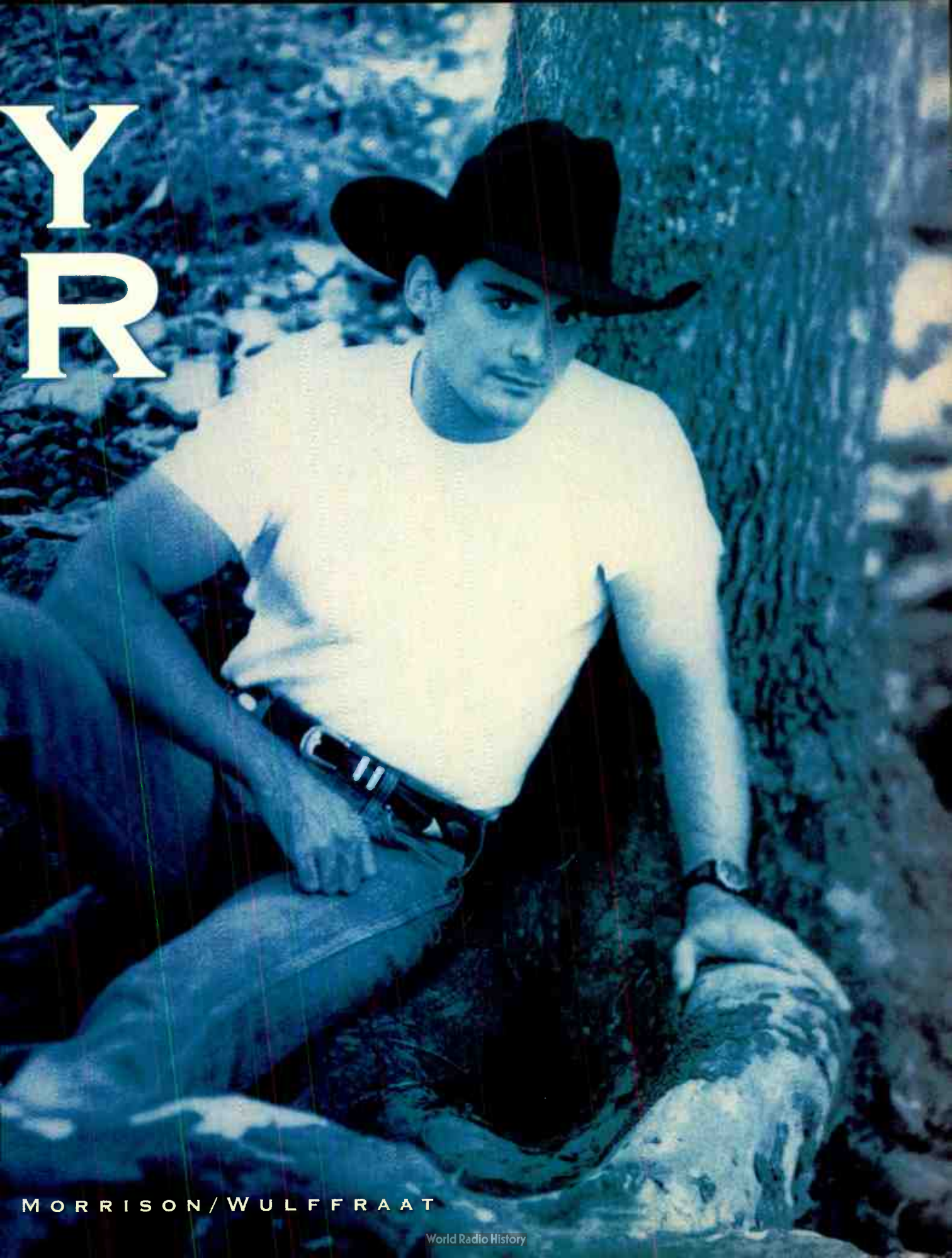
For Paisley, the colorful guitar is much more than a prop. As the star points out, Fender produced two different Paisley-styled Telecasters in the late '60s, and he can explain why he prefers the model he owns.

A child prodigy, Paisley has been playing the six-stringers since he was 8 years old. Today, he drives a new pickup whose West Virginia license tag reads "GTR-PLR."

Like Vince Gill, Lee Roy Parnell and Steve Wariner, Paisley is among the elite few who can be identified as a triple

BY BOB MILLARD ★★ ★ PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Y  
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MORRISON/WULFFRAAT

World Radio History

threat: an ace guitarist as well as a distinctive singer and hit songwriter. Paisley delivers his own guitar licks on his album, and he's the author of his own hit singles, an impressive string that includes "He Didn't Have To Be," "Who Needs Pictures," "Me Neither" and "We Danced." It's no coincidence that the songs are about as hard-core country as any records today.

Despite – or maybe due to – his pointed lack of interest in crossing over to the pop

charts, Paisley is one of the few recent debut artists to break through to significant commercial success. *Who Needs Pictures* has sold 800,000 copies, and Paisley was the only debut artist of 1999 to score a No. 1 hit on the *Billboard* country singles chart, with "He Didn't Have To Be."

A day after his modeling duties, Paisley is tenderly nursing a sore back. He stretches out on the office couch, takes a sip of ice water and moans.

"I'm sorry," he says, a laconic smile

spreading over his thin face. "I've been trying all day to find a comfortable way to sit, and this is about it."

He's teased that he resembles another legendary back-pain sufferer, Hank Williams. "Yeah," he laughs, then raises his glass. "Only I guess this would've been whiskey instead of water."

Paisley is laughing at himself, not at a country music legend. He's a serious student of country music history; or, perhaps more accurately, he's a student of *the*



# Travis Tritt

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music of country history. Sounds, instruments and licks from classic country records fill his mind. He has perfected his sound with equipment made 15 years before he was born. His guitar amp is a VOX, similar to the ones The Beatles used – and his latest dream machine is an orange remake of the Gretsch Country Gentleman (the Chet Atkins model), a perk from his recent Gibson Guitars endorsement deal.

“I play Gibsons anyway,” he explains. “I’ve got a 1963 J-45 that I used to play rhythm on my album [*Who Needs Pictures*]. But now they’ve given me this \$7,000 guitar, so I guess I ought to appreciate ‘em a little more.”

Paisley’s excitement about his new guitar and enthusiasm about his near-completed second album spills into the conversation, and it’s refreshing to encounter a young artist driven by a love of making music rather than an obsession with career goals or marketing plans. His connection to traditional country music is clear on *Who Needs Pictures*, an album loaded with steel guitar and fiddle that concludes with an old-time gospel song. Obviously organized and self-directed, there’s nothing crass or calculated about Paisley – which might be why so many country insiders are rallying behind his quick-rising stature as one of country’s brightest young stars.

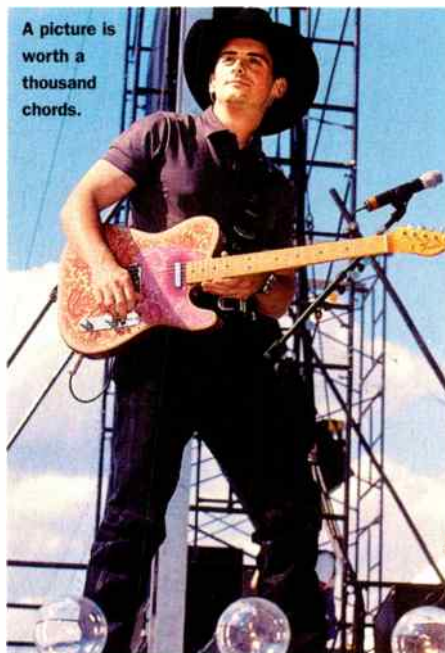
“This guy is so genuine, so likable, so talented and so unafraid of hard work,” says veteran *Grand Ole Opry* star Bill Anderson. “I look at Brad Paisley and I wish there were a hundred more just like him with his talent, attitude and dedication to *country* music. I’d feel a lot better about the future of our format if there were.”

Paisley recently recorded a song Anderson wrote called “Too Country,” a staple of the newcomer’s live shows in recent months. A gentle protest tune, Anderson’s song is aimed at radio stations that refuse to play artists and recordings that fall under the definition of being “too country.” Paisley recorded the song for his second album – and to drive home his point, he cut the song with help from George Jones and Buck Owens, two Country Music Hall of Famers rarely heard these days on country radio.

Paisley’s willingness to speak his mind and take a stand has already created friction with a few of his pop-oriented peers. But he’s not backing down.

“It’d be different if we were in very traditional time in country music’s history,” he states. “But I think we’ve done it to a

“ I’VE HAD  
A COUPLE OF  
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THAT I THOUGHT  
WOULD GO  
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AND THEY  
NEVER DID. ”



point that it’s gone too far, to where the identity is lost when there is no distinction between a song played on one format versus a song played on another format. My firm stance on it is that I believe you can be successful and still be country – and still be honest.”

**P**aisley inherited his old-school country gumption naturally. Born on October 28, 1972, he hails from Glen Dale, W.Va., a rural town of about 1,200 residents. His guitar-playing grandfather, Warren Jarvis, raised young Paisley on a bluegrass and old-time country music diet five days a week while his parents worked.

“In the afternoon, before he’d leave for work – he was a railroad worker and he’d leave about two in the afternoon, about an hour before my mama would get home – he’d sit there and he’d play that acoustic guitar in

his recliner,” says Paisley. “I’d just sit there and watch for hours. He’d do ‘Shortenin’ Bread’ and ‘Under The Double Eagle’ and ‘Wildwood Flower’ – you name it.”

Jarvis gave Paisley his first guitar and encouraged him to the point that the boy eventually got to perform on *Janiboree, USA*, the historic radio show in Wheeling, W. Va.

If his grandfather gave Paisley his musical start, he also gave him his uncompromising attitude. “Probably that was passed along to me just like the guitar was by my grandfather,” Paisley chuckles. “He was a stubborn man, and I have that in me about things I believe in strongly.”

One thing he believes in strongly is romance – not the toss-away kind, but the kind that lasts. He credits Roger Miller’s genius for influencing the quirky humor in songs such as “It Never Woulda Worked Out Anyway,” but his themes of true love and heartbreak come straight from his own experience. Brad Paisley is a romantic.

“I think if I have one really obvious flaw, it’s that I trust too easily,” he confesses. “It’s magnified ten times when I get into a relationship. I’ve had a couple of multi-year relationships that I thought would go to that next level and they never did. It was usually wishful thinking on my part. I’m usually the last one to figure it out.”

His romantic attitude about love has kept him above the fray when it comes to indulging himself in the temptations of road life. “The one-night stand on the road thing?” He winces. “I have never done that. I can honestly sit here and say I never would.”

Paisley stands by his convictions. “First of all, my religious beliefs prohibit that kind of behavior,” he explains. “I’ve got to have a mental connection with a girl before I’ll even go out on a second or third date, because I don’t have much free time. There’s got to be that interesting person who I really want to get to know before I’ll even consider buying someone dinner with romantic intentions. I want her to be an interesting soul.”

In other words, Paisley isn’t a fly-by-night fellow. He’s as traditional in affairs of the heart as he is in his approach to country music. That may put him out of step with prevailing trends in lifestyles and musical entertainment, but, like Alan Jackson and George Strait before him, Paisley is proving that there’s a sizable segment of the country audience that will enthusiastically support a performer with the courage to pledge allegiance to country’s past, as well as to its future. \*



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From left:  
Joey The CowPolka  
King, Woody Paul,  
Ranger Doug  
and Too Silm



# THE SCREEN

## Riders In The Sky are tall in the saddle with *Toy Story 2* and *Woody's Roundup*

When the creators of *Toy Story* began planning a sequel to the popular animated film, they ran into a roadblock. They knew Woody, the toy cowboy featuring the voice of Tom Hanks, would play the central role. They knew the plot would involve a fictional '50s TV program about a cartoon cowboy. And they knew they would need some old-time cowboy music to serve as the cartoon's theme song. But they didn't know who would perform the tunes and do it convincingly.

Then one of the movie's co-directors, Ash Brannon, overheard a conversation about the movie's music. He immediately suggested veteran cowboy trio Riders In The Sky. To support his point, he went to his computer and downloaded a song from [www.ridersinthesky.com](http://www.ridersinthesky.com). Upon hearing the yodeling voice of Riders' guitarist Ranger Doug, they knew they found their musicians.

"Who would guess that one of the directors of *Toy Story* would be a big fan of ours?" asks Ranger Doug of Riders In The Sky. "It was a great stroke of luck."

Listen to the Riders harmonize on "Woody's Roundup," a song featured in the movie, and it's obvious that Brannon made the right suggestion. The sprightly song serves as the theme song for the mock '50s cartoon series that gave birth to Woody, the Tom Hanks-voiced lead character in *Toy Story 2*, and the Riders give it a buoyant, lightly swinging style that perfectly fits the scene.

For the Riders, who perform under

the colorful monikers of Ranger Doug, Too Slim and Woody Paul, the film work led to a 13-song album, also titled *Woody's Roundup*, on Walt Disney Records. The album features the veteran cowboy group harmonizing on a series of songs inspired by the characters of *Toy Story 2*, as well as a couple of Western and country classics, "Home On The Range" and "Act Naturally."

"We loved the characters in the movie," Ranger Doug says. "So it was fun to come up with songs for them. It was a fun challenge. Instead of writing another song about a sunset or a canyon or a lost dogie, we have a different focus."

Indeed, the group did such a good job creating songs for the movie's main characters that the Disney entertainment empire is finding more uses for them. Ranger Doug's "Jessie The Yodeling Cowgirl" currently can be heard daily on the grounds of Disneyland and Disney World. And bassist/vocalist Too Slim contributed "Infinity And Beyond," a song that will serve as theme song for a Disney Channel cartoon series featuring the *Toy Story* character, Buzz Lightyear. "Slim scored the big one on that," Ranger Doug says.

Amazingly, a music executive at Walt Disney Records at first turned down "Infinity And Beyond" as a cut for the Riders album. But Riders associate Joey Miskulin, who produces the group's albums and contributes accordion to the act as Joey The CowPolka King, sent a tape of the song to John Lasseter, the primary

creative force behind *Toy Story*. Lasseter, who heads Pixar Animation Studios, loved the song and persuaded Disney to include it on the *Woody's Roundup* CD.

"I think the Pixar sense of humor is close to ours," says Too Slim, who leads many of the Riders In The Sky comic routines. "It's not edgy in the way a lot of modern humor is, but it's very clever. It works on one level for the kids and another for the parents. So there's a real meshing of sensibilities. We both get the same jokes."

For the Riders, hooking up with the *Toy Story* phenomenon marks the latest in an amazing series of career boosts the trio has received during its 23 years of existence. In the early '80s, the band signed with Rounder Records, appeared on the PBS live-music program *Austin City Limits*, joined the Grand Ole Opry and hosted *Tumbleweed Theater*, a weekly Western-movie program on TNN. By the late '80s, the band served as hosts of *Riders In The Sky*, a Saturday morning children's show on CBS, and started their long-running National Public Radio series, *Riders Radio Theater*.

"I think of this as our third wave," Ranger Doug says. "We perk along steadily and every few years something wonderful happens. It's great to be thought of immediately when cowboy projects come along. We've spent more than two decades establishing ourselves as the bearers of tradition and carrying it on. When you see it glorified in a movie as it is in *Toy Story 2*, it's nice to be a part of it."

— Michael McCall



# Christmas

The members of SHEDAISY – (from left) sisters Kelsi, Kassidy and Kristyn Osborn – tangle with presenting Christmas songs in a modern light on the trio's new album, *Brand New Year*.



**SHeDAISY  
decks the  
halls with  
a holiday  
twist that  
proves  
they're no  
Chicks  
knockoff**

**BY MICHAEL McCALL**

**as Belles**

**F**amily and Christmas go together like tinsel and pine trees. So Lyric Street Records figured its top-selling sister group SHeDAISY would find a natural kinship with holiday songs.

ROSS PELTON/LYRIC STREET

The sisters thought otherwise – at least at first.

“The reason you love Christmas songs so much when you’re a kid is because they’re so simple,” says the group’s Kristyn Osborn. “But how in the world do you make them different? How do you make them exciting?”

That’s why Lyric Street got a surprise answer from Kristyn and her younger sisters, Kelsi and Cassidy. “When they first told us they wanted us to do a Christmas song, our faces dropped,” Kristyn says, recreating the pained expression she gave the record executives. “We said, ‘Uh, no.’ Then they pushed us – and we said, ‘Nooooooo, please no.’”

The company’s executives persisted. The label’s parent company, mighty Disney Entertainment, wanted to feature a new version of “Deck The Halls” on its *Mickey’s Once Upon A Christmas* holiday video. Performing the song would give SHeDAISY enormous exposure.

So Lyric Street asked, “Can’t you at least try it?”

The sisters relented, but with one condition: They wanted to do it their way. “We asked them if we could do a SHeDAISY version rather than a traditional version,” Cassidy says. “When they said yes, we agreed to give it a try.”

Working with producer Dann Huff, the sisters transformed “Deck The Halls” from a fa-la-la-la sing-along to a modern pop song, combining inventive harmony passages with a catchy, soaring chorus. The reaction was so enthusiastic, and the experience so enjoyable, that they decided to create a complete album of Christmas chestnuts. The result, *Brand New Year*, is far from a typical collection of gentle holiday carols.

“We realized with a Christmas record that we didn’t have to be genre-specific,” Kristyn explains. “If we did a country record, we would have to do it a certain way.

Because we were doing a Christmas record, it opened things up. We didn’t want to stifle our creativity, so making our sophomore album a Christmas record was the perfect thing to do. We were able to do all this weird stuff. Celtic, flamenco, rap – it’s all there.”

As *Brand New Year* makes clear, the Osborn sisters used the setting to push the envelope even further beyond the conventional country sounds of their million-selling *THE WHOLE SHeBANG*. Rhythms draw from hip-hop and dance sources, finding common ground in the dynamic sound of pop groups ‘N Sync and Destiny’s Child. At other times, the group’s head-spinning harmonies boast a sophistication reflective of such jazz vocal groups as the Boswell Sisters and Take 6.

“It was important for us to do the best possible project we could,” Kristyn says. “We wanted to be more daring and more creative. We wanted to make sure we were knocked out by our vocal arrangements. If

“The harmonies had to be amazing. They had to be special. That’s our hook. That’s our thing.”



ROSS FELLOW/LYRIC STREET

A close-up profile shot of Ricky Van Shelton wearing a light-colored cowboy hat and a dark shirt, smiling. The background is a blurred green and red holly bush.

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Blue Little  
Christmas

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we weren't, we worked until we were. We wanted to do all these unusual things that we know our voices can do. The harmonies had to be amazing. They had to be special. That's our hook. That's our thing."

SHeDAISY's intricate use of harmony was evident on *THE WHOLE SHeBANG*. The album came out at a time when the majority of new country acts were experiencing difficulty gaining support from both country radio and country fans. SHeDAISY, however, had no such dilemma. The trio's sunny melodies, cosmopolitan rhythms and complex vocal work appealed to young pop fans and to listeners of modern country radio stations.

It wasn't a smooth road. The group drew the wrath of some music critics, who skewered them as pop fluff or as a contrived knockoff of that *other* successful country female trio, the Dixie Chicks. But the group

business decisions. We're more deeply involved in our music and our careers than nearly any other new act. But we really aren't looked at that way yet."

**T**he trio admits that the artful twists of *Brand New Year* bristle with chip-on-the-shoulder ambition. By transforming "Jingle Bells" and "Sleigh Ride" into something audaciously modern, the sisters strive to show what they can do when given the opportunity to flex their creative muscle.

"Hopefully, people can suck it up and admit that this is a pretty inventive project," Kristyn proposes. "Even if they don't admit it, we hope they see it. We hope they *feel* it."

As for the criticism that SHeDAISY cashed in on the Chicks' success, here's a flash: The trio signed its Lyric Street contract *before* the Chicks' breakthrough *Wide Open Spaces*.

until after Kelsi's victory in a national talent contest that earned the family a trip to New York City. Impressed by several Broadway musicals and the entertainment world, Kristyn joined her sisters to form a trio.

The act, then known as The Osborn Sisters, originally hit Nashville in 1989. In the early '90s, they spent two frustrating years with RCA Records. Despite several recording attempts, no music was ever released. "We were three young girls singing pretty progressive stuff," Kristyn says. "The record label didn't know what to do with us."

After leaving RCA, the sisters changed their name to The Violets and concentrated on sharpening their vocal technique, while Kristyn delved into the Nashville songwriting community.

By 1998, Nashville's creative climate had changed. Thanks to Shania Twain's block-



SHeDAISY plan to launch their first tour in 2001, after the release of an upcoming third album.

also gained some high-profile support, including glowing reviews in *USA Today* and *Music Row* magazine. Still, the critical arrows hurt.

"We would love to make people believers, to show them that we really *do* know what we're doing," says Kristyn, who contributed several bold originals to the Christmas album, including the honking "Santa's Got A Brand New Bag," the darkly humored "Tinseltown" and the satirical "Twist Of The Magi."

"People who know us know that we're intelligent and that we make smart decisions," insists Kristin. "We put as much creativity into our music as anybody. We write our own songs. We take an active part in our production. We control our

And like the Chicks, the Osborn sisters put in several years of dues-paying prior to the release of their first hit, "Little Good-byes."

Kristyn (30), Kelsi (26) and Cassidy (24) grew up in the rodeo center of Magna, Utah, three of six children raised in the Mormon household of parents David and Robyn Osborn. "We think living there, and the whole way we were raised, really helps us now," Kristyn says. "We grew up with a lot of values, and that's a really important influence on who we are."

Kelsi was 11 when she played the lead in the musical *Annie* at Utah's Sundance Summer Theater. Afterward, she and Cassidy formed a duo that sang at state fairs and retirement centers. Kristyn, a high-school cheerleader, didn't start performing

buster success, women with an aggressive, modern sound began to be taken much more seriously by Music Row. The sisters signed with Lyric Street and changed their name to SHeDAISY.

"I think a lot of people were surprised by our success because we came out on a little, unproven label," Kristyn says. "We loved being the underdog, and we had complete faith in Lyric Street. But people fear what they don't understand, and there was this backlash against us, partly because we weren't traditional country singers and partly because we seemed to come out of nowhere."

"We hope this album proves that we're for real," she says, "and that we have something to offer." \*



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Winter

(PICK FIVE)

- Dear Beautiful Stranger  
CEALEE TENNISON
- Learn Where I Belong  
TRISHA YEARWOOD
- Lives the Girl House  
MARTINA MCBRIDE
- Memories on the Heart of a Cowboy  
JESSICA ANDREWS
- Cowboy Jack & the Kid  
MARTY RAYBON
- What I Need  
JULIE REEVES
- Rock the Casbah  
SEANIA TWAIN
- The Last  
JERRY KILGORE
- Another Side of Me  
YANKEE GRAY
- The Merry  
TY HERNDON
- Star Line  
JIM BRICKMAN  
MICHELLE WRIGHT
- The Way You Love Me  
TRINI TRIGGS
- When I Found Myself  
THE MAVERICKS
- Your Heart  
KEITH URBAN
- Out Here in the Water  
REBECCA LYNN HOWARD
- Jimmy's Got a Girlfriend  
THE WILKINSONS
- My  
TEAC ADKINS
- Homecoming  
CLAY DAVIDSON
- A Woman's Got Her Own Plans  
COLLIN RAYE
- Melissa Manchester  
MELISSA MANCHESTER
- It Ain't About You  
WADI HAYES
- The Way You Love Me  
DAMON GRAY
- Real Life Woman  
TRISHA YEARWOOD
- Cowboy's Got a Way  
COLLIN RAYE
- The Cowboy's Girl  
CLAY WALKER
- Memories on the Heart of a Cowboy  
MIRLE HAGGARD
- Good to Be Good to the Good 'ol Name  
JASON MILLER
- Memories on the Heart  
ERIC HEATHERLY
- When the Cowboy  
RANGEL FLATTS
- Another Side of Me  
TAMARA WALKER
- My Number  
BRAD PAISLEY
- Goodbye  
DIXIE CHICKS
- Goodbye  
BLACKHAWK

Spring

(PICK FIVE)

- Been There  
CLINT BLACK  
STEVE WARINER
- Yes  
CHAD BROCK
- Almost Doesn't Count  
MARK WILLS
- Change  
SONS OF THE DESERT
- House IT's  
DANNI LEIGH
- To Be  
REBA MCENTIRE
- 800 Primal Jesus  
SAWYER BROWN
- I Need You All The Time  
BLACKHAWK
- Standing To the Side  
CRAIG MORGAN
- Blue Heart  
JEFF FOXWORTHY  
BILL ENGVALL
- Three Little Tears  
JOANIE KELLER
- Little Town Across the Way  
GARY ALLAN
- Good Young Man  
COLLY McCABE  
ANDY GRIGGS
- Vertical Expression  
of Horizontal Distort  
BELLAMY BROTHERS
- When You Need Me  
DARRYL WORLEY
- When You Love Me  
TIM RUSHLOW
- I Hope You Dance  
LEE ANN WOMACK
- Faith In You  
STEVE WARINER
- Good Times  
ANITA COCHRAN
- Breathless  
RIVER ROAD
- Naked Women & Beer  
HANK WILLIAMS, JR
- You Weren't What?  
ALFICIA ELLIOTT
- When You Come Back to Me Again  
GARTH BROOKS
- Trouble With Angels  
KATHY MATHEA
- You're the Reason  
HANK WILLIAMS III
- Don't Be Tired of a Heart  
THE WARRIN BROS  
SARA EVANS
- I'd Like to See You  
MARK CHESNUTT
- Stars When You Come Along  
TARA LYNN HART
- My Heart and Soul for You  
THE KINLAYS
- The Way You Love Me  
FAITH HILL
- Since I Gave My Heart Away  
SONYA ISAACS
- Our Love  
BILLY GIBMAN

Summer

(PICK FIVE)

- She Went Out for Cigarettes  
CHILY WRIGHT
- Mustangs Run  
JACK INGRAM
- New York's Tenth  
BRANDON SANDIFUR
- Beauty Is in the Eye of the Beerholder  
CHUCK WAGON & THE WHEELS
- If You Can  
TAMMY COCHRAN
- If You Can't Be Good  
Be Good as It  
NEAL MCCOY
- Just Another Day in Paradise  
PHIL VASSAR
- I Need You  
LEANN RIMES
- Stuff  
DIAMOND RIO
- Love, You Ain't Seen the Last  
FRACY BYRD
- Three Little Tears  
COLLIN RAYE  
BOBBIE FAYES
- Country Comes to Town  
LOBY KLITH
- Critical Eye  
RAY HOOD
- Searching for the Missing Peace  
MARTY RAYBON
- Send Down an Angel  
ALISON MOORER
- Where Are You Now  
TRISHA YEARWOOD
- I Do You  
JESSICA ANDREWS
- Feels Like Love  
VINCE GILL
- Call Me Crazy  
RICKY VAN SHILTON
- You Won't Be Lonely Now  
BILLY RAY CYRUS
- That's the Way  
JO DEE MESSINA
- That's the Kind of Metal You In  
PAITY LOVELESS
- Bye  
KATHY MATTEA
- A Woman Gets Lonely  
LISA ANGFLE
- He Will She Knows  
KENNY ROGERS
- Boy of Intentions  
TRAVIS TRITT
- I Pray for You  
JOHN RICH
- New Money  
TRENT SUMMAR & THE NEW ROW MOB
- There is No Arizona  
JAMIE O'NEAL
- Let's Make Love  
FAITH HILL  
TIM MCGRAW
- American Offense  
TONY SPAMPELY
- Everybody's Gotta Get a Little Somethin'  
SONS OF THE DESERT
- Paradise  
CRAIG MORGAN

Fall

(PICK FIVE)

- Destination Unknown  
VICTOR SANZ
- A Little Gasoline  
TERRI CLARK
- I Love I Loved You  
DARYLE SINGLETARY
- Silence on the Line  
CHRIS L'DOUX
- Born To Fly  
SARA EVANS
- This Time Around  
YANKEE GRAY
- We Don't  
BRAD PAISLEY
- You With Me  
ANITA COCHRAN
- I Lost It  
KENNY CHESNEY
- Country In My Genes  
LORETTA LYNN
- That's A Shame  
BILL ENGVALL
- Swimming in Champagne  
ERIC HEATHERLY
- Making Up My Mind  
CHALEE TENNISON
- Road Dogs  
CHARLIE DANIELS  
BAND
- She's Gone  
RICOCHET
- Blue Moon  
STEVE HOBY
- What Children Believe  
SHENANDOAH
- I Would  
JOLIE & TIII WANTED
- I Will Just  
SHEIDAINY
- Didn't We Love  
TAMARA WALKER
- Man In The Moon  
PRAIRIE OYSTER
- Let It Go  
MARSHALL DYLLON
- Lost In The Feeling  
MARK CHESNUTT
- I Want To Know  
MARK WILLS
- So What  
TAMMY COCHRAN
- I Can't Be To Be  
CLAY DAVIDSON
- Right Where I Need to Be  
GARY ALLAN
- All Night Long  
MONTGOMERY GENTRY  
CHARLIE DANIELS
- Ashes By You  
LEE ANN WOMACK
- My Celestial Train  
CLELUS T. JUDD
- But For The Grace Of God  
KEITH URBAN
- Too Much To Lose  
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Brad Paisley with publisher Gary Overton (right) and his No. 1 plaque for "He Didn't Have To Be."



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|-----|-----------------|--|
| 1.  | VARIOUS ARTISTS | <b>Coyote Ugly Soundtrack</b> (Curb) ♦         |
| 2.  | FAITH HILL      | <b>Breathe</b> (Warner Bros.) ●                |
| 3.  | BILLY GILMAN    | <b>One Voice</b> (Epic) ●                      |
| 4.  | DIXIE CHICKS    | <b>Fly</b> (Monument) ●                        |
| 5.  | AARON TIPPIN    | <b>People Like Us</b> (Lyric Street) ♦         |
| 6.  | LEE ANN WOMACK  | <b>I Hope You Dance</b> (MCA) ♦                |
| 7.  | JO DEE MESSINA  | <b>Burn</b> (Curb) ♦                           |
| 8.  | SHEDAISY        | <b>THE WHOLE SHEBANG</b> (Lyric Street) ●      |
| 9.  | SHANIA TWAIN    | <b>Come On Over</b> (Mercury) ♦                |
| 10. | TIM MCGRAW      | <b>A Place In The Sun</b> (Curb) ●             |
| 11. | LONESTAR        | <b>Lonely Grill</b> (RCA) ●                    |
| 12. | TOBY KEITH      | <b>How Do You Like Me Now?!</b> (Dreamworks) ♦ |
| 13. | GEORGE STRAIT   | <b>Latest Greatest Straitest Hits</b> (MCA) ●  |
| 14. | ALAN JACKSON    | <b>Under The Influence</b> (Arista) ●          |
| 15. | REBA MCENTIRE   | <b>So Good Together</b> (MCA) ♦                |
| 16. | EMMYLOU HARRIS  | <b>Red Dirt Girl</b> (Asylum)                  |
| 17. | BILL ENGVALL    | <b>Now That's Awesome</b> (BNA)                |
| 18. | KENNY CHESNEY   | <b>Everywhere We Go</b> (BNA) ●                |
| 19. | RASCAL FLATTS   | <b>Rascal Flatts</b> (Lyric Street)            |
| 20. | KEITH URBAN     | <b>keith urban</b> (Capitol)                   |
| 21. | PATTY LOVELESS  | <b>Strong Heart</b> (Epic)                     |
| 22. | ANNE MURRAY     | <b>What A Wonderful World</b> (Straight Way) ♦ |
| 23. | KENNY ROGERS    | <b>She Rides Wild Horses</b> (Dreamcatcher) ●  |
| 24. | BRAD PAISLEY    | <b>Who Needs Pictures</b> (Arista) ♦           |
| 25. | ERIC HEATHERLY  | <b>Swimming In Champagne</b> (Mercury)         |

Compiled by Country Music magazine, based on a combined tabulation of sales and airplay data available at the time of publication.  
 ♦ Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certified for sales of 500,000 (Gold) ● RIAA certified for sales of one million (Platinum) ○ RIAA certified for sales of 10 million (Diamond)



## On Her Own

**Loretta Lynn, still coping with her husband's 1996 death, starts to write the next chapter of her colorful life**

**S**he's as big a symbol of America as Abe Lincoln or the Statue of Liberty, and the very epitome of rural sensibility. *When you're looking at me, you're looking at country*, she sings, and everyone knows it's the truth. But how does a deep-dish country queen stay true to her roots and fit the modern marketplace? With *Still Country*, she hopes, a collection of new songs that keeps her trademark sound intact but incorporates a modern feel with up-to-date arrangements.

“A lot of these people are goin’ out on a limb, but they’re cuttin’ it off. And when it falls, they’ll be back to country.”

At age 65 and with sales of more than 30 million records – and 51 Top 10 and 16 No. 1 hits – Lynn might be expected to retire. But she’s set her sights on the second phase of her career, with more albums and a second book, *Still Woman Enough*, headed down the road. As this recent chat shows, Lynn isn’t just “still country” and “still woman enough” – she’s still everything that makes her an American treasure.

**We haven’t seen an album of all-new music from you in 12 years. What brought you back to recording?**

“I wanted to get back to work. I didn’t work at all for five years when my husband was sick. Then Conway [Twitty] died. And then Tammy died. And my two brothers died. So I said ‘What else can happen?’ I had 12 people die [including husband Doolittle] in four years.”

**How did you cope with all that?**

“Well, I think I was crazy, so I didn’t have to cope with it. After the first year, I looked over at a friend, and I said, ‘Have I



Country in their genes: Brad Paisley, Earl Scruggs, Randy Scruggs, Reba McEntire, John Anderson, Martina McBride, Crystal Gayle and Chely Wright hang with Loretta.

LARRY HILL

been off the road for about two months?’ And she said, ‘Loretta, you’ve been here a year.’ I guess I was just numb.”

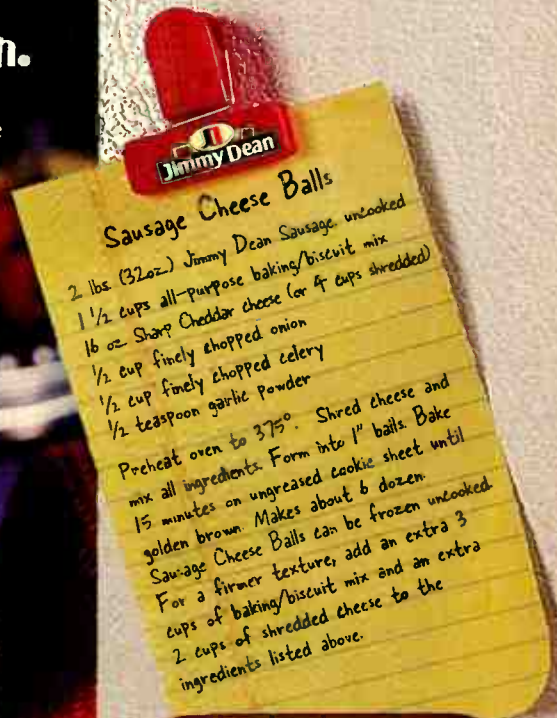
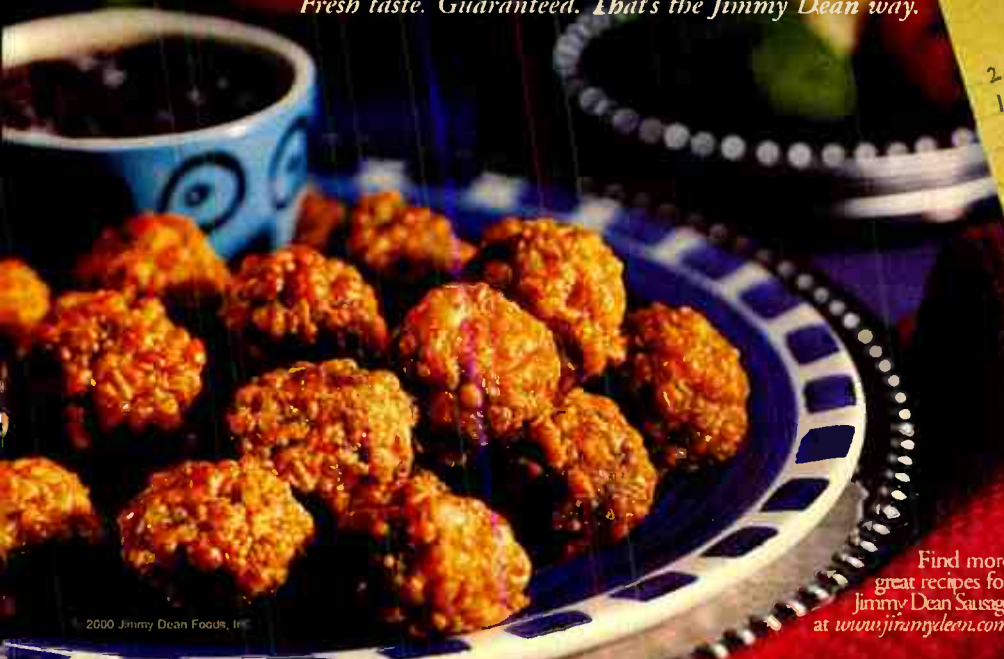
**There are several songs on the album that allude to Doolittle’s illness and death, like “I Can’t Hear The Music,” which you co-wrote. Is that essentially a true story?**

“Yeah. He kept saying that. I thought he didn’t want me to sing no more. But it wasn’t that. He couldn’t see or hear. God, that was

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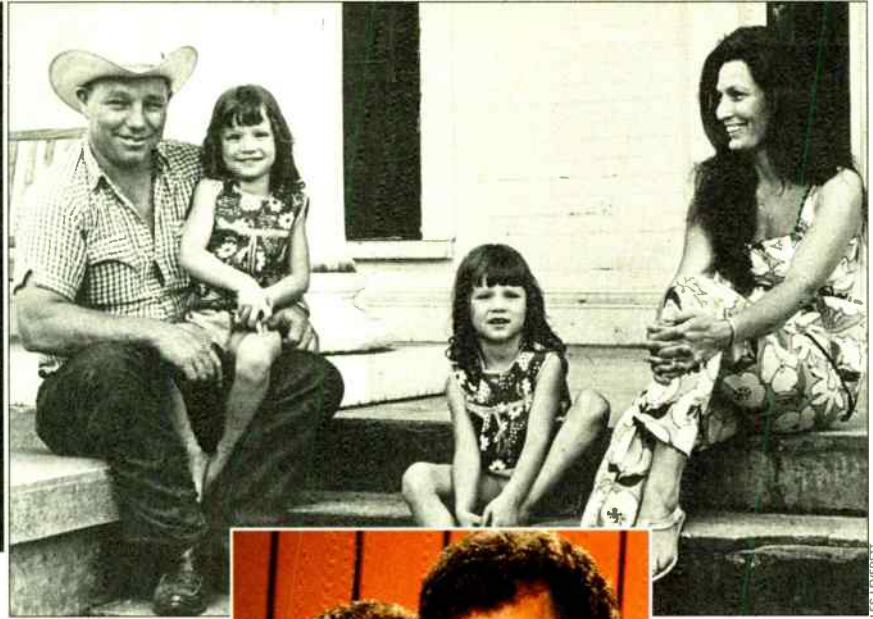


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ALAN L. HAYES



LES LEVERETT

the worst thing I've ever been through in my life. And when we went into the studio, I could not get into that song. I would cry every time I started, and we never did get through the whole thing without me crying."

#### **What did you do?**

"Finally, [producer] Randy [Scruggs] said, 'Loretta, think about something that you're wanting.' Well, I was starved to death, so I thought about that Snickers candy bar out there in that little machine! And I put that on my mind for the last chorus, and so it come out pretty strong."

#### **How long did you work on the album?**

"About three weeks. It didn't take us no year, like these people who go in and cut one line at a time. Then they got these things in the studio now if you go flat or sharp, they can just fix it. Well, I don't like that. If I can't sing it, I don't want to sing."

#### **You wrote "God's Country," which is a good, bard-core country song.**

"It sure is! And we're not hearing much country music out of people these days. But I'm still writin' the honky-tonk stuff. Now a lot of other people that write, they're not livin' life, 'cause you can tell from the songs. You do not hear a story. Brad Paisley's 'He Didn't Have To Be,' that's a good story. The kid's gonna make it because he's writin' true."

#### **Who do you listen to now, besides Brad Paisley?**

"I listen to Chely Wright and a few of the others. But you can't tell who's singin' unless you've got the videos on and look up. Used to be, you knew who everybody was when the music come on. You didn't even have to wait until the voice."

#### **We hear you have a second autobiography, *Still Woman Enough*, coming out next year. What will we read that wasn't in your first book, *Coal Miner's Daughter*?**

"Well, I'm gonna let it be a surprise, but it'll be all the pleasures and the heartaches. It'll tell things I didn't say in the first book, because I couldn't have told half the stuff that I have. It starts with my first memory, and it stops at the last thought that's on my mind."



The legacy of a coal miner's daughter: Loretta preaching "The Pill" in 1975; relaxing on the porch with husband Mooney and daughters Peggy and Patsy; smiling with her 1972 - 1975 Vocal Duo of the Year partner Conway Twitty.

#### **What other recording plans do you have?**

"I want to do another box set. And me and [sisters] Crystal and Peggy's gonna record together. And I may make a record with my daughters, too."

#### **Of course, they have their own career now as The Lynnys. What advice did you give Patsy and Peggy when they started out?**

"I told 'em if they sleep with everybody to start out with, they won't last long enough to get their records played. Because they'll all try - the disc jockeys will try, the artists will try and people that you're recording for will try. So you gotta have sense enough to keep your panties on."

#### **The tabloids have linked you with Arnold Murray, the TV preacher. Are you still seeing him?**

"We very seldom get to see each other, 'cause he's on TV 24 hours a day. But bein' single ... you know, I've had guys hit on me. That shocks me - and completely turns me off. I'd rather go after them."

#### **Do you think you'll remarry?**

"I really don't know. I like being single. I think I've been married all my life. And I kinda like the freedom, if you know what I mean. I'm on my own, just like the song says. On my own again."

#### **This is your 40th anniversary in the business.**

"And it feels like I just started yesterday. I'm turnin' 'em away everywhere I go. Had 12,000 [in the audience] on the last show. So I might have been gone, but Loretta's out there now!"

— Alanna Nash



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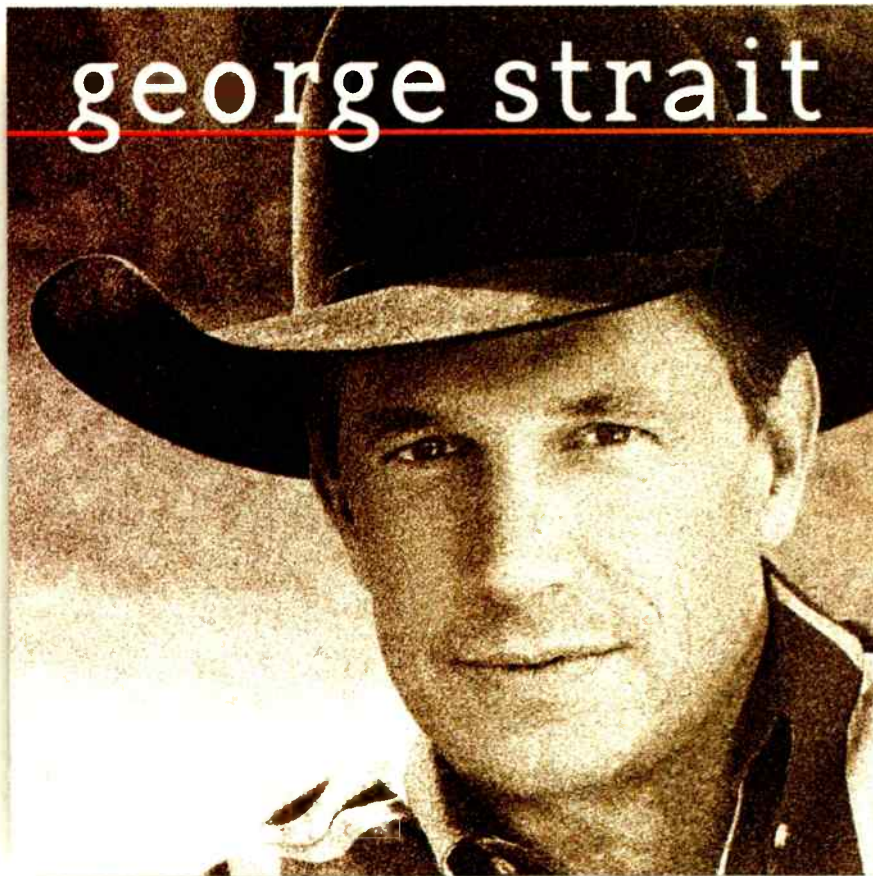
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# REVIEWS



## GEORGE STRAIT

### George Strait

(MCA)

★★★★★

On one of his new songs, George Strait tenderly compliments a woman by suggesting that she's "an old-fashioned girl at home in the modern world." In a way, he's toasting the same strengths that make him such a remarkable country singer; 20 years on, the Strait traits that make him special include the old-fashioned values he continues to instill in modern country music.

His 27th album is the first to carry the bare-boned title *George Strait*, and it's an appropriate choice, for the music represents Strait at his most honest and unadorned. There's the sly swing of the classic Texas shuffle "You're Stronger Than Me" (previously recorded by Patsy

Cline and Ray Price), as well as the sensitive emotion he brings to the romantic "Go On" and the heartbreaking "She Took The Wind From His Sails." On each of them, as well as the romping "Don't Make Me Come Over There And Love You," Strait reminds listeners of his command of both traditional country and its contemporary cousin.

In recent years, the well-regarded Texan has sometimes slipped into nursery-rhyme simplicity in his attempt to remain relevant to the pop-leaning programmers of country radio. While the new album features plenty of sweetly tempered romance, none of it stoops to the overly simple verse of one-dimensional songs like "Check Yes Or No" or "Write This Down."

Instead, Strait concentrates on songs

that are intelligent as well as accessible.

The best example of his subtle mastery as a vocalist comes on a striking version of Rodney Crowell's "The Night's Just Right For Love," a love song that comes across as honest and heart-tugging without relying on sugary sentiment. When Strait phrases the line about his "old-fashioned girl," the feeling he puts into the line is unmistakable, yet free of the histrionics that mar so many modern ballads.

Coming as it does on the heels of a greatest hits album, *George Strait* suggests that the most enduring country singer of the last two decades still has plenty to contribute.

— Michael McCall

## DWIGHT YOAKAM

### Tomorrow's Sounds Today

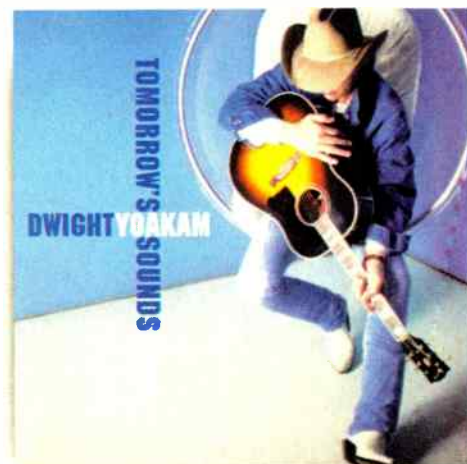
(REPRISE/WARNER)

★★★★★

Dwight Yoakam fans must be in a state of euphoria: *Tomorrow's Sounds Today* is his second album to hit the stores this year. Unlike the bare-boned acoustics and familiar territory of *dwightyoakamacoustic.net*, *Tomorrow's Sounds Today* is his first full-fledged studio album since 1998's stroke of brilliance, *A Long Way Home*.

Initially viewed as a left-field contender when he burst out of the gates with 1986's *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.*, Yoakam's pure vision in producing his unique strain of "Bakersbilly" country has transformed him into a bit of a traditionalist, a beacon that refreshingly outshines some of the mainstream mediocrity going on in country at the moment.

You could almost call *Tomorrow's Sounds Today* a celebration of that integrity; even heartbreakers such as "A Place To Cry" and "Dreams Of Clay" are buzzing with a vibrant optimism that promotes a



#### Country Music rates all recordings as follows:

- ★★★★★ **Excellent.** A classic from start to finish.
- ★★★★ **Very Good.** An important addition to your collection.
- ★★★ **Respectable.** Recommended with minor reservations.
- ★★ **Fair.** For loyal and forgiving fans.
- ★ **Poor.** Seriously flawed.

..... Ratings are supervised by Country Music editors.



carefree confidence we haven't heard from Yoakam in a while, if ever.

The familiar barrel-toned baritone guitar of Pete Anderson announces the album's joyful intentions even before Yoakam's distinguished nasal tenor utters a note on "Love Caught Up To Me," the CD's spirited opener. It's a short intro, maybe eight bars deep, but Anderson's elastic performance reveals that Yoakam is ready to party rather than preach.

Anyone acquainted with the 15-album Yoakam catalog is aware of the importance his crackerjack sidemen play in his music, but here they seem to perform even more fundamentally. Scott Joss' fiddle on "What Do You Know About Love" is the instrumental spine that threads the arrangement; the bittersweet waltz "Time Spent Missing You" offers a sweet, essential mandolin cameo from special guest Chris Hillman; and Gary Morse works his pedal-steel magic as the vital hook for the chugging shuffle "Free To Go," a head-bobbin', toe-tappin' humdinger that ends in a flurry of passionate solos from Morse and guitar master Anderson.

But make no mistake: *Tomorrow's Sounds Today* is Yoakam's baby. His singing shows impressive range whether he's "ya-hawing" on "A Place To Cry" or yukking it up with Buck Owens on the jovial duet "Alright, I'm Wrong."

There's even an extra Buck bonus thrown in on "I Was There," and you just can't argue with that. The 14 songs on *Tomorrow's Sounds Today* find Dwight Yoakam in a playful mood, and the ride is exhilarating.

— Nick Krewen

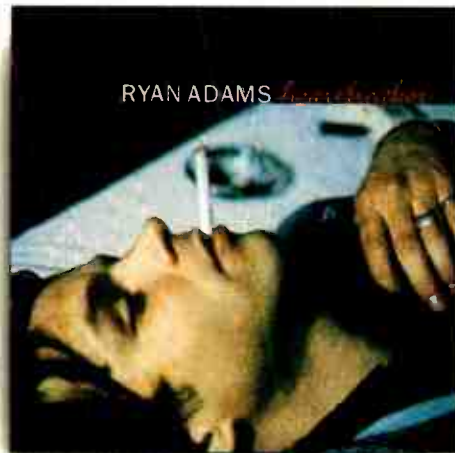
## RYAN ADAMS

### Heartbreaker

BLOODSHOT

Like the neighborhood mockingbird running through his pre-dawn repertoire from atop some darkened telephone pole, ex-Whiskeytown warbler Ryan Adams — on this echoey solo bow, *Heartbreaker* — leaves you rubbing your eyes, gathering your daily wits and wondering "Gee, what kinda call was that? Or that?" An excellent mimic, with a voice reminiscent of Paul Cotton's, circa mid-period Poco, this crafty lad has a great deal of ambition but no sense of definitive style. That's not necessarily a bad thing — mockingbirds, in their heartfelt performances alone, are usually pretty entertaining creatures.

Adams, who penned these 15 ditties,



leaps from songbook to songbook as if he's a parrot being cued by an in-the-wings bird trainer. You'd theoretically expect a bit more from alt-country's reigning (and by many accounts, loudmouthed) *enfant terrible*. But there he is in "Damn, Sam (I Love A Woman That Rains)," aping quavering beatnik-isms as if he were channeling Dylan himself.

Backed by — of all folks — the traditional-minded team of David Rawlings and Gillian Welch, Adams does manage to pull off the homage; it sounds fun, playful, like he's played his copy of *Nashville Skyline* to death to get it right. He goes on to toy with classic country vernacular ("Bartering Lines"), rough-and-tumble R&B ("Shakedown On 9th Street") and even jangly Beatles chords ("Amy").

Occasionally, he's painfully blatant in his thematic thievery, as on the "If I Needed You"-xeroxed "In My Time Of Need." Still, you sort of like the guy at the end of it all. He's 20-ish young, searching for his tunesmith identity, and you can cut him some charitable slack.

Ultimately, it might be Adams' sheer arrogance that holds him back. In the cover photo, he's pictured lying on his jean-jacketed back in a hotel room, hair drooping off his forehead in greasy strands, lit cigarette dangling precariously from his mouth. Yet another homage: either Ron Wood, in his Faces heyday, or Keith Richards, just about any day. Study the shor long enough, and you begin to get the idea that Adams really believes he is a heartbreaker, a James Dean cool customer that we'd all better appreciate before he's gone, damn it! Love him or leave him, however, you have to admire one thing about this artist: Just like the

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mockingbird, he dares to be.

Whether he'll wake up the town or not, only time – and more cohesive composing – will tell.

— Tom Lanham

**SAM BUSH**

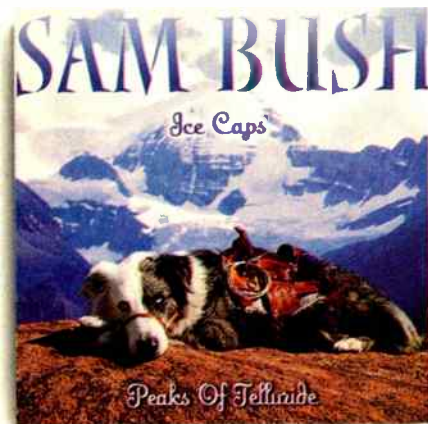
**Ice Caps: Peaks of Telluride**

SUGAR HILL

★★★★

Sam Bush is a godfather of the acoustic-jam-band sound now being explored by dozens of young groups and followed eagerly by thousands of Grateful Dead-heads and bluegrass fans. He manhandles his mandolin and gives a driving, rhythmic core to this effervescent mingling of bluegrass, folk, rock and country. The hub of this boundary-crossing music is Colorado, and the annual Telluride Bluegrass Festival is its mecca. Bush has played one of the festival's staple sets 26 out of the last 27 years, so this live document of some of his best performances is perhaps overdue, but most welcome.

One of Bush's earliest collaborators was John Cowan, bass player and vocalist in their influential band New Grass Revival. Here, Bush and Cowan duet on Lowell George's "Sailin' Shoes" with no backup but Bush's hypnotic, syncopated mandolin. Bush's soul and blues influences also infuse John Hiatt's "Memphis In The Meantime" and Sonny Landreth's "Speak Of The Devil." Bush, also a magnificent fiddle player, offers a show-stopping "Big Mon" with Jon Randall Stewart on guitar, and a medley of three fiddle-burners by, or arranged by, Bush himself. The CD is also a showcase for Bush's singing, which sounds better here than



on some of his studio records.

Don't expect a purely acoustic performance. Bush calls on Stewart's electric guitar skills frequently, and most tracks are backed by Cowan on electric bass and Larry Atamanuik on drums. Other stellar guests include Jerry Douglas on Dobro and Béla Fleck on banjo. The recordings are nicely mixed, with just enough crowd ambience to sound like it would if you had great seats. The tracks come from 1992 and after, so it's too bad we couldn't have heard some samplings from the earlier days. And there's a bit of silliness from the Telluride emcee that will probably prove to be annoying on subsequent listenings. But altogether the record does a great job of capturing a musician who is best experienced live. All that's missing is the awesome Telluride scenery.

— Craig Havighurst

**CHRIS CAGLE**

**Play It Loud**

VIRGIN NASHVILLE

★★★

Virgin Nashville president Scott Hendricks believes country music needs more male muscle, and fans of Hank Jr. or Travis Tritt may be inclined to agree with him. Enough single white females, they say. Bring on the Alpha Dogs. To make good on his vision, Hendricks signed Clay Davidson – who, despite having scored his first hit with the emotional "Unconditional," has more than a few country/rock piledrivers on his debut album. Now Virgin has discovered and rushed to disk a 30-year-old Texan with an enormous voice and, it is said, the ability to work an audience into a head-bobbing, fist-pumping throng. That remains to be seen. But Chris Cagle, whose creamy yet forceful baritone sounds like Gulf Coast kinsman Mark Chesnutt on steroids, comes through loudly – very loudly – and sometimes even movingly on his debut album.

The record announces its fat sound from the opening grooves. Co-producers Cagle and Robert Wright juice the mix for maximum arena-rock effect, but the thundering bass, twinned electric guitar and fiddle and huge drum rack never crowd out Cagle's voice on "My Love Goes On And On," or any number of beefy tracks. "Laredo" and "The Love Between A Woman And A Man" have a great mid-tempo drive and build to battle-station climaxes. The real butt-kicker is "Country



By The Grace Of God," which, if it works as well live as it does on record, should win Cagle legions of fans.

That said, a lot of what most people think of as country music is seemingly not on Cagle's radar. It's certainly not on his record. There's neither shuffle beat nor pedal steel to be heard here, as if the choice between the arena and the honky-tonk was mutually exclusive.

The album's one respectable ballad is "Safe Side," about a man ruminating with resignation over leaving a woman who was almost the one. "Who Needs The Whiskey," depicting a recovering alcoholic leaning on his woman's strength instead of the bottle, is overwrought. (Besides, what would Hank Jr. say?) Cagle displays intimacy on the tender stuff, but he needs better material to work with. "Ton Of Love" and "Lovin' You, Lovin' Me" are nutritionless fillers.

Cagle co-wrote most of these songs, and although the album has enough respectable cuts to feed radio singles until the next album, it would be great to hear this commanding singer tackle some subtler lyrics. There's no reason that good songs can't be played loud, too.

— Craig Havighurst

**TERRI CLARK**

**Fearless**

MERCURY

★★★

Twenty seconds into her new album, Terri Clark signals that she's ready for a change. *I want a full tank of absolution*, she sings. *no fear*. The use of a \$20 word like "absolution" – a term that has probably never appeared in a country hit – indicates Clark isn't playing by Music Row's rules any longer.

That word appears in the powerful "No Fear," one of three tracks co-written

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by Mary Chapin Carpenter. The Ivy League songwriter's contributions are noteworthy because Carpenter is clearly a role model for Clark. Although *Fearless* isn't a bad album, it suffers from growing pains, as Clark strains to transform herself from a mere country hitmaker to a purveyor of serious art, à la Carpenter.

Unfortunately, Clark only occasionally reaches her lofty goal. A cover of "Easy From Now On" compares favorably to Emmylou Harris' 1978 version, and the heartfelt, cello-laced "Good Mother" is admirable, but underwhelming.

Stuart Smith's folky harmonica and Shawn Pelton's techno-lite drum loop offer nice touches to "Last Thing I Wanted," but they can't salvage this generic-sounding cut, penned by Carpenter and Kim Richey. (Even songwriters with high batting averages occasionally hit weak grounders.) The three songs Clark co-wrote with Gary Burr ("Empty," "Getting There" and "Midnight's Gone") envelope serious topics with forgettable melodies.

At age 32, with only three previous albums to her credit, Clark may be making this artistic leap too soon. Unlike Harris, Clark doesn't have a blue-chip voice, and she lacks Carpenter's incredible composition skills. Clark may be wise to endure the Nashville treadmill/hit factory a few years longer. She wants to continue swimming – but where do you go when you're too big for the kiddie pool, yet not mature enough to jump into the deep end?

— Bobby Reed

**SARA EVANS**  
**Born To Fly (RCA)**

★ ★ ★

It's too bad Sara Evans can't keep still. *I keep lookin' for somethin' more*, she sings on the track, "I'll Keep Lookin'," from her new album, and she's right.

It wasn't enough for her to write one of 1997's most acclaimed records, the gorgeous *Three Chords And The Truth*. It wasn't enough for her more contemporary-sounding second album, *No Place That Far*, to go gold. It wasn't enough to settle for a position as a respected, moderately successful singer with a load of talent and just as much charm.

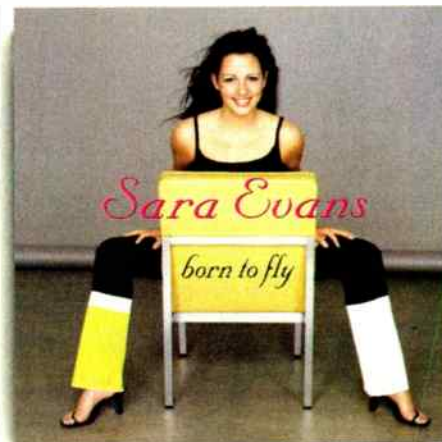
No – Evans, like so many of her Nashville counterparts, feels that respect and self-sufficiency simply aren't enough. She wants superstardom. *Born To Fly*, her third album, is the result of that obsessive eagerness.

Losing the Patsy Cline-styled twang of her initial recordings, Evans now owns a smooth, polished voice that Nashville seems to view as a prerequisite for superstardom. Songs like "Saints And Angels" and the acoustic rocker "Let's Dance" feature Evans' solid, sparkling alto, but in a rather limited range. "Why Should I Care" has a poignant, yet heavy-handed, chorus and Evans can barely keep up with the soaring background vocals.

Time and again on *Born To Fly*, Evans and co-producer Paul Worley go for the knockout punch, the grand slam. Of 11 tracks, they reach it twice.

The title cut ranks among the the best-crafted pop/country songs of the year, while "You Don't" finds Evans belting out a fantastic, angry, Janis Joplin-esque chorus. Throughout the album, Evans and her collaborators have cultivated a big-sounding, lavishly processed pop album, laden thickly with strings, guitars and multi-tracked vocals.

Because of that hugeness, Evans' country charm, so much in evidence on her debut, has almost completely disappeared. In its place emerges a major songwriting and performing personality. Her newer fans, many of whom will unwittingly tune in to a coun-



try radio station in the coming months and hear a bold new voice, are in for a pleasant surprise. But many of her old fans will wonder why Sara Evans didn't just keep still.

— Bob Gulla

**KIERAN KANE AND KEVIN WELCH**

11/12/13

DEAD RECKONING

★ ★ ★ ★

Despite more than a decade of good notices, Kieran Kane (once of the O'Kanes) and Kevin Welch are more likely to see their names in the small type of other people's albums rather than on brightly lit marquees. Nonetheless, both are gifted performers with expressive voices, and they have wisely chosen not to retreat into the



anonymity of songwriter's cubicles.

They still write their songs, share some with bigger names and continue to perform for a small but discerning public. Co-founders of the artist-cooperative label Dead Reckoning, Welch and Kane played a series of dates in Australia during 1999, a first for both. They ran tape the last two November nights in Melbourne and liked the results well enough to share.

On *11/12/13*, the songs are placed in simple settings – just the two singers and their guitars, helping each other out now and again. It's a simple, pleasant evening's music, with nods to fellow songwriter John Hiatt and a happily imperfect pass at Hank Williams' "Ramblin' Man."

Those imperfections – an uncleared throat here, a missed string there – only add to the album's casual ambience. Music, after all, is not made by nor for machines, and both men are professional and confident enough not to be troubled by the odd glitch. There is little between-song pat-

ter, and little audience sound intrudes upon the music. But throughout, one has the feeling of two gifted songwriters at the other side of the living room, picking only for the inspiration of the moment.

— Grant Alden

## CHRIS LEDOUX

### Cowboy

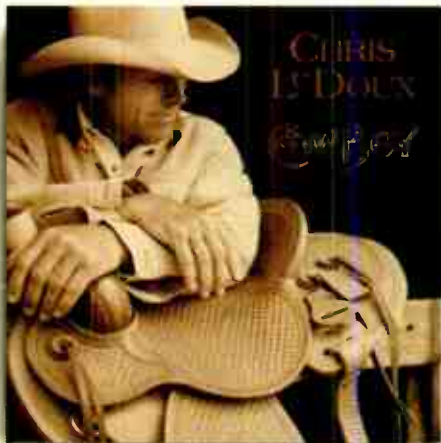
CAPITOL

★★★★

In recent months, Chris LeDoux's old, out-of-print albums have been selling for big bucks on eBay – more than \$50 for a vinyl record and even \$15 for the cassettes or eight-tracks the singer used to sell out of his truck when he traveled the rodeo circuit as a bareback bronco rider. And why not? If you love ranches and rodeos, it's hard to find songs about that life as colorful and authentic as LeDoux's. Even if his early recordings were crudely recorded and streaked with sentimentality, they were the real thing.

This bidding war for LeDoux's old albums inspired his new one, *Cowboy*. The Wyoming rodeo veteran picked eight of his most autobiographical songs (plus three favorites by other writers) from his out-of-print releases. He then re-recorded them with producers Mac McAnally and Alan Schulman and some of Nashville's finest pickers. As a result, some of LeDoux's finest songs are put back into circulation and given improved treatments.

"The Yellow Stud," for example, displays LeDoux's gift for painting a picture of the rodeo life in couplets such as *The wooden gate flew open, and the stud had bailed out high/An explosion of yellow horse seemed to fill the sky*. But the original recording was sabotaged by a muffled vocal and a cheesy marimba. By contrast, the new version reflects a hard-won confidence in LeDoux's baritone and emphatic backing



from Larry Franklin's fiddle and Jack Pearson's electric guitar.

The same mix of vivid writing and state-of-the-art recording can be found on songs about the long miles between rodeos ("Running Through The Rain"), newlyweds without money ("Our First Year") and a marriage threatened by the rodeo life ("Silence On The Line"). A corny romanticism creeps in at times, but the songs are redeemed by the sense that LeDoux is one singing cowboy who has lived every line.

— Geoffrey Himes



## PATTY LOVELESS

### Strong Heart

(EPIC NASHVILLE)

★★★★

In the hyper-compressed and super-processed world of today's Nashville recording studios, listening to an album like Patty Loveless's fine *Strong Heart* is like driving with your top down on a sun-splashed day in spring.

Led by husband Emory Gordy's exquisite, low-key production and propelled by 10 well-chosen tunes, the disc focuses on the singer's strengths: empathy, emotional toughness, solid vocals and great melodies. To some, the understated material may come across as safe, but don't believe it. Loveless' passion for tradition – country music without the souped-up studio-isms – is, in fact, a major risk these days. That said, the album does possess considerable dynamic range, from full-on honky-tonkers and Southern-fried boogie to touching, acoustic ballads. A limited but focused singer, Loveless never overreaches, while Gordy's arrangements – characterized by flourishes like a harmonica, pedal steel and piano – rarely call attention to themselves. When he adds a string section to the song "She Never Stopped Loving

Him," the swelling strings bolster rather than overshadow Loveless in the way Jimmy Webb's delicate orchestrations did for Glen Campbell in the '70s.

By paying attention to the details, Loveless and Gordy have fortified the album from the inside, where it counts. With beautifully written, perfectly sung songs, Loveless' *Strong Heart* ranks among Nashville's most refreshing and genuinely believable albums of 2000.

— Bob Gulla

## LORETTA LYNN

### Still Country

AUDIUM/KOCH

★★

As with Johnny Cash, George Jones and Ray Price, the great ones sometimes are able to place a coda near the end of their careers, to leave one more indelible reminder of the power and glory of their remarkable talent. Loretta Lynn, unquestionably one of the greats, has chosen another path. She wishes still to compete with the young lions, and on their turf.

Like many of her generation, Lynn has been a long time between records. *Still Country*, produced by Randy Scruggs (with guest appearances by his father, Earl), is meant to tie in with her new book, the sequel to *Coal Miner's Daughter*. It is not, however, a look back to the classic '60s country sounds that made Lynn famous.

Scruggs places her in a thoroughly modern setting, surrounded by the gloss and style aired on today's new country radio. Rather than following the lead of June Carter Cash, who sought to summarize her career and share matriarchal wisdom through last year's *Press On*, *Still Country* seeks to position Lynn amid the divas of the day.

The result is a little odd. "Working



Girl,” for example, written by Scruggs and Matraca Berg, has all the bland pop hooks and the demographic precision of country radio. But pretty much anybody on radio could be singing this song. Worse, it hardly sounds like Loretta Lynn, with few of the vocal qualities that make her such a compelling singer.

Except, perhaps, her adaptability. Lynn was, after all, a force on the country charts for most of two decades, during which time she covered a fair bit of territory. But even the schmaltz of her duets with Conway Twitty sounded inescapably like Loretta Lynn. *Still Country* sounds like Loretta Lynn imitating somebody she is not.

—Grant Alden



**SHEDAISY**  
**Brand New Year**

LYRIC STREET

★★★★

The first thing you notice about SHEDAISY’s Christmas album is that it isn’t country. The popular sibling trio sounds more like Wilson Phillips than the Carter Sisters anyway, and always did – at least since 1989, when they were known as The Osborn Sisters and had their first record deal on RCA. But with *Brand New Year*, the Osborns make no pretense of incorporating even the vaguest of country signatures. This is a pop album, clear and simple.

But the real surprise is that *Brand New Year* is as sophisticated and as Hollywood as it is. Nothing on their debut album, *THE WHOLE SHEBANG*, hints at this kind of uptown versatility, although anyone who remembers their inventive rendition of “Deck The Halls” from last Christmas will know what to expect – lots of swirling, techno-beat, Euro-disco ambience and the occasional electronically altered vocal.

“Deck The Halls,” reprised here, originally was recorded for Disney’s animated family feature *Mickey’s Once Upon A Christmas*. Drawing on that tone for *Brand New Year*, SHEDAISY recasts several holiday classics (“Jingle Bells,” “Hark The Herald Angels Sing,” “Sleigh Ride”) into startlingly creative and highly orchestrated numbers. A couple of these, including Kristyn Osborn’s “Tinsel Town,” add overtly theatrical Disney moments, a la snippets of enormous choirs or children’s voices acting out dramatic scenes, such as opening a scary present.

A little of that celluloid sound goes a very long way, but mixed in are three more original songs co-written by Kristyn, including a duet between sister Cassidy and Gary LeVox of Rascal Flatts on “Twist Of The Magi,” a contemporary takeoff on the familiar O. Henry tale. There’s also a fetching jazz-tinged offering, “That’s What I Want For Christmas,” with a tastefully muted trumpet. The overall effect is something akin to Radio City Music Hall’s holiday extravaganza – big, undeniably uplifting and exceedingly produced.

Whether or not SHEDAISY is your cup of tea, *Brand New Year* should go a long way toward separating the Osborns from the inaccurate and often repeated slur that they’re little more than post-Dixie Chicks knockoffs. The complex vocal parts they demonstrate here prove they’re real musicians.

—Alanna Nash

**RICKY SKAGGS AND FRIENDS**

**Big Mon: The Songs Of Bill Monroe**

SKAGGS FAMILY

★★★★

Bill Monroe’s influence extended beyond the world of bluegrass, so it’s fitting that Ricky Skaggs, this project’s fulcrum, called on friends from country and rock to make *Big Mon*.

It’s equally appropriate, too, that 1985’s CMA Entertainer of the Year took the lead in assembling this celebration of Monroe’s music. A longtime friend of the Father of Bluegrass, it was Skaggs who put the master’s signature song, “Uncle Pen,” back at the top of the country charts in 1984. He also lured the legendary Monroe into a rare cameo appearance in the video for another No. 1 hit, “Country Boy,” more evidence of Skaggs’ ongoing commitment to preserving Monroe’s legacy.

With *Big Mon*, Skaggs has created an

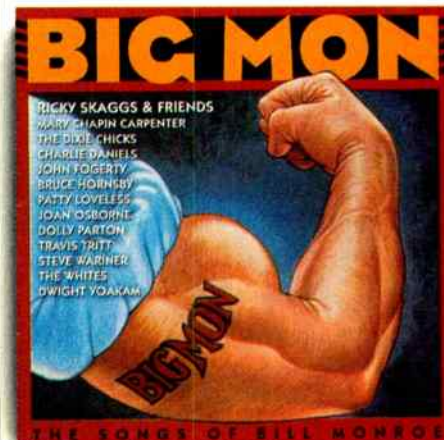
album that may provoke ire among bluegrass purists who want to keep Monroe’s music to themselves, but it should also serve to introduce it to listeners who might otherwise never discover its treasures. An omnibus project like this album is bound to have its ups and downs, but there is more of the former than the latter. Joan Osborne proves to be a surprisingly robust and sensitive foil to Skaggs on the mournful “On The Old Kentucky Shore,” and fans familiar only with Travis Tritt’s Southern rock-influenced country will hear another side of him (including a respectable banjo solo) on Monroe’s great “My Little Georgia Rose.”

The Dixie Chicks acquit themselves well on “Walk Softly On This Heart Of Mine,” as one would expect from a trio that includes two former bluegrassers, and The Whites recap one of their performance staples, “Used To Be.” Patty Loveless, Steve Wariner, Dwight Yoakam, Charlie Daniels and Dolly Parton all give spirited interpretations of songs written by or associated with Monroe.

Not all of the guests fare as well. John Fogerty’s mannered pronunciation undercuts an otherwise rockin’ version of “Blue Moon Of Kentucky,” and Mary Chapin Carpenter never gets the upper hand on “Blue Night.”

But all in all, *Big Mon* succeeds on its terms. If bluegrass purists blanch at the instrumentation (drums, piano and electric guitars all make appearances) and revamped chords, they would do well to recall Monroe’s words when Elvis apologized for the changes he’d made to “Blue Moon Of Kentucky.” “Why, if it helps you in your career, I’m for it one hundred percent,” the elder star told the young upstart. In this case, the assistance is to Monroe’s legacy. While it might not be necessary, it’s certainly a boost – and a fine, enjoyable album to boot.

—Jon Weisberger



TRENT SUMMAR

& THE NEW ROW MOB



TRENT SUMMAR AND THE NEW ROW MOB

Trent Summar And The New Row Mob

VFR

★★★★

Who'da thunk it? Twenty years down the pike, the mighty legacy left by country-punk pioneers Jason And The Scorchers is not only alive, but thriving in the best possible way. It's a pity more folks didn't pick up on that legendary outfit's simple down-

home schematics. That is, put a manic hill-billy-driven vocalist in front of a crafty, Duane Eddy-schooled guitarist, then sit back and watch the retro-sparked fireworks. What could be easier?

Thankfully, the lesson was not lost on punchy Trent Summar, every ounce the thick-drawled showman that Jason Ringenberg was and still is. Summar, backed by seasoned axemen Philip Wallace and Kenny Vaughan, is wonderfully exaggerated and outrageous, totally in touch with his inner Elvis. He's a rhinestone cowboy for the new millennium, and he keeps the Nudie-suit intensity at full throttle throughout his debut.

The only moment where Summar checks his animated attitude is on the gentle, loping version of Albert Hammond's 1972 pop hit "It Never Rains In Southern California," which is more midnight cowboy than rhinestone. The rest is pure Hank-inspired camp. *Metal, stone, glass and wood/I'd build a wall if I thought I could/Keep you outta my heart for good/Metal, stone, glass and wood*, goes one goofy chorus, and it shows that he can smartly spoof the purveyors of the historic craft he obviously loves.

Along those lines, when the Mob plays the "Get Out Of Denver"-ish "The Beat Don't Ever Stop," they don't attack it with the arena-rock precision of Bob Seger. Instead, they put it through its Dave Edmunds/rockabilly-purist paces (just like Edmunds did on his high-speed version of "Denver").

Summar knows his Nashville history. But he also kowtows to California in "Colene" and "Starletta," which recall The Blasters at their "Marie, Marie" finest. Never mind that he also dedicates a number to the legendary "Lookout Mountain," incorporating a reference to Tennessee's kitschy tourist destination Rock City.

Summar has actually recorded a statement of intent, a kind of credo, with the track "I'm Country." While Jerry Dale McFadden pounds away on his barroom piano keys, the singer defiantly bays, *I'm country, well I break beans/ That's right I'm country, if ya know what that means*. The track ends with a dog barking – exactly where any decent rhinestone cowboy worth his salt would end such a treatise. Summar is country, all right. You'd better believe it.

— Tom Lanham

A COUNTRYMUSIC EXCLUSIVE

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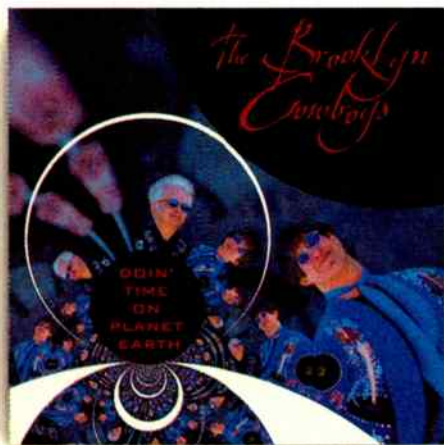
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**THE BROOKLYN COWBOYS**

**Doin' Time On Planet Earth**

LEAP

★★★★

Fans of the Flying Burrito Brothers, take note: There's a band out there that shares your soul.

The Brooklyn Cowboys, led by the irrepressible Walter Egan, have the '70s California country/rock sound locked down tight. And why shouldn't they?

An alumnus of the rock band Spirit, Egan had his own 1978 hit, "Magnet And Steel." He also co-wrote "Carolina Calypso" (which appears here) with Gram Parsons, and penned "Hearts Or Fire," which Parsons recorded with Emmylou Harris. Pedal steel guitarist Buddy Cage previously played for the New Riders Of The Purple Sage. Throw in the hip rhinestone jackets – and the fact that Al Perkins produced this record – and you've got a veritable West Coast revival, despite the band's New York origins.

With the underrated Joy Lynn White on harmony vocals and acoustic guitar, the repertoire falls neatly into two categories – swirling dancehall music and killer in-and-out-of-love ballads. "Juke Box Girl" and "Wishful Drinking" will inspire dreams of a sawdust floor, while "Hearts On Fire," which features White's plaintive vocals, recalls the Parsons/Harris collaborations.

Like Parsons, Egan doesn't smooth the edges off his tenor, and the addition of White's yearning soprano makes their entwined vocals a sweet sound, indeed. Unfortunately, White doesn't get a song of her own to show off her power, range and emotive talents. But there's enough rwang, whimsy and odes to honky-tonk misery to satisfy Parsons' grinning ghost.

Forgive the occasional bad line (*Learn how to love me/And velvet glove me*) and

the no-frills production. Just sit back, love it and raise a tall one to the time when country had an edge as hard as an ex-wife's heart.

—Alanna Nash

**JUDITH EDELMAN**

**Drama Queen**

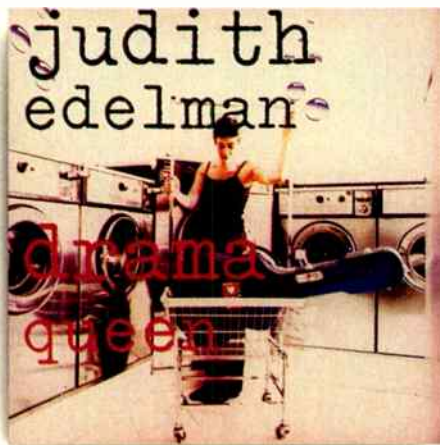
COMPASS RECORDS

★★★★

Years ago, Judith Edelman would have been classified a folk artist. Today she probably fits the Americana format. As a singer/songwriter, she pairs her literate, thoughtful lyrics with a feathery soprano reminiscent of Alison Krauss and Nanci Griffith. As co-producer of her albums, she turns her quiet melodies over to a top-rate clutch of bluegrass pickers (Darrell Scott, Tim O'Brien and Stuart Duncan) who, despite the addition of cello and bouzouki, give her songs a front-porch sensibility.

On *Drama Queen*, her third and best album, Edelman excels at starkly original portraits of everyday situations – dead-end jobs and relationships, small-town ennui and family get-togethers. But there are also far darker songs about abused children ("The Sisters Of St. Timothy's"), complacent marriages ("Good Day" and "There It Goes") and mental illness. At times, her minimalist lyrics are so abstract as to obscure their exact meaning ("Don't Open That Door"), but they also leave plenty of room for personal interpretation.

Edelman is among a handful of artists, from Kathy Mattea to the Dixie Chicks, who manage to expand the definitions of bluegrass, country and folk without taking anything away from those forms or watering them down. Her story songs may not revolve around the usual country themes in the primary way, but they address many of the same bedrock issues – family, romantic relationships, coming of age and love.



An oddly uplifting quality sneaks into Edelman's most sobering songs, attributable to her gift for making the ordinary into something worth our attention, for turning the personal into the universal. Her most straightforward song, the album-closing "Some Nights," is a short, poetic meditation on being daily felled by one's own demons and hoping to find the strength and love to face them head-on. Who among us, whether depressed in Des Moines or exuberant in Edina, can't relate to that?

—Alanna Nash

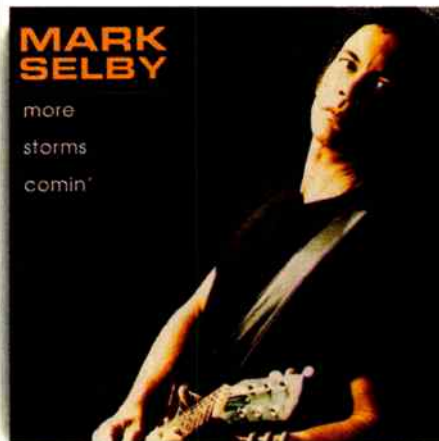
**MARK SELBY**

**More Storms Comin'**

VANGUARD

★★★★

It's a fairly well-kept secret that Nashville's talent pool is deeper and wider than the country mainstream. Case in point is Mark Selby. In addition to pen-



ning the breakthrough "There's Your Trouble" for the Dixie Chicks and cuts for Wynonna and Trisha Yearwood, Selby also has written a string of hits for blues rock star Kenny Wayne Shepherd. Chief among them is "Blue On Black," a No. 1 smash on rock radio in 1998. Selby has a degree in classical guitar and musical composition, and he's an accomplished pianist. He has an ocean of talent, if you will. Or maybe it's a river, perhaps even the mighty Mississippi. It's a blues thang, y'all.

For such an eclectic musical background, Selby's Vanguard debut, *More Storms Comin'*, is focused and cohesive. Here, he lays out a searing, gut-level collection of blues rock that flows from swampy to urban. While a thoroughly modern dialect carries his soulful lyrics and voice, there's an organic spirit that informs even the hardest-rocking numbers. An understated guitarist (the best always are),



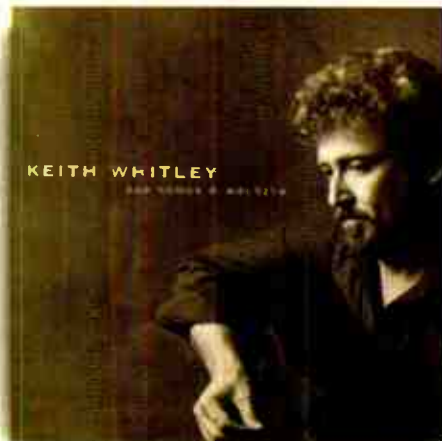
Selby's magic fingers coax emotion from every string, nuance from every note.

In "Don't You Throw That Mojo On Me," a greasy slide serves as a cozy, cotton-thicket mattress for a warning that a confined lover is breaking free. This song, as well as the languid "Blind Since Birth," sounds like it could have been written in the '20s by the progenitors of Southern Blues. "I'm The Lucky One" is a contemporary beauty declaring that luck brings love, not money. Although Selby flat-out rocks on "She's Like Mercury" and "Kink In The Chain," these tunes lose some of the personality of their acoustic counterparts. Still, whether he's rocking or rolling, *Storms* is a blast of fresh Southern air.

—Charlene A. Blevins

**KEITH WHITLEY**  
**Sad Songs And Waltzes**  
 ROUNDER

Keith Whitley's 1989 death from alcohol poisoning robbed country music of one of its vital young masters. At 33, he was just beginning to mature into greatness, following Lefty Frizzell and Merle Haggard as one of the supreme honky-tonk vocalists and interpreters.



In 1978, the Kentucky native had a stint with Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys behind him when he joined J.D. Crowe And The New South, ready to make the transition from bluegrass to country. Four years later, Crowe recorded *Somewhere Between*, the album that introduced Whitley as a full-fledged honky-tonk singer.

That album has long been unavailable, but in 1998 Crowe stripped off the majority of New South's original instrumentation and began remastering Whitley's affecting vocals backed by contem-

porary session musicians, including Alison Krauss and Diamond Rio's Gene Johnson.

*Sad Songs And Waltzes*, as the old-made-new album is now titled, also includes five additional performances — one originally omitted from the New South album and four produced after Whitley left Crowe's employ. Together, the tracks offer the work of some of country's most revered tunesmiths — Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Lefty Frizzell, Billy Joe Shaver and Whitey Shafer among them.

With the first notes of his version of Frizzell's classic "I Never Go Around Mirrors," Whitley proves himself to be intimate with the requisite pain every true honky-tonk king knows. Still, he was continuing to hone the fine points of his delivery when Crowe first brought him to the microphone.

Now it is Crowe who seems a tad deficient; the newer production could have been buffed up with more distinctive or passionate instrumental solos. But whether the producer was too mindful of detracting from Whitley's own eloquence, the cumulative effect adds up to an album that deftly showcases a singer that helps define the best of country music's astonishing history.

—Alanna Nash

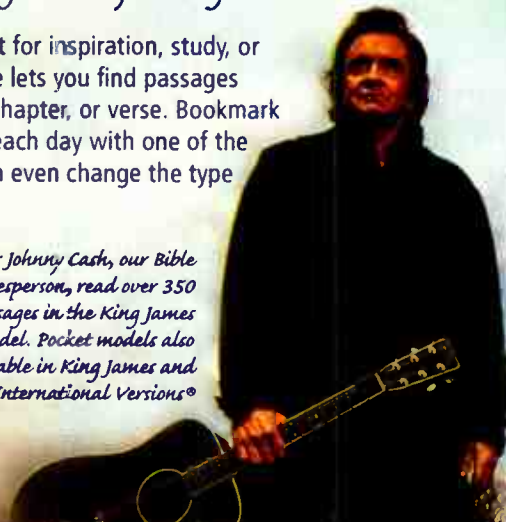
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# OFF THE CHARTS

## THE BUZZ AROUND THE MUSIC BIZ

### Nashville: A 25-Year Retrospective

The acclaimed Robert Altman film turns 25 and comes to DVD.

**W**hen Tom T. Hall first saw the 1975 movie *Nashville*, he described it as a work of “genius.” He also was a little embarrassed. “It was a little like getting back your wedding pictures and discovering you had your fly open during the ceremony,” Hall quipped.

Minnie Pearl, meanwhile, was dismayed on two levels. “I felt we were victims – it made us look like a bunch of freaks,” the late, great humorist said. “But I’m also sorry to say that a lot of it was true to life.”

*Nashville*, director Robert Altman’s epic satire of show business and politics, was based on a freewheeling plot in which a renegade presidential candidate comes to Music City to throw a fund-raising concert that featured singers who closely resembled Loretta Lynn and Hank Snow. Heralded as a masterpiece of cinematic tapestry, it remains, in the words of film critic Jim Emerson, “the closest thing to the Platonic ideal of the ‘Great American Movie’ since *Citizen Kane*.”

This year the classic film celebrates its 25th anniversary, a passing that hasn’t gone unnoticed. Various salutes ranged from a star-studded screening at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to a new book, *The Nashville Chronicles: The Making Of Robert Altman’s Masterpiece*, and a DVD rerelease.

But how does the movie’s portrayal of Music City stack up against modern Nashville? Were Altman and his screenwriter, Joan Tewkesbury, prescient about the future, or had they simply lampooned a moment in time?

When journalist Ray Sawhill visited Nashville for the first time some years after seeing the movie, he was “thunderstruck by how little the film had



Jeff Goldblum was one of the stars in the 1975 film that put Nashville on the Hollywood map – for better or worse.

MOVIE STAR NEWS

exaggerated. There was no escaping the bad middle-range singers, the bored backup musicians, the terrifying big hair, the Goo-Goo candy bars.”

Today, however, the bad middle-range singers no longer get recording contracts, the hair is neither big nor terrifying, and the Goo-Goo candy bars still taste pretty darn good. But what the movie – and presumably Sawhill – missed, in Hall’s view, “is how tremendously wealthy and ridiculously powerful some of the people in Nashville are, [how] well informed, well educated and highly aristocratic. But we’re all in there – with our hero worship, our illusions of literacy, creativity. Altman just devastated the hope we had that there’s a meaning to it all.”

The new mantra of modern day Nashville isn’t meaning, it’s marketing. In that sense, a great deal has changed since the movie’s original release. “Country stars are symbolic ordinary figures,” the critic Pauline Kael wrote in her 1975 *New Yorker* review of the film. Twenty-five years later, it’s still true about such stars as Alan Jackson and George Strait, and less so about Shania Twain and Garth Brooks.

Most of the songs on the movie’s vibrant soundtrack are so solidly country as to seem to be parodies (Ronee Blakely’s “Tapedeck In His Tractor”), and none of them would get on country radio today. Yet the California-country-folk song that won an Academy Award – Keith Carradine’s “I’m Easy” – could make it onto just about any album currently coming out of Music Row.

Altman’s *Nashville* was about a nation trying to recover from an emotional meltdown following the Vietnam War and the resignation of President Richard Nixon. Today, the city of Nashville is undergoing a different kind of nervous breakdown, one that teeters between sentimental devotion to its rural authenticity (i.e., “country music”) and an allegiance to the corporate dollar that only slick packaging (i.e., “pop music”) can provide. Behind its relaxed “just-folks” demeanor, Nashville doesn’t really want to be Nashville anymore. After its long-ago brush with Hollywood, it aspires to be L.A.

— Alanna Nash

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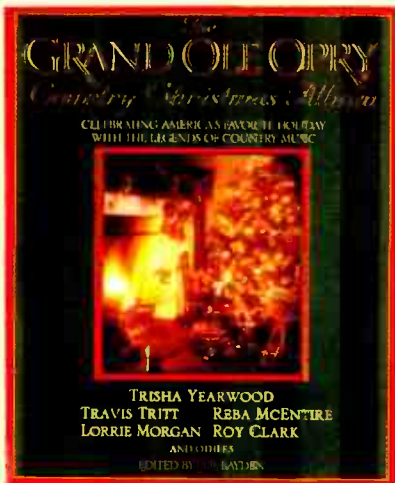
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World Radio History

# Book Beat



## *The Grand Ole Opry Country Christmas Album*

Edited by Joe Layden (Berkley Boulevard Books, \$22.95)

Did you know that Santa carries a cell phone? That's what Reba McEntire told her young son Shelby when he spotted a toy tractor-trailer during a last-minute Christmas Eve trip to the toy store in Aspen, Colo.

Shelby was four at the time, and he fell in love with the miniature metal truck as soon as he saw it. After persuading him to leave the store, some last minute arrangements with the North Pole were made via Reba's cell phone, and the next morning a wide-eyed Shelby found his special present under the tree.

Reba's enchanting tale is just one of 40 holiday memories as related by *Grand Ole Opry* stars and future inductees. Stars ranging from Diamond Rio, The Judds and Bashful Brother Oswald to Brad Paisley and Chely Wright offer their personal Christmas memories in this engaging book.

## *The Stars That Shine*

By Julie Clay, Illustrated by Dan Andreasen (Simon & Schuster \$24.95)

It may not be a coincidence that Willie Nelson's latest album is called *Milk Cow Blues*. According to author Julie Clay – the daughter of Brenda Lee – Willie became so attached to his calf, Butch, that when it came time to sell him at a local fair, he

literally put a bee in Butch's bonnet so no one would buy him. The ruse worked, and Willie and Butch remained friends for many years.

Willie's tale is just one of many children's stories in *The Stars That Shine* that are inspired by some of the biggest names in country music. You can read about Tim McGraw's scary adventure "The Ghost Of Bayou Bleu"; LeAnn Rimes' dancing dog in "Dreams"; and other contributions from Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Vince Gill and others.

Dan Andreasen's entertaining illustrations, plus childhood photos of the stars themselves, make this an ideal Christmas gift for kids of all ages who love bedtime stories.

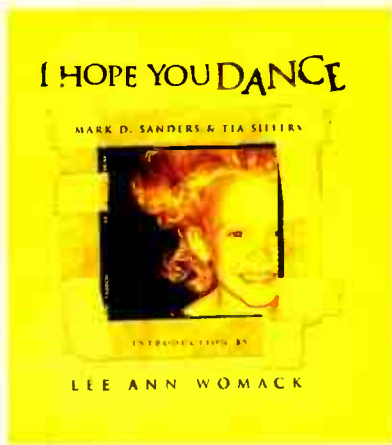
## *I Hope You Dance*

Mark D. Sanders and Tia Sillers (Rutledge Hill Press, \$13.99)

The smash Lee Ann Womack hit from earlier this year inspired young and old alike, and now you can enjoy "I Hope You Dance" in the form of an illustrated picture book. The authors, who also happen to be the songwriters of the chart-topping song, take lyrical excerpts and embellish them with additional prose.

The handsome layout and colorful photographs are complemented by a special bonus: a CD featuring Womack herself singing a stripped-down version of "I Hope You Dance." Just the right thing to make you feel warm and fuzzy all over.

— Kristin Russell



# Mixed Ratings

The true shelf life of country's leading awards.

As any award-winning artist will testify, the benefits of a top music award can be reaped for years. But how do the trophies themselves stand the test of time?

According to several award winners, these cherished constructions of glass, metal and plastic are like facelifts: Some hold up better than others. A few award winners agreed to comment anonymously on how well the highly touted trophies stand the rigors of time. Here's what they told us:

**The CMA Award:** "We call this one the elephant suppository," one country performer told us. "The cone-shaped piece of glass is like a foot tall and hollow inside. It's suitable perhaps for a terrarium – maybe with little ferns and a turtle. I saw one at Buck Owens' house that was older and made of wood and brass. It looked much better."

Another winner added, "The crystal CMA I have is pretty nice, but there is something nostalgic about the wood ones they used to make. Crystal Gayle has one in her shop called Crystals. That's the only wooden one I've seen on display anywhere."

**The ACM Award:** "My favorite door-stop award," cracked one winner. "The chrome plate is corroding and bubbling off the bottom while the pig iron – or whatever cheap metal they use to produce it – shaped like guitars on either side, is all coming apart. The hats have started to come loose, and it spins around. What a piece of #@\$. ."

Another expert concurred, "I have to say this is the most hideous looking award of them all. I keep it on my piano, but it really is tacky looking. Mine hasn't fallen apart or anything yet, but it is an odd-looking thing."

**The Grammy Award:** "There is nothing bad to say about the Grammy," said one happy winner, "except that



## Hollywood's new diet phenomenon

# Lose up to 10 lbs this weekend!

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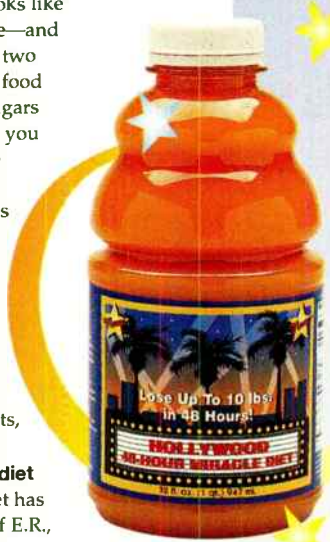
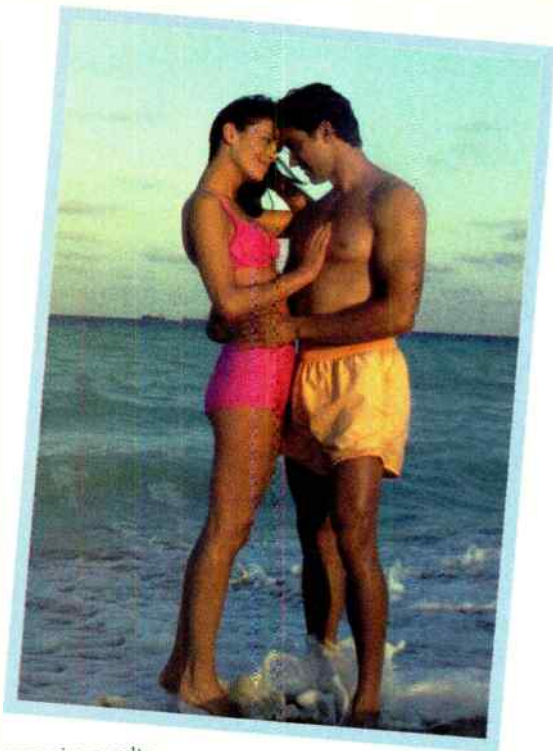
by Pete Johnson

**H**ow often have you wasted precious time and money trying to lose weight? Let's see...I've tried every quick-fix, fad diet known to man...even tried the ones where you buy the pre-packaged food. They all seem to take months to show any results... and by that time my motivation is gone! Even straight fasting didn't work for me. Then I read about the Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet and decided to try it—I had nothing to lose but weight—and I did!

**The skinny.** James Kabler, world famous for his phenomenally successful Six Day Bio Diet, has now launched the faster and easier Miracle Diet. The Hollywood 48-Hour Miracle Diet is a special formulation of all-natural juices and botanical extracts so it looks like an ordinary bottle of juice—and works like a miracle! For two days you give up all bad food habits. In place of fats, sugars and artificial ingredients, you flood your body with the vitamins, minerals and essential oils found in this amazing juice. Just mix half of it with an equal amount of cold water and sip it throughout the day. It's so easy. There's no measuring or combining foods, no counting calories or points, no hassle. It's that easy.

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cleansing ingredients that detoxify and rejuvenate your body, while you shed pounds. And it supplies more than 100% of the U.S.R.D.A. of 12 essential vitamins in every serving. **And it's clinically proven.** Tested by an independent lab, this remarkable diet produced impressive results. A clinical trial involving 10 volunteers found that subjects lost an average of 4% of their initial body weight and noted "obvious results"



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World Radio History

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it's too big to wear around your neck."

**The Nashville Music Association Award:** "My favorite award to use as a weapon," comments one wary victor. "This thing is a hazard! An N-shaped piece of rusted metal tubing? You could put an eye out really easily! I keep this one away from my kids."

**Gold and Platinum album awards:** "A real thrill to get and give until you realize the cost comes out of your pocket," says one multiplatinum artist. "After a while, they're fame without fortune. I can't even look at mine anymore."

Another big-selling artist adds, "I have a few gold and platinum plaques hanging in my basement office. I'm not big on hanging them all in one place; we kind of spread them out

around the house. The label gives one to you, then you have to pay for the ones you give to other people who have helped you. The main problem with them is that sometimes the discs slip out of their mounting and fall to the bottom of the frame. Then you have to take the whole thing apart and repair it. It's kind of embarrassing to give a gift like this and have it just break."

A different artist says, "I keep all my plaques in one office. It feels obnoxious to have them anywhere else in the house. Keeping them where I work keeps me motivated."

However, when it comes to awards, a winner must find somewhere to keep

them. Most organizations stipulate that the awards can't be sold or given away. "I think it is actually illegal to sell your award, although I know a few people who have," says one artist. "The membership rules of some of these organizations say that if they catch you selling it they can confiscate it. But the awards can hold a lot of emotion and memories for people. I think if a band breaks up or fires you, you associate that bad feeling with the award itself and you just want to get rid of it."

So, what to do? One artist suggests a novel resting place.

"I'm going to buy some of that short, white gardening fencing and plant them in my yard," said one

of our wags. "It'll be my little trophy garden."



## On the Air and Around the World

The fact that the *Grand Ole Opry* is celebrating its 75th birthday has been trumpeted to the four corners of the earth, but fiddler "Uncle" Jimmy Thompson wouldn't have launched the longest-running radio show in the U.S. on November 28, 1925, if it weren't for WSM.

Established on the AM radio dial at 650 on October 5, 1925, "The Air Castle Of The South" began life as a 1,000-watt station located at the corner of Seventh Avenue North and Union Street in downtown Nashville. Its importance as the cornerstone of what eventually evolved into the country music industry was quickly established, as WSM became a magnet for attracting artists and administrators to Music City.

"There would be no Nashville music industry without WSM," declares current WSM program director Kyle Cantrell.

Initially owned by the National Life And Accident Insurance Company — the station's call letters stood for their slogan "We Shield Millions" — WSM recruited the artistic and executive know-how that eventually transformed the city into the center of the country music industry universe.



"National Life purposely recruited top-drawer talent because they wanted WSM to be as good a station as it could be," Cantrell says. "The fact that the station brought all these people to town turned out to be really important for the city of Nashville."

For the artists such as Uncle Dave Macon and the Gully Jumpers, the *Grand Ole Opry*, under the tutelage of George D. Hay, gave them national recognition. Supporting musicians also found employment because of WSM's round-the-clock live programming. The station's engineers opened the city's first recording studio, and its executives founded Nashville's first booking agency. *Opry* star Roy Acuff

and WSM executive Fred Rose teamed to form Music City's first music publishing company, Acuff-Rose Publishing, and WSM announcer David Cobb first pegged Nashville as Music City U.S.A.

Dial up WSM today and you'll find a healthy balance between old and new. WSM-FM is a modern country radio station that concentrates on playing today's hits. On the other hand, WSM-AM is a throwback to an earlier age; its on-air hosts are country historians with folksy personalities and conspicuous Southern accents, and they play songs that draw from the entire history of country music. A listener is as likely to hear Bob Wills, Flatt & Scruggs or Tammy Wynette as Garth Brooks, Pam Tillis or Chely Wright.

"The FM station is where we compete in the modern music industry," Cantrell says. "WSM-AM we run from our heart. We feel it's the station of record for the entire community of country music in America. It's where we embrace as much of the music as we can, through all the facets of its history."

For further information, check out [www.wsmonline.com](http://www.wsmonline.com).

— Michael McCall

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- 15 PHILADELPHIA, MS  
Silver Star Casino
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### January

- 20 WARSAW, IN  
Wagon Wheel Theatre

### RHETT AKINS

- December
- 1 TAMPA, FL  
Tampa Conv. Ctr.
  - 31 DALLAS, TX  
Country 2000

### ALABAMA

- December
- 1 TUNICA, MS  
Grand Casino Tunica
  - 8 HERSHEY, PA  
Hersheypark Arena
  - 14 MT. PLEASANT, MI  
Soaring Eagle Casino

### GARY ALLAN

- December
- 31 DALLAS, TX  
Cowboys Red River

### BILL ANDERSON

- December
- 2-9 MIAMI, FL  
Carnival Cruise

### JOHN ANDERSON

- December
- 9 WILTON, IN  
Old Milton School

### ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

- December
- 9 COLORADO SPRINGS, CO  
Broadmoor Hotel

### January

- 7-14 MIAMI, FL  
Sandy Beaches Cruise
- 19 WASHINGTON, DC  
Marriott Wardman Park Hotel

### BELLAMY BROTHERS

- December
- 8-9 SCOTTSDALE, AZ  
Casino Arizona At Salt River
  - 16 VICTORIA, TX  
Community Ctr.

### JOHN HERRY

- December
- 1 ALTOONA, PA  
Jaffa Mosque
  - 2 UNCASVILLE, CT  
Mihigan Sun Casino
  - 3 NORFOLK, VA  
Naval Base
  - 4 ANNAPOLIS, MD  
Ramshead

- 6 ALEXANDRIA, VA  
The Birchmere
- 12 MACON, GA  
Grand Opera House
- 13 ASHLAND, KY  
Paramount Arts Ctr.
- 14-16 ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Millennium Th. @ Gold Strike Casino
- 17 HATTIESBURG, MS  
Multi Purpose Ctr.
- 19 LEXINGTON, KY  
Kentucky Theatre
- 20 SUTTSBAY, MI  
Leelanau Sands Casino
- 31 DWENSBORO, KY  
Executive Inn

### CLINT BLACK

- December
- 7-9 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Las Vegas Hilton

### BLACKHAWK

- January
- 6-13 MIAMI, FL  
Caribbean Cruise

### CHAD BROCK

- December
- 10 GALESBURG, IL  
Orpheum Theatre

### LISA BROKOP

- January
- 16 FORT FRANCIS, ONT., CANADA  
DNT, CANADA High School
  - 17 ATITOKAN, ONT., CANADA  
ATITOKAN, ONT., CANADA High School
  - 18 DRYDEN, ONT., CANADA  
High School
  - 25 BRAMPTON, ONT., CANADA  
Heritage Theatre
  - 27 NORTH BAY, ONT., CANADA  
Capitol Centre

### BROOKS & DUNN

- December
- 4-6 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Las Vegas Hilton

### TRACY BYRD

- December
- 11 IRVINE, CA  
Crazyhorse Saloon
  - 12 ESCONDIDO, CA  
California Ctr.
  - 13 BAKERSFIELD, CA  
Crystal Palace

MIKE SPREIBING



Brooks & Dunn

### January

- 19 KENNESAW, GA  
Cowboys
- 20 TAMPA, FL  
The Round-Up

### CONFEDERATE RAILROAD

- December
- 2 CDLUMBIA, SC  
Palomino

### CHARLIE DANIELS

- December
- 1-2 CHEROKEE, NC  
Harrah's
  - 8-10 HARRIS, MI  
Chip In's Island

### DIAMOND RIO

- December
- 9 WISCONSIN DELLS, WI  
Crystal Grand Theatre

### JOE DIFFIE

- December
- 16 CDLLEGE STATION, TX  
Texas Hall Of Fame

### EXILE

- December
- 1 CHATTANOOGA, TN  
Soldiers Auditorium
  - 2 FAYETTEVILLE, NC  
Cumberland Co. Civic Ctr.
  - 7 COVINGTON, KY  
North Kentucky Conv. Ctr.
  - 31 GATLINBURG, TN  
Park Vista Hotel

### RICKY LYNN GRIBGG

- December
- 1-3 VICKSBURG, MS  
Ameristar Casino
  - 5-9 BILOXI, MS  
Treasure Bay Casino
  - 12-16 BILOXI, MS  
Treasure Bay Casino

### WADE HAYES

- February
- 19 KESHENA, WI  
Menominee Casino

### ERIC HEATHERLY

- December
- 1 W. VALLEY CITY, UT  
Westerner Club
  - 2 LOVELAND, CO  
White Buffalo



MORRISON/WULFRAAT

Ty Herndon

### TY HERNDON

- December
- 1-6 SPARKS, NV  
John Ascuaga's Nugget

### January

- 6-13 MIAMI, FL  
Norwegian Cruise Lines
- 26 KENAI, AK  
Kenai High School
- 27 ANCHORAGE, AK  
Egan Civic & Conv. Ctr.

### TOBY KEITH

- December
- 1-2 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Boulder Station Hotel

### SAMMY KERSHAW

- December
- 12/2 BAY ST. LOUIS, MS  
Casino Magle

### TRACY LAWRENCE

- December
- 1-3 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Sam's Town Casino

### BRENDA LEE

- December
- 9 AURORA, IL  
Paramount Arts Ctr.

### CHRIS LEDOUX

- December
- 6-8 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Silverton Casino

### LORETTA LYNN

- December
- 15 CHEROKEE, NC  
Harrah's

### KATHY MATTEA

- December
- 2 SCRANTON, PA  
Scranton Cultural Ctr.
  - 14 NORMAL, IL  
Braden Auditorium
  - 17 ORONO, ME  
Maine Ctr.
  - 19 MILBURN, NJ  
Papermill Playhouse
  - 20 SCHENECTADY, NY  
Proctor's Theatre

### MARTINA MCBRIDE

- December
- 1-2 ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Horseshoe Casino



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## On the Road Again...



Oak Ridge Boys

LEBA GILSON

### NEAL MCCOY

December

- 8 MARKSVILLE, LA  
Grand Casino Avoyelles
- 9 ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Sam's Town
- 31 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Sam's Town Casino

### LORRIE MORGAN

December

- 1-3 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Orleans Casino
- 6 RENO, NV  
Reno Hilton
- 8 OROVILLE, CA  
Feather Falls Casino
- 9 HANFORD, CA  
Fox Theatre
- 13 ANAHEIM, CA  
Sun Theatre

### GARY MORRIS

December

- 8 DENVER, CO  
Paramount Theatre

### 9 LOGAN, UT

- Ellen Eccles Theatre
- 15 ABILENE, TX  
Abilene Civic Ctr.
- 16 AUSTIN, TX

January

- 27 CERRITOS, CA  
Cerritos Ctr.

### ANNE MURRAY

December

- 1 VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA  
Orpheum Theatre
- 3 KELOWNA, BC, CANADA  
Skyre-ich Place
- 6 WINNIPEG, MAN., CANADA  
Centennial Concert Hall
- 8 EDMONTON, ALB., CANADA  
Francis Winsper Centre For Music
- 12 CALGARY, ALB., CANADA  
Jubilee Auditorium

### 13 SASKATOON, SASK., CANADA

- Centennial Hall
- 16 OTTAWA, ONT., CANADA  
National Arts Centre
- 19 HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA  
Hamilton Place Theatre
- 20 KITCHENER, ONT., CANADA  
Centre In The Square

### OAK RIDGE BOYS

December

- 1 ST. CHARLES, MO  
Family Arena
- 2 BRANSON, MO  
Grand Palace
- 5 MILWAUKEE, WI  
Potawatomi Casino
- 6 BRANSON, MO  
Grand Palace
- 8 OWENSBORO, KY  
Executive Inn
- 9 BRANSON, MO  
Grand Palace
- 10 MERRILLVILLE, IN  
Star Plaza Theatre
- 11 NEENAH, WI  
Pickard Theatre
- 13 BRANSON, MO  
Grand Palace
- 14-16 ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Sam's Town

### 20 LAKELAND, FL

- Lakeland Ctr.
- 21 CLEARWATER, FL  
Ruth Eckerd Hall
- 22 SARASOTA, FL  
Van Wezel Perf. Arts Hall
- 23 MELBOURNE, FL  
Maxwell C. King Ctr.

### 28-31 COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA

- Harvey's Casino

### BRAD PAISLEY

December

- 2 HANFORD, CA  
Fox Theatre

January

- 12 VERONA, NY  
Turning Stone Casino
- 19 BILOXI, MS  
Grand Theatre
- 20 ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Grand Casino

### EDDY RAVEN

December

- 2 EUSTIS, FL  
Florida Sunshine Opry

### 8-9 TUNICA, MS

Hollywood Casino

### RICOCHET

December

1-10

- LAS VEGAS, NV  
Rio Hotel / Casino

### JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ

December

- 18 MIDLAND, TX

### BILLY JOE ROYAL

December

- 2 MILTON, IN  
Old Milton School
- 8-9 ROBINSONVILLE, MS  
Bally's

### SAWYER BROWN

December

- 8 ROCHESTER, MN  
Mayo Civic Ctr.
- 9 SIOUX FALLS, SD  
Sioux Falls Arena
- 13 SAULT STE. MARIE, MI  
Vegas Kewadin Casino
- 15 MAHONOMEN, MN  
Shooting Star Casino
- 17 MERRILLVILLE, IN  
Star Plaza Theatre
- 21 CERRITOS, CA  
Cerritos Ctr.
- 22 PHOENIX, AZ  
Celebrity Theatre

### SHENANDOAH

December

- 12 ARLINGTON, TX  
Arlington Conv. Ctr.
- 16-17 CYPRESS GARDENS, FL  
Cypress Gardens

### DARYLE SINGLETARY

December

- 1-3 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Gilley's

### RICKY SKAGGS

December

- 9 HORTON, KS  
Golden Eagle Casino

### PAM TILLIS

December

- 1-3 BRANSON, MO  
Mel Tillis Theater
- 5-10 BRANSON, MO  
Mel Tillis Theater
- 12-15 BRANSON, MO  
Mel Tillis Theater

### TANYA TUCKER

December

- 6 IRVINE, CA  
Crazyhorse Saloon
- 7-9 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Orleans Casino
- 31 JACKSON, CA  
Jackson Rancheria Casino

### CLAY WALKER

December

- 1 OTTAWA, ONT., CANADA  
Ottawa Civic Ctr.
- 2 HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA  
Copps Coliseum

### GENE WATSON

December

- 22 FORT WORTH, TX  
Billy Bob's

### BRYAN WHITE

December

- 3 ST. MICHAEL, ND  
Splitf Lake Casino
- 9 ENID, OK  
Chisholm Trail Coliseum
- 11 TAMPA, FL  
USF Sun Dome

### 12 ORLANDO, FL

- Univ. Of Central Florida
- 13 WEST PALM BEACH, FL  
Mars Music Amph.
- 14 DAVIE, FL  
Davie Rodeo Arena
- 15 FORT MYERS, FL  
Lee County Civic Ctr.

### HANK WILLIAMS JR.

December

- 7 COLLEGE STATION, TX  
Shadow Canyon
- 8 WACO, TX  
Melody Ranch
- 9 FORT WORTH, TX

### MARK WILLS

December

- 6 BAKERSFIELD, CA  
Crystal Palace
- 9 LAS VEGAS, NV  
Boulder Station Hotel

### CHELY WRIGHT

December

- 1 ALPINE, CA  
Viejas Casino

### WYNONNA

December

- 11 OMAHA, NE  
Omaha Civic Auditorium



TAMARA VAN WINKLE

### YANKEE GREY

December

- 1 EARTH CITY, MO  
In Cahoots
- 2 WICHITA, KS  
In Cahoots
- 12-13 KESHENA, WI  
Menominee Casino

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World Radio History

# Guitar Slingin' & Light Hangin'

**Anita Cochran ventures into hazardous country to comment on high heels, tattoos and her favorite TV Duke.**

**A**nita Cochran is perpetually pressed for time. “You would just laugh if you looked at my schedule right now,” she says. “Or maybe you’d cry!” Anita is in a time bind because she’s one of those people who has a lot of slashes: She’s a singer/multi-instrumentalist/producer/songwriter, and now she’s branching out even further into

acting (she recently appeared in the CBS made-for-TV movie *Hazzard In Hollywood*). Her latest album, *Anita*, spawned the single “You With Me,” which can sit proudly beside her smash 1998 duet with Steve Wariner, “What If I Said.” She is definitely a lady on the go. But Anita recently took a few minutes to answer some pressing questions.

**What’s your favorite Christmas activity?** Hanging up Christmas lights. I go all out, hanging lights on all the trees outside. I really enjoy the whole decorating aspect of Christmas.

**You recently bought a farm. Do you farm anything?** So far, I don’t farm anything. I’d actually call it more of a ranch. I grew up on a farm, so it’s nice to have some land to go play on. Right now, I have two dogs, so I guess I’m a dog farmer. They’re growing like weeds!

**Does it bother you to wear high heels?** I wear cowboy boots almost every day. But if the occasion calls for them, I will wear high heels. Heels don’t seem to bother me as much as they bother some people. I have a high arch to my foot, so maybe my feet are built for boots and high heels.

**Which would you rather read: a book, a magazine or a newspaper?** Probably a magazine. Usually, that’s what I have time to read. It’s easy to pick up when you’re in the airport. I haven’t had much time to read books lately, so it’s hard to keep up with that kind of reading. Magazines are just easier.

**How do you feel about flying?** I’m not a big fan. I’d rather take a bus any day.

**Will you go out of your way to avoid flying?** Yeah. For instance, if I’m going from Nashville to Michigan to see my parents, even though it takes more time, I’ll drive rather than fly. I have to fly so much with my career, I feel like if I fly any more than necessary, something might happen. Like the law of averages is against me. And I’ve gotta tell you, in the last six months, it seems like almost every flight I’ve been on, there’s been something wrong or a delay. Spending time waiting in the airport is not my favorite thing to do.

**You were recently in the new Dukes Of Hazzard television movie. Who’s sexier, Bo or Luke?** Well, I spent more time

with Luke because I was the “love interest” for him. But I guess growing up, I always had a crush on Bo. Tom Wopat would get mad at me for saying that. Tom is just great to work with, he’s the best. But I’ll tell you what, when you meet them, they’re both pretty good-looking!

**Let’s do some word association. What do you think of first when I say: Reindeer?** Santa. **Sunday?** Church. **The Grinch?** Christmas. **Reba?** Great. **Birthday?** Old!

**How do you like performing without your guitar?** It’s OK. People ask me, which do I like better: with or without the guitar? I started playing guitar and singing at the same time, so to me, they are like one. Occasionally, I will do a song or two without the guitar, but it’s like my other half. If it’s a ballad, I prefer to do it without the guitar. When you have a piece of musical equipment

strapped on, it’s hard to emote and your stage movements are restricted. With the cord attached like it is, it’s almost like a leash sometimes.

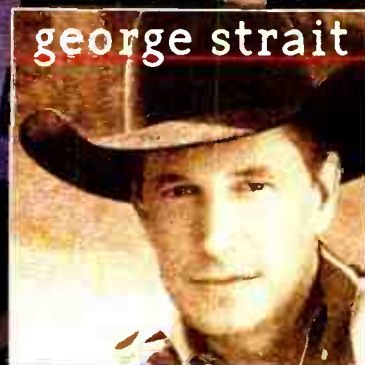
**Speaking of leashes, do you like big dogs or small dogs?** Well, I have a big dog [a border collie] and a small dog [a sheltie]. I love them both. If I were home more often, I’d have as many dogs as I could. I’m a dog lover; I love all kinds. Smaller dogs are easier, though.

**Which food will you absolutely not eat?** Liver. I’m not a picky eater, but liver is something I will not eat.

**Would you ever get a tattoo?** I don’t have one, and I’ve never really seriously considered getting one. It would be my luck that I’d get something stupid put on that I would hate five years from now. I’m very cautious and like to think ahead, so I’d just worry that I’d get the wrong thing. And tattoos are permanent.



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