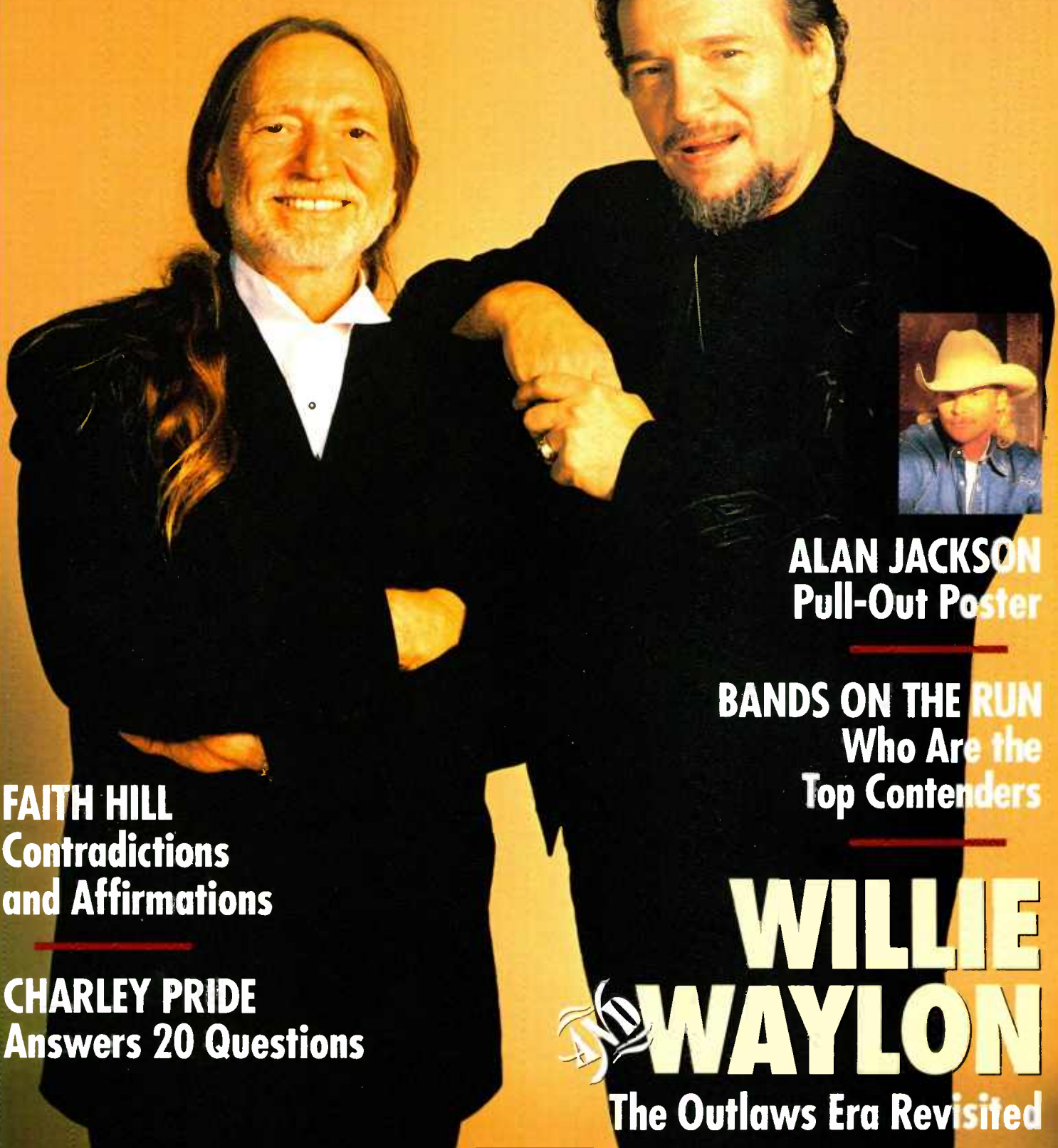


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# COUNTRYMUSIC



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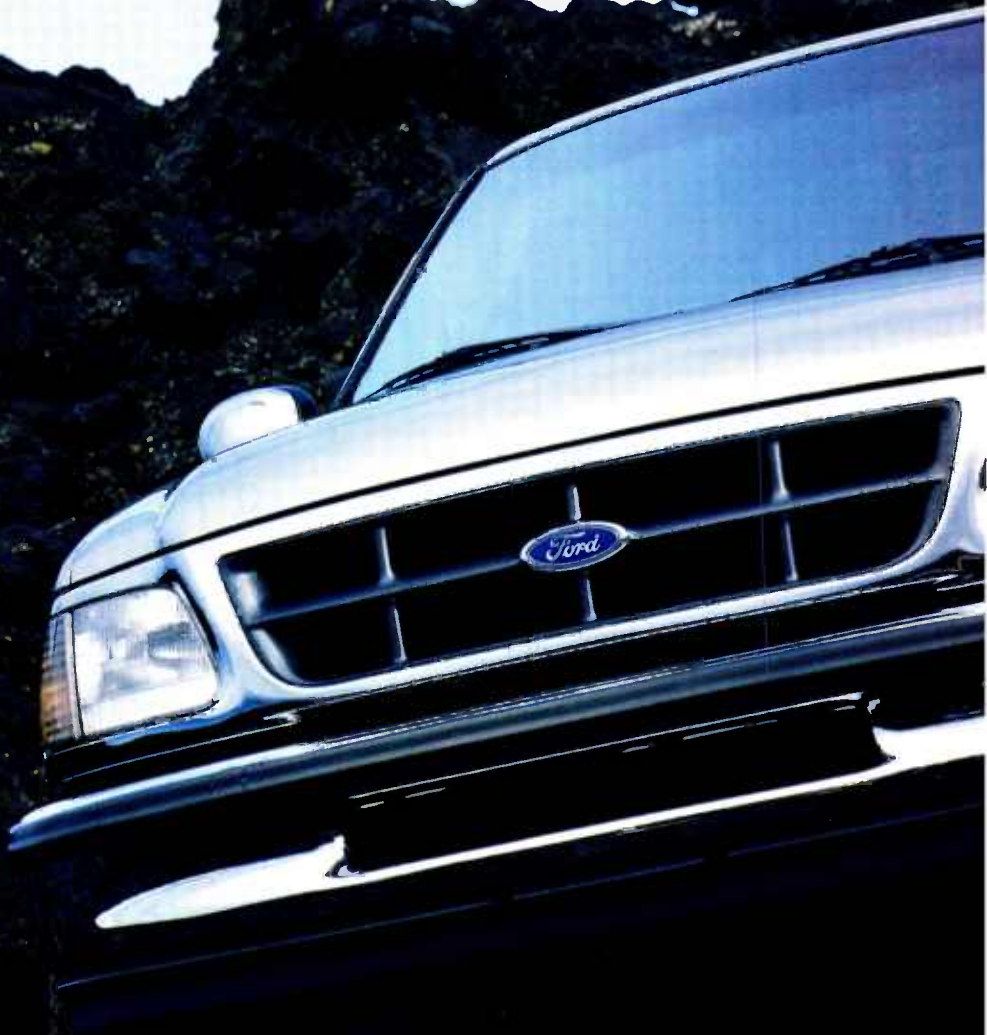
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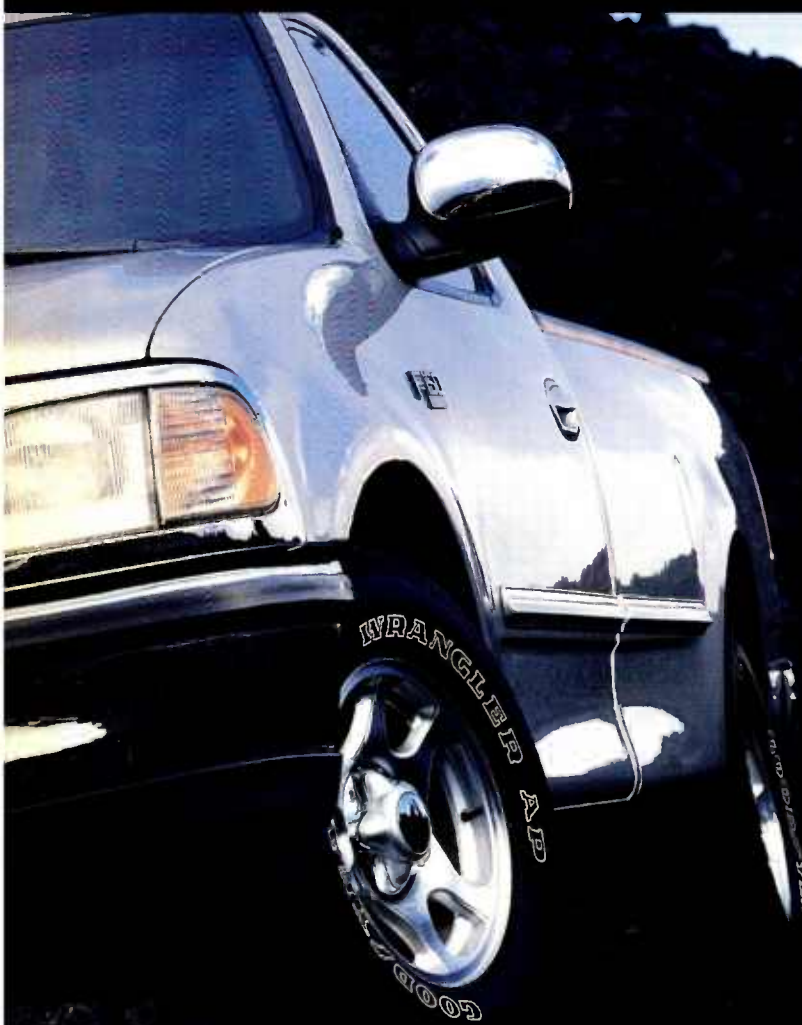
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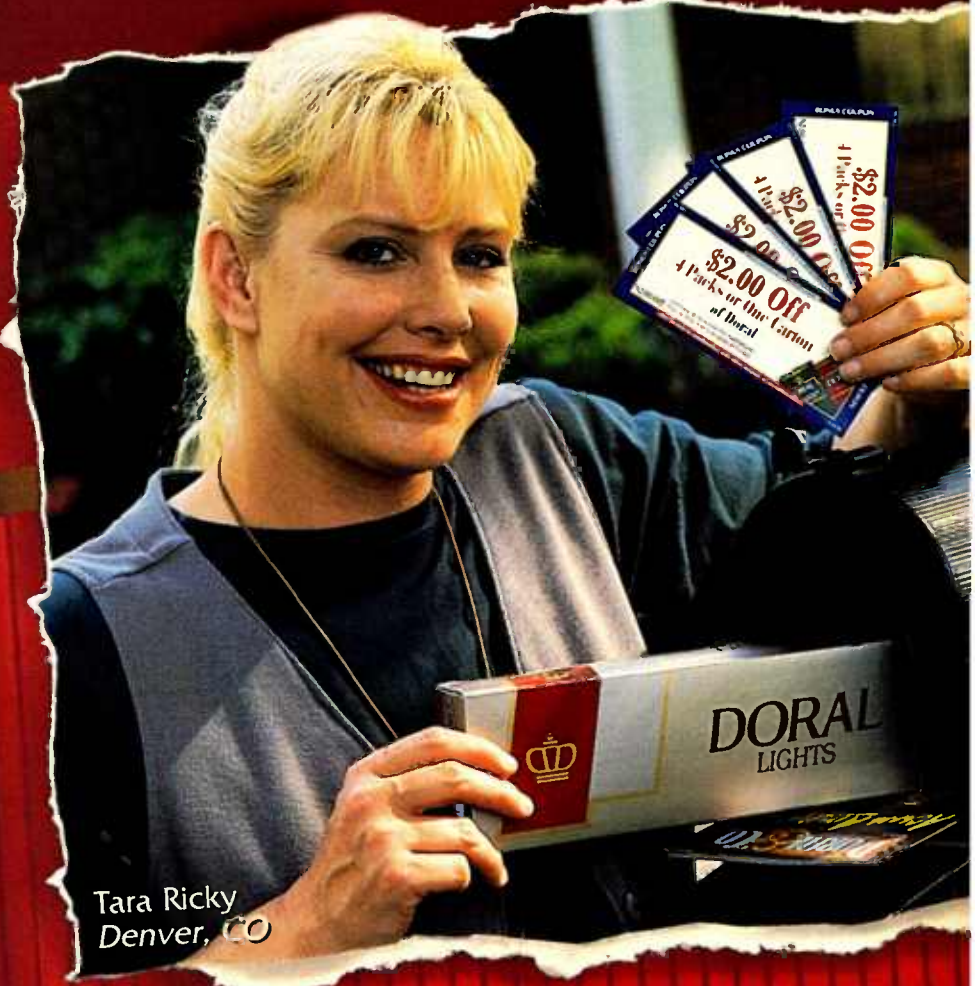
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# COUNTRY MUSIC



## FEATURES

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The photos and the updated facts on Alan Jackson—everything from family members to awards to favorite foods and TV shows.

### 40 Faith Hill: Contradictions and Affirmations *by Geoffrey Himes*

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### 43 Bands On the Run *by Bob Millard*

In this issue we take a look at ten bands who are breaking through the charts in the mid-90's. Names like Boy Howdy, Confederate Railroad, Frazier River, Lonestar, Smokin' Armadillos, BlackHawk, Ricochet, 4 Runner, The Tractors and Perfect Stranger are on the list. Will there ever be another Alabama? One time and record sales will tell.

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Charley's been singing country music for 30 years. He's got a theater in Branson, and he's still selling out crowds here and abroad.



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In 1976 *Wanted: The Outlaws* by Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Tompall Glaser and Jessi Colter was the first album in country music to achieve multi-platinum certification. For its 20th anniversary, it's out again with one new and 11 "lost" tracks. Patrick Carr caught up with Waylon, Willie and Jessi in New York to get their take on the history, the music and the creative revolution that changed the face of country music.

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It's the Opry for Steve Wariner, the road for Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, and a banner day for Terri Clark. Merle Haggard comes to New York, Wynonna goes Number One and Vince Gill duets with Jimmy Dickens. Plus, parties and more parties for Hazel, a final farewell to Patsy Montana and Walter Hyatt, and more.

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*by Patrick Carr*  
A CD gives Patrick goosebumps.





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# People

## 72ND MEMBER

**Steve Wariner** was named the 72nd member of the Grand Ole Opry on May 11th. The Indiana native had wanted for so long to be an Opry member. Great guitar player, singer and songwriter, Wariner was the happiest man in all of Tennessee. A few, including myself, were privy to the induction ahead of time. 'Course we were sworn to secrecy because Steve wanted to be the one who told his equally proud parents, who now reside in Kentucky.

## OUTLAWS RIDE AGAIN

When **Jessi Colter** called me from the *Live with Regis & Kathie Lee* set in New York City, I was still in bed. After all, it was 7 A.M. in Hillbillytown, and the night before somebody had allowed as how I'd written something marvelous in *Country Music Magazine*, and I was laying there reading what I'd written that was wonderful. Jessi phoned to be sure that I knew **Waylon (Jennings)** and **Willie (Nelson)** were appearing live on the show in support of the second-coming of *Wanted: The Outlaws* on RCA, in honor of the album's 20th anniversary. (See this issue's cover story.) The original 11-song recording was, by the way, the first country album certified platinum by the RIAA. Nine additional "lost" (as in unreleased) songs are added on the new record, as well as a Steve Earle penned/produced song—a grand total of 21 cuts.

Jessi, along with Waylon and Willie, had learned that when the extra song was recorded in Music Town, I wasn't privy to the session while others were. Like I explained to Jessi, that's what happens when record labels and publicists don't know the full picture. I was there for the original recordings, and I've been chief cheerleader all these years. Lastly, it was I who coined the phrase "Outlaw music," which gave me studio rights in '76....

Early on **Regis** and **Kathie Lee** were debating, when a table is set, "how to know which is the wine glass." Then Regis announced the guests, saying those outlaws, Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, were backstage slouched across chairs with **Dorothy** (David's mom) **Letterman** between



Second newest Grand Ole Opry member **Martina McBride** congratulates newest member **Steve Wariner** on his induction. Steve was overjoyed.

them, sitting nicely, hands folded. One of their crew, allowed Regis, had overheard Willie ask Dorothy if she wanted to see the bus, which is a well-known "come on" in the World of Hillbilly, so I hear. Saint that I am, it was never said to me. Onstage, the guys sang their biggest duet hit, "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys" for the blue zillionth time, and for the blue zillionth time, it was awesome. During their interview, Regis asked Willie about the wine glass. Willie replied, "I let Waylon handle questions of that nature." Regis repeated, "Waylon, do you know how to tell which is the wine glass," to which Waylon brilliantly answered, "The one that ain't got no ice in it." Watching the show, the thought hit me that one of those characters might just remind Kathie Lee of her days as a *Hee Haw* honey!

## ALSO ON THE WAYLON FRONT....

**Waylon's** inked a three-album deal with Justice Records, and his first new music is out now. Look for the album, *Right for the Time*, when you go out to pick up his Outlaws anniversary album!

## TENNESSEE'S HEART BROKE AGAIN

When the DC-9 went down in Florida's Everglades, taking the lives of 109 with it, there was one poet among them. The poet, a gentle man, **Walter Hyatt**, was probably best known from **Uncle Walt's Band**. Hailing from Spartanburg, South Carolina, the three-piece band migrated to Music Town, where they got several howdies and many friends before departing for Austin, where they kept from starving by working the clubs. Besides Hyatt, **David Ball** and **Champ Hood** rounded out Uncle Walt's Band. While hanging out in Texas, they made many more friends, including **Lyle Lovett**.

Exactly four days before the fatal plane crash, I attended David Ball's wonderful album release party at Warner Brothers and told him about Lyle Lovett honoring Ball and his two former compadres on his current CD. And I quoted David these words from the pen of Lyle Lovett: "Those boys from Carolina/They sure enough could sing/When they came on down to Texas/We all showed 'em how to

Reporter: *Hazel Smith*

Editor: *Rochelle Friedman*





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# People

## CAJUNS COOKING



Whether we're talking music or food, those Cajuns are always hot! Jo-El Sonnier and Eddy Raven prove the point at Nashville's popular South Street eatery, where they were promoting *Cookin' Cajun*, their new album on K-Tel. A mix of Cajun favorites and new recordings, the album includes duets by the two as well as solo material.

swing/Now David's on the radio/And old Champ's still on the guitar/Uncle Walt he's home with Heide/Hiding in her loving arms."

Lyle's song is titled "That's Right (You're Not from Texas)," and it appears on his brand-new CD, *The Road to Ensenada*. When he wrote it, he couldn't have known it would be a eulogy for his pal, Uncle Walt. Lyle Lovett, David Ball and Champ Hood were among the mourners who paid their last respects to Hyatt at the Second Presbyterian Church in Nashville.

Besides his wife, Heidi, Walter is survived by an eight-month-old daughter, a six-year-old daughter, and a 20-year-old daughter, Haley, from a former marriage.

## MIDNIGHT AT E.T. RECORD SHOP

An emotional David McCormick, owner of Ernest Tubb Record Shops, humbly and graciously praised Arista signees, BR5-49, for bringing the true sounds of country back home. He further thanked the band for bringing life to the once dead and dangerous Lower Broadway area, where at night it is once again okay to walk down the street to hear music, have dinner or just plain have fun. The midnight show was "packed" with screaming fans who hung out for autographs after the hillbilly retro BR5-49 performed their mini-concert of old standards along with a few of their own homemade tunes. McCormick said the band was the kind of act that

Ernest Tubb would love to have discovered. Then he solemnly added, "I wish that E.T. was here tonight to praise you." A lot of us still miss E.T.

## CLAY DIAGNOSED

After experiencing numbness in his fingers, Clay Walker went to the doctor for a physical and was told he suffers from multiple sclerosis, a disease that attacks the nervous system. It was a shock for Clay, but his attitude is to keep on singing. His neurologist says the disease will not hurt Clay's singing. Singer Donna Fargo, a/k/a "The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A.," also has the disease. Clay became a father for the first time earlier in the year. He and wife Laurie have a daughter. We send our prayers to Clay and his family.

## ON THE COVER OF CORN FLAKES

I do believe more people will see the faces of Brooks & Dunn on the "cover" of Kellogg's Corn Flakes than on the cover of any magazine. The "boot-scooting" duo are currently appearing on the cereal boxes. Congratulations to B&D also for their win as Entertainers of the Year at the Academy of Country Music Awards.

## ANDY GRIFFITH'S CONFESSION

In Music Town for the Dove Awards. Andy Griffith TV'd, radioed and guested

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# People

whenever there was a microphone. Still "Sheriff Taylor" to those of us who loved the wonderful show that bore his name, Andy's recorded a gospel CD titled *I Love to Tell the Story*, which has, to the surprise of the multi-talented star, been certified Gold. During his stay, the 69-year old Griffith exposed a myth, declaring that co-star **Don Knotts** was acting when he sang off-key. "Don has a fine tenor voice," said Andy of his friend. "It was hard for him to sing out of tune on the show," he added.

## NORTH OF THE BORDER

Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, hometown of **Terri Clark**, rolled out a "Welcome Home Terri" banner when their favorite daughter returned a star. Some 1,000 locals paid a buck each to sign the banner, and the money went to a local charity. The city made Terri an honorary "Mad Hatter," referring to her Resistol, and they presented her with a miniature Medicine Man's bust. All this plus a Gold album celebration at the Country Music Hall of Fame hosted by her label, Mercury Records. Speaking of which, here a while back there was a benefit held in the alley behind Tootsie's Orchid Lounge. Two items on sale were the original Tootsie's windows. Mercury purchased the windows, and at Terri's celebration at the Hall of Fame, one was presented to the museum and the other to Terri. See, Tootsie's is where Terri worked for tips when she first hit Music City. Isn't that the greatest gift for her?

## THANKS, WALMART/ANDERSON

Once again those good folks at WalMart and Anderson Merchandisers have teamed up for the "Country Music Across America" Tour. The grassroots series is free family entertainment and will be held in WalMart parking lots. Confirmed so far are **Wade Hayes**, **Ricochet**, **Rich McCready**, **Joe Diffie**, **Stephanie Bentley**, **Philip Claypool**, **M.C. Potts**, **James Bonamy**, **Bryan White**, **The Smokin' Armadillos**, **The Thompson Brothers**, **Great Plains**, **Mark Wills** and **Rick Trevino**.

## CMT GOES ON THE ROAD

Wonders never cease—Country Music Television is now a corporate sponsor. Yep, CMT is the sponsor of the **Tim McGraw/Faith Hill** 100-city tour this year. And it's a big party, pals. Titled the "Spontaneous Combustion" Tour, before each show, there's a CMT party host who leads off with games, CMT merchandise



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giveaways and live audience and backstage celebrity interviews broadcast on huge auditorium screens. Also, advance concert tickets are given away in each concert city. It's big time! Coming your way, fans. Keep your ear tuned to radio.

## THESE PARTIES—TOUGH JOB

A chosen few, including yours truly, were invited to join A&M Records (formerly known as Polydor) Prez, **Harold Shedd** on his yacht, *Fascination*, for a cruise down the Cumberland River. We boarded the yacht at Riverfront Park, and believe you me when I say Harold should have charged admission to watch me climb the side of that craft. It could not have been a pretty sight... Once aboard we were offered champagne by the steward. Half an hour later we went below for sushi and other finger foods, as well as your favorite liquid refreshment. Then the marvelous **Toby Keith**, one of the current artists who *can* play a guitar and actually sing (so many today are manufactured in a studio...but they've got nice posteriors), entertained us with songs from his wonderful new album, *Blue Moon*, as we taxied along. Real close to heaven on earth, friends. An hour and a half downstream we docked at the trendy Blue Moon Cafe, where seafood was laid out fit for the queen that I am. This is the way to go, I decided, and Mr. Shedd, being the Southern gentleman that he is, suggested I get my suitcase. Best offer I had in ten years. Call me on my portable until fall.

## THE GREAT MERLE



**When Merle Haggard made a rare concert appearance in New York, CMM was there. Senior Editor George Fletcher met up with the great Hag at an even-rarer (for Merle) "meet the press" event before the concert. Haggard has a brand new album out on Curb, 1996, as well as a new boxed set of his classic material on Capitol, *Down Every Road*. At left, rear, Trace Adkins, new on Capitol Records.**



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6. PRIZES: The following prizes will be awarded: 500 Prizes of 2 round-trip airplane tickets to Las Vegas, hotel accommodations for November 22nd and 23rd, 1996, \$250 cash, attendance to Camel party, valued at approximately \$1,350.00 each. Total value of all prize values is approximately \$675,000. Travel must be completed by November 24th, 1996. Restrictions and blackout dates may apply. Accommodations are subject to availability and change without notice. Trip companions must be 21 years of age or older and must sign and return a liability/publicity release prior to travel. Taxes, tips, alcoholic beverages, ground transportation not specified herein and all other expenses not specified herein are solely the responsibility of winners. All airfare will be round-trip coach, unless otherwise specified herein, from airport nearest winner's home location. All hotel lodging is one-room double occupancy unless otherwise specified herein. The difference between any stated value and actual value will not be awarded to winners. In the event of cancellation by winner, the ability to reschedule will be allowed only at Sponsor's discretion.
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# People

## MUSIC ME

Did we celebrate Wynonna's Number One single, "To Be Loved by You"? What do you think? Do you honestly believe that we'd dare let that girl have a Number One record and not party? Dressed in pregnant black, Wy looked content as she and writers Gary Burr and Mike Reid were honored and honored at Mama (Naomi) Judd's Trilogy Restaurant just a hop, skip and a jump from Music Row. Everybody came out to chow down on fresh-out-of-the-Trilogy kitchen goodies, get wined up, schmooze and be seen until star arrival. Once the do was done, everybody stared at young Elijah Kelly, the spittin' image of his dad, Arch Kelly III, hubby of the bride Wynonna, who is greatly pregnant with second child. Yes, mama Naomi was there looking like a Dresden doll in a smart gray silk suit with wide velvet lapels. Naomi and I chatted a bit about motherhood, grandmotherhood, God, aging, health and music. And I chatted a tad with Wy, who told me she was like her grandpa, who always said he "didn't have nothing but his ass and his elbow."

## SURPRISE, SURPRISE

As a surprise for William Lee Golden, his fellow Oak Ridge Boys—Duane Allen, Joe Bonsall and Richard Sterban—bought billboards throughout Nashville welcoming him back to the group. The foursome boarded their tour bus in Hendersonville under the pretense of doing a press interview. TNN cameras were rolling all the way, and William Lee is quietly smiling as they pull into Gilley's parking lot in sight of Music Row. When William Lee spied the billboard, he pointed and he smiled, saying, "Boys, you done me in."

## A DIFFERENT DO

I took our Adam and Jeremy Smith to the Cumberland Science Museum for a reception celebrating the opening of "Earth 2U, Exploring Geography." Why do I tell you this? Well, I thought you'd want to know that Alan and Denise Jackson brought their daughter, Mattie, to the event; Reba McEntire brought her son, Shelby Blackstock; Louise Mandrell brought her daughter, Nicole Bannon; and my good friend, Donna Hilley, brought her grandson. You should have seen those kids gather around Olympic Gold Medal speed skater, Dan Jansen. No, he don't sing, but the kids knew who he was and thought he was a hero. I'm not gonna argue with that.

## THESE TWO ARE (McC) READY!



No, Rich and Mindy McCready are not related, even though they share a last name and have both recently released debut albums. Magnatone is the label for Rich, and BNA is where Mindy hangs her pipes. The two singers met in St. Louis at a St. Jude's Children's Hospital benefit. Mindy's album is named after the lead single, "Ten Thousand Angels." Rich's is self-titled.

## MINNIE'S TRIBUTES

Tributes to the late Minnie Pearl, whose passing was covered in the last issue, were rampant. Some good. Some great. I must say the two that really moved me were Dwight Yoakam's emotional testimonial on the ACM awards and Vince Gill's simple, "I want to dedicate this song to my friend, Minnie Pearl," as he sang my favorite song, "Go Rest High on That Mountain," to the Grand Ole Opry audience, leaving not one dry eye in the house. In the Book of Hazel, Vince does no wrong.

## TALL YA'LL

The late Hawkshaw Hawkins stood six foot, six inches and is said to be the tallest star in country music. Well, there's another boot-wearer who stands just as tall. Louisiana-born Trace Adkins is the dude, and the powers that be at his label, Capitol-Nashville, tell me they are betting the farm and their firstborn on Trace.

## QUIET NO MORE

Due out shortly on the Intersound label is a new album from Baillie and The Boys. Wife-and-hubby duo Kathie Baillie and Michael Bonagura are joined by bassist Roger McVay on their first recording in



# People

four years. Kathie and **Vince Gill** collaborated on the album's first single, "You're My Weakness." And if you've wondered what happened to **Kenny Rogers** lately, he's about to release a new one, too. Recently he signed a "multi-album" deal with Magnatone Records. First up is a Christmas record, due out later this year.

## THE BUCK STOPPED IN SHERMAN

**Buck Owens** added another notch to his already filled legendary belt. This honor got close, real close, to ole Buck's heart. His hometown of Sherman, Texas, north-east of Dallas, renamed a street in Buck's honor. Lots of Sherman residents paid a hundred bucks a plate to eat dinner with Buck. The legendary Owens gave the folks back home a concert, a rarity these nights.

## THOSE ASCAP DO'S

Another Number One for **Neal McCoy** brought the writers of "You Gotta Love That," **Jess Brown** and **Brett Jones**, to the snazzy ASCAP do. That Neal tops that chart every time!

At the **Diamond Rio** Number One party, I learned about The Godfather of Soul, **James Brown**, showing up at their gig in Augusta. Brown dug **Jimmy Olander's** guitar picking, and praised the band's performance of "It's All in Your Head." The celebs were at ASCAP to celebrate "Walking Away," their latest Number One, along with the writers **Annie Roboff**

## HOSTS WITH THE MOST



**MCI** sponsored a video to educate fans about the 70-year-old Grand Ole Opry's storied history, and wisely chose the loveable **Jimmy Dickens** and the legendary hunk, **Vince Gill**, to host the spot. These two dudes are solid buddies and both Opry mainstays. We all need to know about the Opry.

and **Craig Wiseman**. I almost didn't recognize **Lari White** without makeup at the Diamond Rio do. If Lari saw me without makeup, she'd probably declare Halloween!

And we celebrated **Garth Brooks'** Number One, "The Beaches of Cheyenne," along with the writers, Garth. **Bryan Kennedy** and **Dan Roberts**.

## THEY'RE GONNA PUT HIM IN THE MOVIES

Academy award-winning actor and country music friend, **Robert Duvall**, has a movie production company and is working toward bringing the life story of **Merle Haggard** to the big screen. Now in the fifth script re-write, it sounds like it's "Hollywood serious." The life and times of Merle Haggard has more possibility than any story I know! Wonder who'll play The Hag?

## REGULAR MOM

I heard this second-hand, but it's a wonderful story. This lady was watching her son play Little League baseball when this other lady, who was also watching her son in the game, struck up a conversation. The talk was baseball. kids. just plain mama talk. You would never have known the "other" lady was one of country music's finest singers and the steady lady of U.S. Senator **Fred Thompson**, Miss **Lorrie Morgan**, who was watching son, **Jesse Keith Whitley** play ball and chatting away. 'Course, those of us who were fortunate enough to be invited to BMI for Lorrie's RIAA platinum celebration of her *Greatest Hits* record on BNA and heard her new music from her album, *Greatest Need*, a few days later, knew well and good that she's a big star.



Turning out for Garth's Number One party for "The Beaches of Cheyenne" are publisher **Bob Doyle**, co-writer **Garth**, co-writer **Bryan Kennedy**, publisher **Carol Roberts**, co-writer **Dan Roberts**, ASCAP's main lady **Connie Bradley** and publisher **Gary Overton**.

# People



Newcomer Stephanie Bentley, an avowed Patty Loveless fan, traveled all the way to Chattanooga to see her Epic Records labelmate in concert with Vince Gill.

## HILLBILLY ANGEL SOARS

With her recent album, *When Fallen Angels Fly*, certified platinum—which is still my favorite record at this moment—plus being named Female Vocalist of the Year by the Academy of Country Music, 90's Queen **Patty Loveless**, The Hillbilly Angel, soars. Did we party? Of course, silly. This time we partied at Cheekwood Museum of Art, which has zero to do with country songs. However, in view of the fact that her label, Epic Records, commis-

sioned a local artist to do an unbelievable painting of the star, the Museum of Art was by all means the proper place. Whether acquainted with Patty or not, the painter captured the red-haired beauty, including the golden wings which have always been around her shoulders. Cheekwood, lovely with spring flowers, grass and trees, was so restful at sundown. With just a nip of chill in the air, the outdoor setting was perfect for the lovely table of food set before us. Wearing beige jacket with black pants and shoes, looking every inch a major star, Patty graciously accepted her accolades, thanking all the proper people, especially those unsung heroes, the songwriters. Now we must recall Patty's testimony at the ACM Awards, where she spoke of how good it feels to be a woman in country music today. The little shy girl from Pikeville, Kentucky, has become The Hillbilly Angel Who Soars. Especially with her new album, *The Trouble With the Truth*, already yielding the Number One hit, "You Can Feel Bad."

## TWO BABY ACTS

Must mention two baby acts. "It all begins with a song," or words something close to this, is the slogan of the Nashville Songwriters Association International. Two acts have proven this philosophy—

## FINAL BOW: PATSY MONTANA 1912-1996

Patsy Montana, whose 1935 hit, "I Wanna Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart," was the first million-selling recording by a female country singer, died May 3rd in California of heart failure. Kitty Wells rightly gets credit for opening the door for female vocalists with "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" in 1952, but Patsy first cracked the door with "Sweetheart." Born Ruby Blevins in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in either 1912 or 1914, depending on the reference work consulted, she grew up in President Clinton's hometown of Hope. Like most singers of her generation, she was considerably influenced by the music of Jimmie Rodgers, and she worked for a time in California with pioneer West Coast performer Stuart Hamblen, who gave her her stage name. She started recording in 1932 but made her name after moving to Chicago's WLS *National Barn Dance* in 1933. There, she worked with The Prairie Ramblers, with whom she recorded "Sweetheart." There were other popular recordings after that, but none as successful. She did movies with Gene Autry, and continued recording through World War II. In the late 40's, she worked the *Louisiana Hayride* until returning to California with her husband. Based in Southern California in the 1950's, she slowed down through most of that decade, but by the 1960's was back performing and recording for small labels. Even after most of her generation of performers had retired or died, she remained on the road. Her achievements continue to echo today.

—RICH KIENZLE

## THEY GET AROUND



Sawyer Brown and The Beach Boys recently joined forces in the studio for a remake of the Beach Boys' "I Get Around." The cut will be featured on a Beach Boys tribute album, pairing them with the likes of Willie Nelson, Lorrie Morgan, Steve Earle and Toby Keith. Left to right: Sawyer Brown's Duncan Cameron, Hobie Hubbard, Mark Miller and Jim Scholten; Beach Boys Brian Wilson, Mike Love and Al Jardine; Sawyer's Joe Scholten and Beach Boy Bruce Johnston.

find an undeniable hit, and you will see the difference. "No News" by **Lonestar** hung at Number One on the charts for three weeks. The proven hit started a fire under these five Texans, followed by the ACM naming the fivesome Top New Vocal Group. There's no stopping Lonestar, who were among the acts on the George Dickel "Ain't Nothin' Better" Country Music Tour. Second case, **Jo Dee Messina**, whose first single, "Heads Carolina, Tails California," had all of Music Row a-buzzing. Jo Dee, who hails from Massachusetts, and her producers, **Bryon Gallimore** and **Tim McGraw**, looked for a year for songs and went through over a thousand. Looks like the wait was worth the time.



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# People

## "BARES" IN EAST TENNESSEE

Puhleeze, I know what I'm doing. And I know there's bears over in them hills just as well as you. This is a bare with a different tale (or is it tail?). It was **Tom Wopat's** last, history-making week as host of TNN's *Prime Time Country*. Those notorious Parton sisters are always up to something, and this time it's the eldest, **Willadene Parton**, who has written a book titled *Smoky Mountain Memories*, and is on the television trying to stir up some sales. Consequently the bare story was revealed: Best I can remember, Willadene says **Junior Blaylock** was coming a-courting her. It was Willadene's first date with Junior (whom she eventually married). Ten-year-old **Dolly** doesn't know why she decided to "get 'em," but she dropped her drawers, reached for an East Tennessee grapevine and swung herself, butt-naked, across that mountain top, singing at the top of her lungs. "On top of old Smoky/ All covered in grass/Look here, Junior Blaylock/At my naked a...." Dolly allowed, "When Daddy got home, Junior wasn't the last person to see my naked a... that day!"

## THANX, MR. WAUGH

**Irving Waugh**, former president of WSM, former producer of the CMA Awards Show, wearer of many other former equally important hats, not to mention the snappiest dresser who ever walked the hallowed Row, was man enough to stand before an audience and admit that it was **Harriane Condra** who first said we should entertain disc jockeys, and 50 flew into Music Town on airplanes and out on their own steam! This was the beginning of the disc jockey convention (which is now the Country Radio Seminar), the organization of the Country Music Association and the CMA Awards Show. Course, with Irving's shove, the Opry moved to its present locale, and there's Opryland, Opryland Hotel, the General Jackson Showboat, TNN, CMT, water taxis and all the other "trappings" that followed. Irving is due a thanks, and Harriane is commended for using her head. Anyway, the occasion at hand, held outside under a tent at the Tree Publishing parking lot, was to honor Harriane and **Charlotte Lowther** upon their retirement. These two ladies have done more acts of kindness for songwriters than any other two I know. Charlotte held many positions with Tree, most recently serving as assistant to CEO/President **Donna Hilley**. What a decent thing Donna did when she honored these two great women.

## STAR POWER!



This year's Boomtown Charity Ball, a fundraiser for SHARE (an organization that distributes funds to various children's charities), brought out the big guns. Pitching in for the 43rd annual event were **Billy Ray Cyrus**, actress **Ashley Judd**, **Naomi (Mama) Judd** and **Randy Travis**. Quite a foursome! Billy Ray, by the way, is at work on his latest album for Mercury Records and gearing up for a new tour, and Ashley recently starred in an HBO movie on Marilyn Monroe.

## NEWCOMER

Let me be the first to tell you about **Tammy Wynette Graham**. Named for the legend, this Career Records act moved to Nashville when she was 14, but nothing happened there, so she and her family migrated to Las Vegas. She got work at Caesar's and has been there ever since. Tammy's got a few glitz moves from too



Career Records' **Tammy W.** (for Wynette!) **Graham**. A girl with a dream.

many Vegas nights, but for the most part, she is stone country. Wearing a Western cut silver jacket that accented her black hair, black jeans and boots, Tammy seemed very comfortable with Music Town pickers when she showcased for the media at the Stadium Club. The Mexican chow was a treat as well.

## WFMS COUNTRY EXPO II

Can you believe it's been a year that I've been on the air at WFMS in Indianapolis with "Hazel's Hotline," with charming **Charlie Morgan** and sometimes bluegrass **Jim Denny**! At this year's WFMS expo, we were treated to baby acts like **Mandy Barnett**, **Keith Gattis**, **Ty England**, **Keith Stegall**, **Bobbie Cryner**, **Jeff Carson**, **Mindy McCready**, **Rhonda Vincent**, **Gretchen Peters** and **Rich McCready** along with **Ricky Skaggs**, **Great Plains** and **Rob Crosby**, all of whom gave wonderful live performances. Icing on the expo was Saturday afternoon when **Garth Brooks**, who was performing a four-day run in the city, made a trip over and sat in on the songwriters' "guitar pull," joining **Jon Ims**, **Paul Overstreet**, publisher/manager **Marty Gamblin**, **Gary Baker**, **Frank Meyers**, **Shelby Kennedy** and others, singing his songs and taking turns with the rest of the panel. Personally, I'd like to thank Garth for making Music Town look real special in Indy.

# Record Reviews

## Merle Haggard

1996

Curb 77796

Five years ago, you could barely find Haggard's greatest Capitol material in record stores. But after the recent Arista and HighTone tributes, several domestic labels, including Razor & Tie, Koch and Capitol/Nashville, decided they'd better get that stuff back on the shelves fast, and they did. Now, there's almost *more* classic Hag available—including the new *Down Every Road* boxed set (see Buried Treasures)—than when he dominated the charts, won awards and was a pillar of radio. Over a quarter century has passed since that heady period in the late 60's and early 70's, and Haggard continued making another decade's worth of timeless music, until trends changed about ten years ago and he, like others, fell out of favor at country radio.

Listening to the Haggard of the mid-90's, it's clear the years have made a difference. World-weariness that he could only sing about in his 30's, in songs like "White Line Fever," now comes naturally. The music remains a constant. Though *The Strangers* are different, the sound is much the same, with veteran drummer Biff Adam and steel player Norm Hamlet still at the heart of things. All but one of the ten songs on *1996* are Haggard originals or collaborations, only one of them from outside that circle. This allows him the freedom to make a new album that succeeds as a career summary. While most numbers reflect today, some revisit the themes of some of his classics. Anyone, even new fans who've discovered him through other artists (or the tributes), will immediately know



where he's coming from.

Of the "new" numbers, his version of Iris DeMent's brilliant "No Time to Cry" is almost shattering in its impact. Having discovered DeMent through her rendition of "Big City" on the HighTone *Tulare Dust* tribute, he picked one of her songs that he could really relate to (Merle was young when his father died) and sings the hell out of it. "Sin City Blues" is a new Hag honky tonker along with the vivid, autobiographical "Beer Can Hill." This one describes the very real Bakersfield dive that was his first performing venue, with guest vocals from Dwight, Buck Owens and Hag's former guitar teacher, Bob Teague.

Two songs revisit the theme he addressed in his 1969 song, "White Line Fever," of a trucker somberly reflecting on aging. Both "Truck Driver's Blues," which Merle wrote with Tom Howard, and "Too Many Highways," a more humorous Haggard-Max D. Barnes collaboration, serve

as a two-part sequel. The trucker of the song is older and more mature, yet still brimming with the resigned, wistful melancholy that "White Line" hinted at. Likewise, "Five Days a Week" revisits the blue-collar pride of "Workin' Man's Blues." Ex-wife Bonnie Owens wrote "If Anyone Ought to Know" with Merle. His original version of his song "Untanglin' My Mind," a song Clint Black later re-wrote, is superior in its original form. His duet with John Anderson on the environmentalist anthem, "Winds of Change," a Haggard-Terry Hardisty effort, is powerful even if the lyrics occasionally wax pretentious. In reflecting environmental concerns, today's Haggard is addressing social issues that are a far cry from "Okie From Muskogee."

Unlike Haggard's idols, Jimmie Rodgers and Bob Wills, whom he memorialized with LP and onstage tributes, Merle Haggard lived to see his music revived and honored while he's still active. All those

Hag reissues can't obscure another fact: at age 58, Merle Haggard is still capable of creating timeless music, as he does on this, his most powerful, best-focused effort in years. —RICH KIENZLE

## George Strait

*Blue Clear Sky*

MCA 11428

A friend of mine—actually another one of them nasty, dreaded critics who periodically inspires hate mail from you kindly readers—recently noted how great George Strait was. He went on to lament the fact that Strait didn't get more critical attention.

Well, I thought, Strait's 1995 boxed collection, *Strait Out of the Box*, sold more than three million copies, despite its hefty price, making it one of the Top Ten all-time best-selling boxed sets. How much more attention do you need?

That sort of explains why I'm not going to waste space here extolling Strait's virtues, particularly since most of the superlatives have long since been expended on him.

Nor am I going to try and define what sets him apart. If you've heard his first album, *Strait Country* (1981), or his brand-new *Blue Clear Sky*, or any of the 14 albums in between (not counting several "best of's" and a Christmas album), you have, in a sense, heard them all. Stylistically, Strait is, to say the least, consistent.

Yet, as I listen to *Blue Clear Sky*, I have two reactions. Number one, I am once again in awe of this guy. I am simply amazed at how he can approach record-making with such efficient, almost formulaic consistency. (He sometimes cranks an album out in a

# Record Reviews

GEORGE STRAIT



few days, usually relying on the same handful of studio pickers.) Yet, almost without fail, he comes away with results that are consistently excellent and thoroughly moving.

My second reaction is that, as much as I hate to admit it, my critic friend was right. We alleged "tastemakers" (and I use that word cautiously in your presence!) do sometimes tend to take Strait for granted when we're making up our end-of-the-year "ten best" lists. We do occasionally tend to forget how vastly talented and immensely durable he is. As other singers have risen and fallen in the charts, Strait has quietly and methodically continued to serve up music that still sets the benchmark for the many imitators he's spawned in the last 15 years.

There are no big surprises on *Blue Clear Sky*, which was co-produced by Strait and Tony Brown. Broken down to its essential ingredients, the recipe is thoroughly predictable. It features top-drawer songs from the usual suspects like Dean Dillon (he's got two cuts this time around) and Jim Lauderdale. (He and Gary Nicholson co-wrote "Do the Right Thing.") Other unerring country Shakespeares like Larry Boone, Bob DiPiero, Norro Wilson, Mark Chesnutt and Paul Nelson are also represented.

There's pretty much the usual stylistic range to the songs, as well. There's a couple of steel guitar-tinged hillbilly tearjerkers—Boone's and Paul Nelson's lovely, lyrically concise "King of the Mountain (Fool on the Hill)," and an oldie by Wayne Kemp and Mack Vickery called "She Knows

When You're on My Mind." There's a touch of swing—"I Ain't Never Seen No One Like You," on which Mark Chesnutt is one of three co-writers. There's a rodeo song, "I Can Still Make Cheyenne," co-written by Strait's long-time manager Ery Woolsey. And there's a few of those super-melodic, mid-tempo contemporary country ballads on which Strait, the heartthrob, shines: "Carried Away" (Steve Bogard and Jeff Stevens), Dillon's and Wilson's "Rockin' in the Arms of Your Memory" and the title song, which was penned by Mark D. Sanders, John Jarrard and Bob DiPiero.

Strait himself has never been much of a songwriter; but once again, that's no problem. Each time he steps up to the mike on *Blue Clear Sky*, he neither under-sells nor over-sells the song. He simply makes each one all his own and works his dependable magic.

—BOB ALLEN



**Chet Atkins**  
*Almost Alone*  
Columbia CK 67497

**W**hat can you say about the international dean of guitar players that hasn't already been said? Even saying "he has a terrific new record out" has been said...oh, probably a couple of hundred times by now. Still it must be said: "He has another terrific new record out."

This new effort is as near to being a one-on-one with Chet as you're ever likely to hear. "Waiting for Suzie B." (composed while waiting for Suzy

Bogguss, who jammed on the porch with him for nearly a year before they made their collaborative album a few years back) features a bit of Nashville String Machine overkill, but the rest is mostly just Chet and maybe one sideman. Clean as a whistle, this is just Chet Atkins picking his guitar—no overdubs, no worries about a little extraneous foot-tapping or Chet's humming along with himself.

"Jam Man" may sound overdubbed, but it's actually one pass, going down to tape just as you hear it. In the liner notes Chet confesses to using a techno-toy called The Jam Man that tape-loops a rhythm pattern live and frees him to play along with himself. He sometimes uses this in his too-rare live performances, and it amazes people. In a concert take Chet sings a humorous little ditty he co-wrote with Billy Edd Wheeler called "I Still Write Your Name in the Snow." A little barnyard humor: the country-born and bred among you will immediately understand this.

Chet offers "Maybelle," a touching tribute to an early mentor and sponsor of his. Mother Maybelle Carter. Chet also mixes in classic pop evergreens. He performs the Christmas religious number, "Ave Maria," and in another spot David Alapai's sweet Hawaiian ballad, "Pu, Uana Hulu." For good measure, he throws in Jerry Jeff Walker's "Mr. Bojangles," Irving Berlin's "Cheek to Cheek" and Cole Porter's "You Do Something to Me," too.

For my money, though, it is the artist's own compositions that make this all worthwhile. He has a tried and true jazz-ably sensibility that is unmistakably Chet Atkins. His albums have been more adult contemporary than country for many years, but I think almost every knowledgeable critic I know gave up trying to give the genre a limiting definition at least a decade ago. Shootfire, Bubba, there's Randy Howard playing excellent fiddle on

"Sweet Alla Lee," if you just gotta have some hardcore Western-style country.

You'd think a guy who has made as many records over the past 40-something years as this guy would've run out of good stuff to play or interest in playing at all. Not hardly; not Chet. Humble as ever, he jokes in the liner notes, "A Les Paul I'm not! but it's fun to try." Even funner to listen to him try.

—BOB MILLARD



**Junior Brown**  
*Semi Crazy*  
MCG/Curb 77843

**A**lmost every article ever written about Junior Brown has compared him to Ernest Tubb and Jimi Hendrix (the rock critics say, "Even though he sings like Ernest Tubb, he does play guitar like Jimi Hendrix," while the country critics reverse the emphases). Brown does sing in the bottomless barroom baritone of Tubb and does pick his guitar-steel (his invention, a combination of Telecaster guitar and a tabletop steel guitar) as if he were Hendrix in a brim-turned, straw cowboy hat. What few observers point out is that Brown writes songs like Roger Miller.

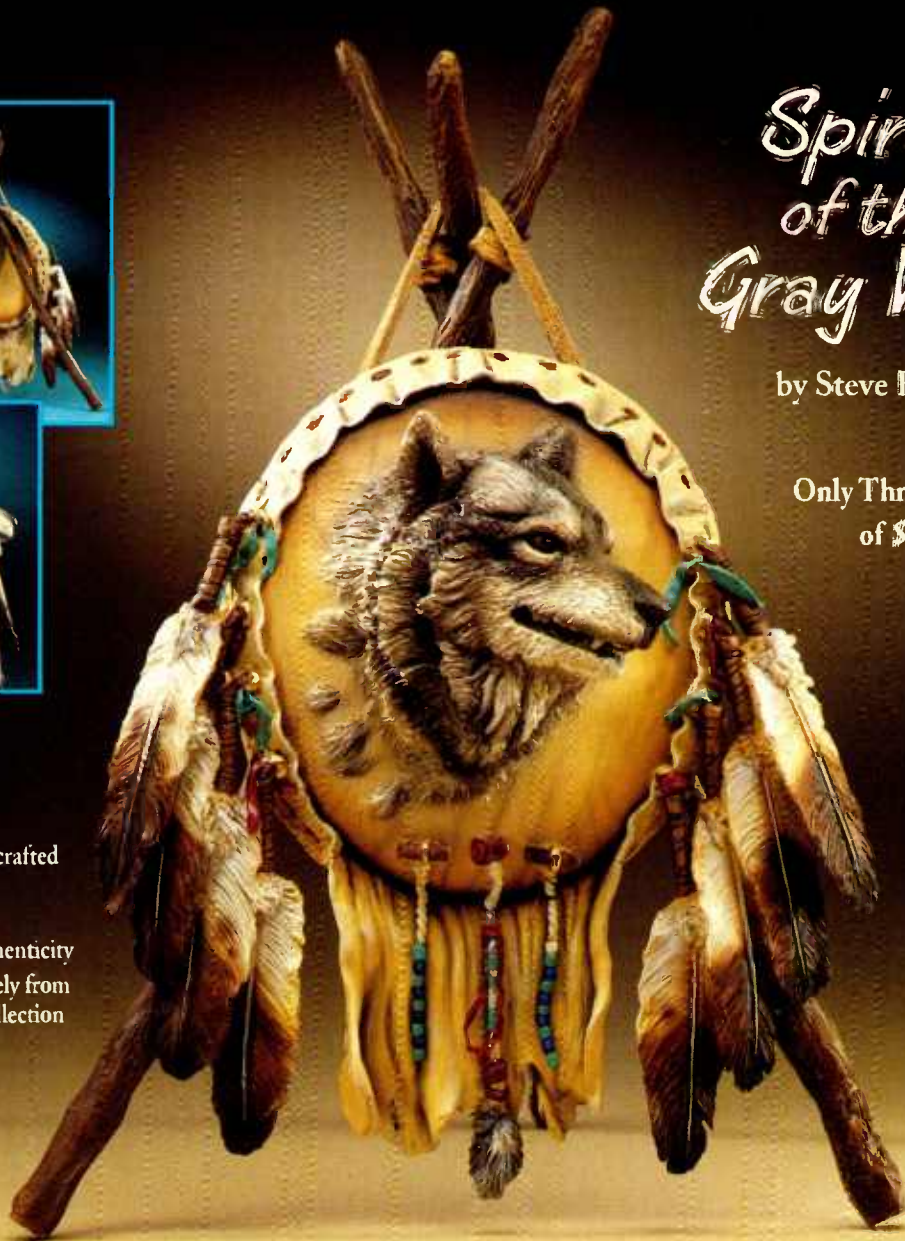
Brown's songwriting gifts are more obvious than ever on his third full-length album, *Semi-Crazy*. On the opening cut, "Gotta Get Up Every Morning," Brown describes himself as a working man with a partying wife; in his deadpan drawl, he sings, "I got to get up every morning/Just to say good night to you/My alarm clock

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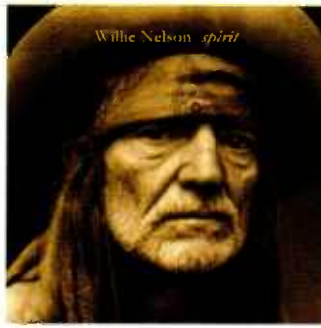
rings and there you are/Falling out of someone's car." The exaggerated lyrics are even funnier because Brown sings them so straightforwardly over the lightly swinging Western beat.

"Venom Wearin' Denim" is a pun-crammed, two-step portrait of a "copper-headed queen" who "slithers when she walks" and "coils up beside you to shed her denim skin" before she "puts the bite on you." "Joe the Singing Janitor," the lament of a hillbilly-singing broom-pusher, is so carefully balanced between comic overstatement and working-man's blues that you're not sure how to take it—and it's the rare writer who can keep a listener guessing like that.

Brown wrote a great truck-driving song, "Broke Down South of Dallas," for his first album, but he's perhaps best known for his remake of the Red Simpson chestnut, "Highway Patrol." The 62-year-old Simpson returns the favor by singing a duet with Brown on "Semi Crazy," Brown's new song about "a slap-happy, gear-jamming, coffee-drinking, truck-driving fool" who's not only half nuts but also nuts about semis. Hillbillies like Miller and Simpson aren't the only inspirations for Brown's clever wordplay; he salutes another influence by covering Hoagy Carmichael's Oriental novelty, "Hong Kong Blues."

Brown is less interesting when he gets serious, as he does on, "Darlin' I'll Do Anything You Say," and on the predictable prison ballad, "Parole Board." No matter what he plays, though, Brown always entertains, with his buttery, deep-voiced purr and his sudden bursts of picking virtuosity. His chops are most obvious on "Surf Medley" ("Pipeline," "Walk, Don't Run" and "Secret Agent Man") and on the revved up "I Hung It Up," Brown's rockabilly rewrite of Lavern Baker's "Saved." Less showy but more emotionally telling are the patient, graceful fills and solo on his remake of Ray Price's "I Want to Hear It From You."

—GEOFFREY HIMES



**Willie Nelson**  
*Spirit*  
Island 314-524 242

Periodically during the last couple of decades, Willie Nelson has stepped back from his wide-ranging musical excursions which have taken him into honky tonk, pop, Tin Pan Alley, jazz and just about everywhere else.

Now and then he will take a different turn, scale things back down to the bare minimum and settle into a more contemplative, somewhat mystical, groove. He did this on two of the landmark 70's albums that helped launch him to stardom: 1974's *Phases & Stages*, and 1975's *Red Headed Stranger*. He took a similar musical journey more recently on his largely overlooked 1983 "concept" album, *Tougher Than Leather*.

Nelson has once again taken such an inward look on *Spirit*, his latest. Like the above-mentioned introspective song-cycle collections, *Spirit* is a sparse, meditative, mostly acoustical work that deals with the same sort of spiritual and quasi-spiritual preoccupations as his earlier "theme" albums.

The tracks on *Spirit* are just about as pared down as Nelson ever gets. Mainly, it's just him singing and hammering out poignant, flamenco-style riffs on his trusty old gut string guitar. Most of the backing comes from a gospel piano and a few minor key fiddle flourishes here and there.

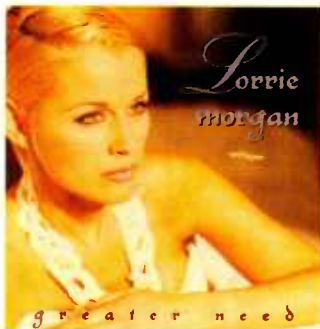
The first seven songs on *Spirit* represent a sort of mortal reckoning and coming to

terms with loss ("She's Gone"), grief ("Your Memory Won't Die in My Grave"), despair ("Too Sick to Pray") and, finally, resignation and acceptance ("I'm Not Trying to Forget You" and "I'm Waiting Forever").

The final six songs have an almost antithetical spirit of affirmation ("We Won't Run") in which temporal love ("It's a Dream Come True") and love of God ("I Thought About You Lord") become almost inseparable. Scattered throughout the album are provocative little instrumental interludes called, alternately, "Spirit" and "Spirit II." Nelson's original songs on this quiet masterpiece are so spare and to the spiritual point that they could have easily been drawn from the vintage 1960's and 1970's era when he composed such haunting gospel-tinged odes as "End of Understanding," "The Healing Hands of Time" and "I Walk Alone."

For the thousandth time, Nelson reminds us just what a timeless artist he is. He's been on the scene now for darned near four decades, yet, with *Spirit* he still manages to amaze us, and provoke us.

—BOB ALLEN



**Lorrie Morgan**  
*Greater Need*  
BNA 66847

Even though her father was Opry great George Morgan, Lorrie can hardly be accused of closet traditionalism. Her music, songs and attitude exist in the here and now. *Something in Red*, her great-

est achievement, remains an album as profoundly moving today as when it was released four years ago. Morgan's strength has always been her no-nonsense performance of direct songs that avoid frothy greeting-card sentiments, silly wordplay or quasi-poetic nonsense. Nor has she been reluctant to tackle older material that fits her, as she did in 1991 with George Jones' "A Picture of Me (Without You)."

*Greater Need* covers a wide range of moods and emotions, with modern traditional arrangements. "I Can Buy My Own Roses," written by Victoria Shaw and Skip Ewing, fits this approach, chronicling sorrow at a rocky relationship as well as asserting that the usual cheap flowers-and-candy apology won't solve the problems. Ewing also co-wrote "Back Among the Living." That song's theme of renewal after tragedy echoes Morgan's own past, and makes "She Walked Beside the Wagon," a song about generations of women persevering through adversity (with a cameo from son Jesse), seem redundant.

The hard-driving "Soldier of Love" (an old Kenny Rogers recording Morgan loved) is first-rate, far edgier than Rogers could ever sing it. While "Good As I Was to You" assaults a selfish, unfaithful ex-mate, "I Just Might Be" covers rejection with a lighter touch.

Morgan's ballad skills shine on Constant Change's sensitive, unsyrupy "Greater Need," a contemporary performance equalling her finest ballads of the past. Change also wrote "By My Side," a duet with Jon Randall. Vince Gill, who seems to spend his off time singing on others' records, makes an appearance on the snarling, rockabilly flavored "Steppin' Stones." Morgan reaches back to 1975 for Billy Walker's forgotten Top 20 hit, "Don't Stop in My World," a Texas shuffle released the year Morgan first appeared on the Grand Ole



# Record Reviews

Opry with her dad. The catchy lyrics and melody of "Reading My Heart," combined with a zestful performance, give this song potential to be a hit single of substance.

Along with Carlene Carter, Pam Tillis and Patty Loveless, Morgan continues to follow her own course. On *Greater Need*, she proves that not all great mainstream female singers need to bury themselves in Patsy Cline retreads, Vegas glitz or lousy 70's pop hits to make great music.

—RICH KIENZLE

## Tracy Lawrence *Time Marches On* Atlantic 82866

Tracy Lawrence is a good-looking kid with a honeyed tenor, but that's not what makes him special, for Nashville is full of rosy-cheeked boys with a healthy set of tonsils. What made Lawrence so exhilarating when he first emerged in 1991 was his untamed, unpredictable spirit. When he sang about hanging out in bars, getting into trouble and loving without caution, there was no hint of apology in his voice; in fact, his giddy vocals seemed to jump ahead of the beat in their eagerness to sing his shaggy-dog stories.

Lawrence is still a cute crooner, but his spirit seems to have been tamed on *Time Marches On*. The new album contains a song called "Excitable Boy," a piano-pounding country-rock number about a wild child who was flirting with girls before he could walk and breaking laws before he graduated. Unfortunately, on the rest of the album Lawrence sounds anything but excited. He has become a goody-two-shoes who politely apologizes for anything he's done wrong and swears to live by every sentimental cliché that ever appeared in a country song. The first single, "If You Loved Me," is a weepy ballad that



finds Lawrence promising an ex-lover that he'll "never let forever end" if she'll only forgive him. There's no hint in the lyrics that human beings are more complicated than light switches—they can't go from sinners to saints with a simple click—and there's no hint in the music of lingering anger or temptation. The same simplistic view of human nature infects such schmaltzy ballads as "I Know That Hurt by Heart" and "Stars Over Texas." Even "Speed of a Fool," an uptempo number about the restless life of the road, has a marshmallow core, for it apologizes for being so foolish as to not settle down. Worse yet, the new album doesn't contain a single comedy song with a punch line to match Lawrence's past triumphs such as "I Threw the Rest Away" and "If the Good Die Young."

*Time Marches On* will probably sell millions, for as long as there's an audience for afternoon soaps on TV, there'll be an audience for musical soaps on Nashville albums. And producer Don Cook does his usual bang-up job of making fiddles and steel sound at home in modern arrangements which never sound cloying or cluttered. For those of us who care about the artistic health of country music more than its financial health, however, Lawrence's new release is a disappointment. There aren't many singers with his honky tonk potential for both comic and serious material, and one hates to see him give in to Nashville formulas.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

## Todd Snider *Step Right Up* MCA/Margaritaville 11412

On 1986's *Guitar Town* and 1987's *Exit 0*, Steve Earle pointed the way to the Promised Land. Like a hillbilly Moses, Earle prophesied a country music of the future where the rebellious irreverence of Jerry Lee Lewis combined with the songwriting craft of Harlan Howard, where the loud guitars of Lynyrd Skynyrd mingled with the storytelling drawl of Willie Nelson, where the poetic liberties of Bob Dylan joined the working-class earthiness of Merle Haggard. Unfortunately, Earle got lost in the desert of biker-rock and heroin for seven years before heading back toward the Jordan River with this year's *I Feel Alright*. Right on his heels is Todd Snider.



Snider's 1994 debut album, *Songs for the Daily Planet*, suggested he might be an "Earle-y Riser," and his follow-up release, *Step Right Up*, confirms those suspicions. It's not so much that Snider imitates Earle—for imitating originality is a self-defeating effort—as that he is infected by the same spirit. He likes a little distortion in his guitars, a wise-guy sneer in his vocals and a booming snare drum in his mix, but under it all are songs as country as pick-up trucks, long necks and time clocks. This is country music for a new generation—a generation whose landscape is dominated by 7-11's and sports bars instead of general stores

and honky tonks but a generation which faces the same problems of making a place in a world with little room for Sunbelt working folks.

Snider's "Horseshoe Lake," for example, brings the great tradition of country songs about crummy jobs up to date. Standing in front of the time clock one morning, the singer decides he just can't punch in, for "my back is aching/I'm so confused/I can't help but feeling like I'm being used." He decides to take the day off, drive out to a lake, crack open a beer and figure out what he's doing with his life. Once he gets there, the acoustic guitar hits an anthemic strum over a church-like organ, and Snider cries out the sing-along punch line, "I want to feel like it makes a difference/What difference one man makes."

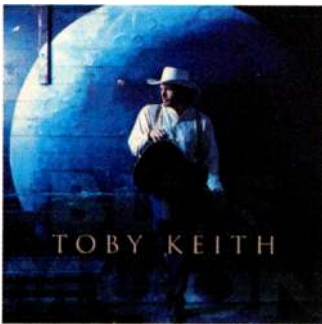
On "Enough," the country melody is dressed up in a jingly-jangly Byrds guitar riff as Snider explains to his girl friend that this life of boring jobs, TV shows and parking-lot landscapes is hard enough without her lying to him, too. On "Hey Hey," by contrast, he describes his "girl in the Georgia hills" as his one refuge in an inhospitable world, so he resolves she will be "one promise I keep." Also providing refuge is that venerable country music institution, the saloon. Snider uses a bluesy honky tonk shuffle to pay tribute to "Moon Dawg's Tavern," a bar in Frazier, Tennessee, and a Chuck Berry riff on "Late Last Night" to bemoan the resulting hangover. The album, *Step Right Up*, takes its title from "Side Show Blues," a Dylanesque rave-up about the crazy circus of modern life, where everyone from the politician to the stranger on the phone is selling snake oil like a barker on the midway.

Snider co-produced *Step Right Up* with Tony Brown (who also did the honors on *Guitar Town* and *Exit 0*) and Mike Utley (Jimmy Buffett's keyboardist, who adds thick organ and rattling piano here). The boisterous country-rock of

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most of the album is balanced by four solo-acoustic numbers, where Snider's smart, skeptical lyrics and funny, raspy vocals take apart such traditional country topics as prison and churches and such modern topics as convenience stores, television and drugs. Snider and Earle seem determined to drag Nashville into the 21st century, even if it goes kicking and screaming.

—GEOFFREY HIMES



## Toby Keith

*Blue Moon*

A&M 314 531 192

**T**oby Keith, now on his third album, is definite about what he wants to sing. For the most part it is his own songs. Writer or co-writer of nine of the ten, Keith does Keith over an attractively sparse production. In Nashville studio parlance, there's air in between the instruments. It lets you breathe in a way some of the bigger, more West Coast-style country music records don't. There's lots of blue lyrics and feelings on the cuff here, but they are honest; never maudlin or manipulative.

I found favorites here. "A Woman's Touch" is a standard for the lonely man, with a stinging electric blues guitar that blows the self-pity away. Its ragged, fall-away ending gives the impression of a late night club scene winding down, where the players are playing for themselves, the bartender and a few staunch friends. I really dig it. "Lucky Me" has been circulated on the radio a lot. It's good. "Does

That Blue Moon Ever Shine on You" is a positive love song with a steel guitar crying in the background. Sure takes the sugarcoat off first-person-positive, giving it an earthy twist that whole subgenre badly needs for a grownup's ear.

But there has to be a bright side to all this blues. Greasy, rocking and bumping comic relief comes in the tight package with "Hello." Toby must have been taking his Jimmy Buffett vitamins on the day he wrote this one. Caught by an untimely phone call to his Caribbean retreat, he never gets a chance to give his girlfriend back home a plausible excuse for why he's been so out of touch. This is the best song here and worth the record by itself.

Another backbone thumpin', uptempo number is "She's Gonna Get It," this meaning, in the positive sense, "no matter what it takes, the sky's the limit." If it didn't just knock me in the dirt, it certainly has "good" written all over it.

And that probably sums up this whole effort. It could have been put together with steamroller power, with bass notes that rattle your intestines, wall-to-wall-of-sound overdubs and crackling arena-rock guitars, but Toby aimed for something more intimate here. He hit it square on the head.

—BOB MILLARD

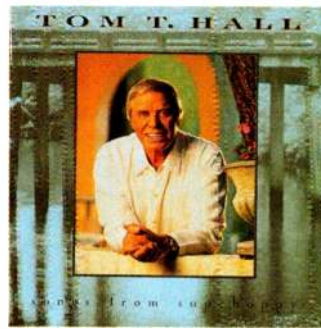
## Tom T. Hall

*Songs From Sopchoppy*

Mercury 314 528 892

**I** think last year's 50-song boxed set retrospective on the common-folk genius storytelling style of Tom T. Hall must have jogged a lot of people's memories—including Tom T.'s own—as to just what a singular voice he was.

This album is a welcome breeze from the little Florida village on the Sopchoppy River where Tom T., long since retired from the rigors of Music Row, retreats to the



peace of quiet beaches and locals who don't make too much over him.

The title derives from the fact that this album was recorded in a barn studio called the Possum Club, with a couple of longtime Tom T. Hall road pickers and a bunch of pretty good musicians from Sopchoppy who call themselves The Dreadful Possums. "If this project seems to lack technical perfection, it is because it was recorded in a barn...it was not planned; it just happened," says Tom T. in the liner notes. There certainly are some rough edges—denture sibilance comes to mind—but the rough edges are part of a laid-back feel that mainly reminds us that music can be relaxing without being New Age syntho-claptrap.

Tom T. Hall is writing mostly about his retirement life and from memories here. Don't expect a 90's "Harper Valley P.T.A.," and you won't bring unrealistic expectations to what is a gentle, nostalgic, even sweet collection of new tunes and performances by one of country music's most one-of-a-kind artists. "Raking Up Leaves," "Sky Blue True" and "Water Blue" are softly, jazzily blue ballads, the kind that comprise the lion's share of the 10 cuts. "Shoes and Dress That Alice Wore" is the closest to the old Tom T. Hall stories, but that doesn't denigrate the others.

He credits Miss Dixie, his wife, for writing "Redneck Riviera," the only really upbeat song in the collection, and (tongue-in-cheek) for chasing him to the Gulf Shores with her incessant charity events

held at their Nashville home. "Little Bitty" is the only mid-tempo cut here, and it has the delightful whimsy of a John Prine composition, which probably has that influence reversed. You should really love its bounce, its sense of scale, and its nothing-matters-but-love philosophy.

Basically, this is a worthy effort by a happily retired genius. No one asked him to write a bunch of line dance numbers. No one really asked him to do anything new, but I believe we owe the Possum Club of Sopchoppy, Florida, a debt of gratitude for egging this living legend into a brand new record. This is a fan's meat. It may not set the new generation on its ear, but it rolls nicely over a fan who remembers an era of brilliance—Tom T. Hall's heyday.

—BOB MILLARD

## Ray Condo and His Ricochets

*Swing Brother Swing!*

Joaquin JR 2502

**P**atrick Carr's outstanding essay on Austin's Cornell Hurd Band ("Garth's Worst Nightmare") in last issue's Final Note leaves the door open for similar nominations. Mine is Ray Condo and His Ricochets, a quintet who couldn't create homogenized Music City sludge if their lives depended on it. You can't line dance to them, nor do they steal their song ideas from old Eagles or James Taylor LP's. The only smoke onstage during their performances comes from cigarettes in the clubs they play. They're not from the gang at Nashville's Dead Reckoning, nor do they hail from Austin or our West Coast. Their home base is Canada's West Coast, specifically Vancouver, British Columbia.

Condo used to sing rockabilly as leader of The Hardrock Goners. The Ricochets write few songs, preferring to cover many old and obscure Western swing, rockabilly and jazz

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tunes. Joaquin Records owner Jeff Richardson produced Western swing LP reissues on the Rambler and Western labels in the early 1980's, records devoured by the Condo group, which sort of brings them full circle. Their sound, however, avoids imitation. Whether swing, rock or blues, the energy fairly pulses from the speakers. Steel guitarist Jimmy Roy (who plays a vintage non-pedal Fender), guitarist-arranger Stephen Nikleva, bass slapper Clive Jackson and drummer Steve



Taylor (who uses only a snare onstage) sound like a much bigger band behind Condo's hyperactive, passionate vocals and muscular saxophone work.

Their Western swing skills come alive with Hank Penny's 1952 "Hadicillin Boogie." This was the Pee Wee King-Redd Stewart novelty that satirized the cure-all elixir, Hadacol. They follow with a jumping version of "Loud Mouth," the 1937 recording by the Texas band Smoky Wood and His Modern Mountaineers. "Strathcona," the sole original, features its composers, Jimmy Roy and Nikleva, reviving the spirit of the old Jimmy Bryant-Speedy West guitar-steel instrumentals.

Rockabilly gets a fair shake as well, with such obscurities as "Sunset Blues," Carl Perkins' "Rockin' Record Hop" and Lew Williams' "Something I Said." Condo turns Glenn Barber's "Ice Water," a Starday recording from the 1950's, into a ranting, raving mass of energy. Ruth Brown's "Teardrops from My Eyes" and Larry Darnell's

moody blues ballad, "What More Do You Want Me to Do," demonstrate their R&B mastery. Even more impressive is their skill at adapting 1930's small-group jazz into their sound without imitating. "Swing Brother, Swing" was originally recorded in 1935 by trumpeter Wingy Manone. "Tain't No Use" and "It Ain't Right," sung with urgency and fervor by Condo, come from virtuoso jazz fiddler Stuff Smith, whose 1930's versions, recorded with his Onyx Club Boys, were devoured by Western swing musicians of that day.

Retro bands run a risk that such revivals will result in pale imitations. The Ricochets' sound and approach precludes that by reaching into the past, bringing it into the present and keeping it exciting. No doubt the number of units sold does matter to Condo (and to Joaquin). The difference? The music matters more.

—RICH KIENZLE

## Jo Dee Messina

*Jo Dee Messina*  
Curb 77820

With her catchy debut single, "Heads Carolina, Tails California," Messina is launched in fine style. The album cut follow-up, "You're Not in Kansas Anymore," shows she's radio ready with a good ear for great songs. Her production, by Tim McGraw and Byron Gallimore, was done in Nashville sound rooms but is what I'd call state-of-the-art L.A. Country. Her vocals are very much a mix of Reba, Wynonna and Faith Hill, but these obvious influences don't keep her from establishing herself in her own right with these top-notch tunes and these kickin', seamless tracks.

Not just any first-time country chanteuse can walk in and command tunes from Nashville's best writers, but Jo Dee (and McGraw) did. There are ten very extraordi-

nary songs here; no waste. And Messina delivers them so that you get the impression that she's being conversational with you, rather than trying to see just how out-there she can push her vocal chords. Maybe it's just lyrics like "I'm waitin' for you/Tell me whatcha wanna do/You wanna make something of it?"—there's no pretense here.

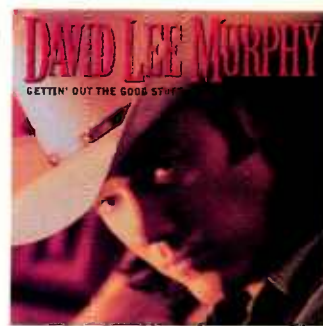
A certain amount of cynicism comes with the territory when you've pounded the Music Row pavement as many years as I have. I see a good-looking redhead being shown around as "the next big thing" by 1995's hottest country singer (Tim McGraw) and I wonder. There's always a chance that you'll get a Dee Dee Prestige or Kelly Foxtton or worse, when a star decides to produce an unknown female singer.

Not so in Messina's case. McGraw was straight up about his find—Jo Dee is the real thing. Heck, for those cynics who thought Tim McGraw was Curb Records' lucky mistake, Jo Dee's success is showing Curb to be the little label that could in Nashville.



There's not a lot more to say about this record. It won't cure cancer, and it doesn't describe a whole new direction in modern country music, but it's 100% listenable and totally pleasurable. Jo Dee doesn't make me laugh or make me cry once here, but she doesn't seem to mean to, either. She's just a real fine singer singing real fine songs. Catchy, entertaining, memorable, and we haven't even had to contemplate her navel; works for me.

—BOB MILLARD



**David Lee Murphy**  
*Gettin' Out the Good Stuff*  
MCA 11423

David Lee Murphy literally came *Out With a Bang* last year. His debut CD of that same name sold nearly a million copies. His Number One hit, "Party Crowd," was named by *Radio & Records Magazine* as the most played single of 1995.

*Gettin' Out the Good Stuff*, Murphy's sophomore album, is also going to most likely result in more of a bang than a whimper, even though the ten cuts on it (all of which Murphy wrote or co-wrote) are a bit uneven, and some simply pack a bigger wallop than others.

Murphy, as a singer, is more wistful than compelling. He's not a low-moaning honky tonker, nor is he a smooth balladeer. Yet his slightly upper-register style is intriguing, earnest and real easy to warm up to, all the same.

When Murphy sings one of his mid-tempo love songs—like "She's Really Something to See," or the first single from the album, "Every Time I Get Around You"—it's easy to get the feeling you've heard it all before.

Similarly, "100 Years Too Late" is a nostalgic look at Jesse James and other 19th-century outlaws and the peculiar notion of freedom they've come to symbolize in the modern imagination. The sentiments and imagery here also sound a little bit too trite and recycled to hold your attention for long.

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Murphy sounds much more at home, and much more interesting, when he's spinning out one of his devil-may-care odes to life in the low and outside lane—"Genuine Rednecks," "Born That Way" and "I've Been a Rebel (And It Don't Pay)." "Pirate's Cove" is a haunting number that vividly suggests all the deep, dark nighttime secrets of the cypress swamps.

On "Breakfast in Birmingham," Murphy adroitly mixes metaphors of the pleasures of down-home dining with the high anxiety of romantic estrangement and unanswered telephones. "The Road You Leave Behind" is a beautiful song about the binding power of good deeds.

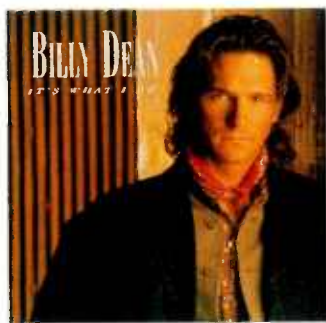
On these tracks and elsewhere Murphy proves himself a skilled songwriter and a journeyman singer who's long on inspiration and short on pretense.

In short, he's just the kind of artist that country's currently ailing mainstream needs more of. —BOB ALLEN

## Billy Dean *It's What I Do* Capitol 30525

It's praise laced with faint damnation to say that *It's What I Do*, Billy Dean's sixth and latest album, is pleasant to the ear, competently done and ultimately makes few emotional demands on the listener.

The problem with *It's What I Do* is not that Dean can't sing. His voice is pluperfect, belljar-clear, full of earnestness, energy and brio. It's also, alas, nearly devoid of personality, bereft of the sort of weird trills, curls, yelps, whines and other eccentric resonations that give each of the great stylists their peculiar distinction. I mean, if you listen and watch Merle Haggard sing, it's almost like there's pain buried way back there that he's just struggling to get to. But there is so little of that sort of conflict or tension in Dean's voice



that he makes the whole process sound effortless, dreadfully smooth.

Yet, thanks to his uniform enthusiasm, some great song choices and some snappy arrangements from producer Tom Shapiro (who produced "Billy The Kid" and other Dean hits), the album now and again manages to transcend Dean's continuing blandness. "In the Name of Love" (co-written by Doug Stone and Skip Ewing—the latter of whom is, of late, really coming on strong as a writer) is a touching story-song. "Down to Your Last One More" (by Gary Burr) is a clever lyric with a lively track on which Dean displays a little grit. With its staccato "Theme from Peter Gunn"-style guitar riffs and Dean's spritely vocal, "That Girl's Been Spyin' on Me" (Max T. Barnes and Tom Shapiro) is a triumph of style and novelty over substance. On "Play Something We Can Dance To" Dean scores a few points as both songwriter and adept country-pop crooner. "Leavin' Line" (by Pat Bunch, Pam Rose and Mary Ann Kennedy) is a credible duet with Linda Davis—a gifted singer who seems to share Dean's stylistic curse.

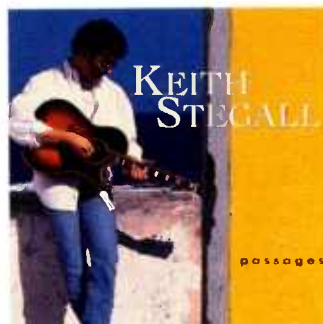
Yet, just as these pleasantly forgettable cuts spin past, one by one, and you're expecting merely more of the same, Dean not only surprises, he astonishes. Seemingly out of nowhere, he sinks his heart, soul and teeth into "I Wouldn't Be a Man," a lovely R&B/soul-flavored ballad written by Mike Reid and Rory Michael Bourke. The power, subtlety and maturity he brings to this

great song seem almost out of character, and for just four and a half minutes he rises to a level that is never attained elsewhere on *It's What I Do*.

—BOB ALLEN

## Keith Stegall *Passages* Mercury 314 528 437

No doubt, it's a first: the head of a Nashville record label (Mercury in this case) releasing his own solo album. But when you hear Keith Stegall's *Passages* and take a look at his impressive resume, it actually begins to make a lot of sense. Stegall first broke into the industry some years back as a songwriter, and later, as a recording artist. He's written or co-written Number Ones for everyone from Randy Travis and Alan Jackson, to Clay Walker and Mickey Gilley, and Johnny Mathis and Al Jarreau.



Recording on his own for Epic Records in the mid-1980's, Stegall had a couple of Top Ten singles and even earned an Academy of Country Music nomination for "Top New Male Vocalist." When this well dried up, he turned to production. He recorded some of Randy Travis' earliest cuts, including the Number One, "On the Other Hand," and he's been Alan Jackson's producer since day one.

But Stegall never lost his burning desire to be an artist. Thus, when he was asked to head Mercury's Nashville division, he insisted on a proviso: the label also had to sign him as an artist.

As improbable an arrangement as this is, *Passages* validates it. The album, which revolves around—in his words—a "mid-life crisis," is masterfully written, sung and co-produced (by Stegall, John Kelton and Carson Chamberlain).

As one of Nashville's most consistently successful producers, Stegall knows better than almost anyone that radio airplay is the key to any country career. And since radio, these days, tends to like uptempo "ditties," he's seen fit to include several of them. "Roll the Dice," the lead-off cut, is a generically upbeat number about beating the odds in the casual romantic "ISO" game. "Fifty-Fifty," with its delightful John Anderson/"Swingin'"-style hookiness, is a playful ode to that magical ratio that tends to make marriages work and divorces costly. "Boo Hoo" is a bluesy lament with a cool arrangement that manages to be both mournful and playful.

But the best cuts are those on which Stegall (who wrote or co-wrote nearly everything on *Passages*) slows down and does his mid-life woolgathering. "Another Guilty Rose" is a terribly sad ballad about loss of faith and fidelity in a marriage. "Middle Aged Man" is the chilling confession of 40-plus craziness. The piano bar ballad, "My Life," despite its slightly cloying pop arrangement, deals with a similar urgent dilemma. "A Perfect World" is just a little too Michael Boltonish for my tastes, yet it makes a poignant statement. "1969" offers a slightly ironic, yet grimly sentimental reminiscence on the wild & crazy 60's. "Hard Luck Cafe" has some great harmonies and a compelling California early-Eagles ring to it.

*Passages* is just the sort of album that could easily launch a career. But if it does take off, that raises all sorts of fascinating questions. Like, how do you run a record label while on a national tour? Ah, well, in this age of faxes, lap tops and e-mail, I guess all things are possible. —BOB ALLEN





The 1976 release of *Wanted: The Outlaws* by Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Tompall Glaser and Jessi Colter turned a creative revolution into a commercial bonanza.

The revolution died. The revolutionaries live on.

# THE OUTLAWS

## *Revolution Revisited*



BY PATRICK CARR

**T**he scene is New York City, the event the 20th anniversary of the *Wanted: The Outlaws* album, which among other things became the first country album ever to receive a multi-platinum certification from the Recording Industry Association of America. The album has just been released on CD for the first time, with all its original Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Jessi Colter and Tompall Glaser cuts, plus nine tracks advertized as “lost” and one brand new recording.

For the rationale behind the project, let’s go to the RCA press release, which quotes “RCA Label Group RLG/Nashville Senior Vice President and General Manager Randy Goodman” as saying, “In the midst of our ongoing catalog reviews we were hit with the realization that *Wanted: The Outlaws* had been unavailable for the past five years; and as a key recording of the modern era of country music we needed to get it out again. It just happened that 1996 was the 20th anniversary of the release, which gave the project a sense of urgency and excitement that, in turn, allowed us to develop a comprehensive marketing plan to hopefully reach a generation of country fans who have probably never heard this album, nor understood its significance.”

Goodman didn’t really *say* that, of course. Either he said something like it, and a publicist cleaned it up for him, or he (or the publicist) wrote it from scratch. Still, it gets the



point across, and you have our guarantee that all further quotes in this article actually happened as reported and are correctly attributed.

This one, for instance, is by myself, spoken to Jessi Colter while her husband and his old pal Willie Nelson squirm in front of one of a day’s worth of New York talk/entertainment TV cameras, trying to come up with a good answer to one particular interviewer’s surprisingly good question: “Why was *Wanted: The Outlaws* an important album?”

“That’s easy,” I tell Jessi. “It focused attention on the outlaw movement, which was the most significant

creative development in country music since Hank Williams, and since which nothing of equal creative significance has occurred.”

“There you go!” says Jessi, slapping her thigh. “That’s exactly right, Patrick. I wouldn’t say it, but I’m glad you did.”

A little later, Jessi delivers her own essential quote, this one about what exactly *has* occurred in country music since the demise of the outlaw movement.

“What I want to know,” she draws sardonically, “is who let the mules in with the thoroughbreds?”

Indeed. Later still, in a long black limousine sliding along Central Park South amid Manhattan’s ambient cacophony of screeches, shouts and sirens, I launch a similar sort of question across three feet of intensely aromatic airspace towards Willie Nelson.



“Check this out, Willie. Here’s how it seems to me. For a while there, after you and Waylon broke through, it really did sort of seem that things were on the up and up—you know, that in Nashville the system would bend itself more to the wishes of the artists, and people would get to make records more like they wanted to make, and there would be more diversity and freedom. But then, that just kind of got closed down. It seems like very shortly after *Wanted: The Outlaws*, the bosses just stamped all that stuff out. They came on with Kenny Rogers and the urban cowboys and all that crap, and it was back to business as usual. Do you see it that way?”

He stares at me for a moment from behind those thousand-mile eyes—with Willie, there’s always a short pause while his mind sets up, searches, rejects, selects, refines and finally delivers. You get to watch and wonder:

“Yes,” he concludes composedly. “I see it that way.”

**I**t’s history time: a reminder for those of us who were there, a little background for those who have joined us since.

The outlaw movement was “about” all sorts of things. It was about style and image: Willie wanting to drop all pretense and *look* like he smoked dope all day, Waylon wanting to look, in Dave Hickey’s immortal line (sorry, Jessi) “like a used turquoise salesman,” and all manner of other sports and somebodies on the radical fringe of country music wanting to look just as pretty as they felt. If you want to perceive this phenomenon collectively, in terms of the counterculture arriving on Music Row a little later than it reached most other places, you could do that.

You might also think in terms of content: about a wave of creative energy which had begun building in Nashville during the 60’s—a generation of Southern/Western poets, everyone from Roger Miller and Tom T. Hall to Kris Kristofferson and Guy Clark, making music their medium and Tootsie’s Orchid Lounge their salon—and so a new, wider vision of country music’s lyrical boundaries being fully formed, and straining for expression, as the 70’s began.

Finally, you could and should think in terms of power, money and freedom: about a music-making system which bought songs cheap from writers and sold them high to singers, with neither

the writers nor the singers getting any significant share of the control or profit. Typically, the basic arrangement of things Nashvillian in the 60’s was a producer/publisher/record executive who’d tell everyone else what to do and keep most of the money, a singer who’d get his (or her) voice on the radio if he did what he was told, and a songwriter who got to pay the rent.

That’s the system against which the people who eventually became known as “outlaws” struggled. Willie Nelson, who’d been allowed to make records because he was such a valuable songwriting talent, wanted to do so on his own creative terms, and perhaps even get the results promoted and sold. Waylon Jennings wanted to sing the songs he wanted to sing, and have his records sound the way he heard them in his head.

Separately, then together, they went about achieving those goals, and that’s how it all started.

**G**liding down Broadway in the limo with Waylon, we’re talking New York, New York. It’s a helluva town. Waylon, his head swiveling, is trying to pick out the hotel where, at the tender age of 19, on his first trip to the Big Apple, he was introduced to the drugs that would run him for 20-odd years. “Yeah,” he says, “Tommy Allsup slipped two pills in my beer, and half an hour later, I was like, ‘what is *this*?’”

In another hotel just up the Great White Way, he says, he once stood in the very room where Jimmie Rodgers died. Then, of course, there was that other gruesome New York night years later at the Rainbow Room, the ultra-swanky lounge atop Rockefeller Center where RCA Records threw a big bash to celebrate the original *Wanted: The Outlaws* and, fearing that the mightily stoned Waylon might not show up if he knew what was happening, chose to keep him in ignorance of events until the elevator doors closed at his back and there he unavoidably was, caught like a wolf in the highbeams.

“I wanted to kill those sonsabitches,” he laughs. “I mean, I was flyin’, it’s true, but I had it together better than a lot of people in that room”—and he probably did; with the potpourri of psychoactive substances circulating in the Rainbow Room that night (and any night in the Beautiful People’s Manhattan), a lot of folks had probably forgotten all about outlaws by the time one actually showed up. Waylon had a right to be annoyed. Still, he might have overreacted a little.

“I remember grabbing Joe Galante and telling him, ‘Your mother should be shot just for having you!’” He laughs again, almost in wonder. “And that was *Carmine* Galante’s *nephew* I was talking to, not just the guy in charge of promoting my records.”

A couple of things about all this. First, it’s a real pleasure to share old war stories with Waylon without having to fear that worse ones might be just around the corner. I haven’t seen much of him sober—he’s been intoxicant-free, Jessi says, for “what, 12, 13 years now?”—so for me, the contrast is startling. You could always see power, charisma and danger in him (how couldn’t you?); now there’s peace, grace and humor, too. His mama would be proud.



The other theme is the influence of New York as it was felt in the outlaw movement. Its most obvious expression was in the person of Neil Reshen, "New York Neil," the manager whom Waylon acquired and shared with Willie in the early '70s and who acted, as Willie told me at the time, as "a mad dog on a leash." Reshen, who had learned exactly how record companies kept musicians in their place during his stewardship of jazz genius Miles Davis (who was black, and a drug addict), went straight for the throat, beginning with an audit of RCA's account with Waylon, who at the time was broke.

Waylon picks up the story. "Sure enough, they'd kept about \$150,000 they owed me, so Neil went to them for that, and they said, 'Well, sue us!' We kept at 'em, and eventually they said, 'All right, we'll settle.' Neil got them to give up about \$75,000.

"The good part, though, was that they gave him two identical checks by mistake, and he got out of the building with them. He went straight to a phone and called me and told me, then said, 'I know, I know, you're gonna make me give one back, aren't you?' I said, 'Hell, no! Go to their bank right now and cash them both! They want some back, we'll just tell 'em, 'We'll settle.' Neil said, 'Waylon, you're a genius!'

"We ended up giving them back about \$35,000. Which wasn't too bad, but y'know, it was still *my* damn money."

Reshen's banzai tactics and intimidating style did wonders for Waylon and Willie in Nashville, where stories of his successful strikes and outrageous affronts can still evoke shudders in high places, and the New York state of mind of Reshen and his assistant, Sam Uretsky, was also advantageous on its home turf. It's impossible to imagine a Nashville manager thinking that a 1973 engagement at Max's Kansas City, home base of the Andy Warhol underground-androgynous set, could be good for Waylon's career, or that posters in New York subway stations could be anything but irrelevant to honky tonk heroes from Texas. The fact of the matter, though, is that those tactics worked brilliantly. It wasn't long before Waylon, Willie and the boys could negotiate with Nashville not as semi-nonentities within the country system, but as stars of the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*—and as names known to their adversaries' bosses, the guys on the top floors of the record companies' Manhattan headquarters.

Hazel Smith, now *Country Music's* "People" columnist and then Tompall Glaser's assistant in his Nashville publishing house/recording studio on 19th Avenue South—"Hillbilly Central," outlaw headquarters—remembers the fallout from the Manhattan connection. "They were all over the place," she says. "You'd look up, and there would be Bruce Lundvall [then the boss at CBS Nashville] leaning against the wall in Tompall's office with some big man from New York you'd never seen before. They were *real* interested in what was going on with us."

So were the journalists, among them myself (the *Times*, the *Voice*), Chet Flippo (*Rolling Stone*), and of course Dave Hickey, the former *Art In America* editor whose *Country Music* stories wrote an unforgettable subscript to the outlaw movement. Hickey, quite apart from having a savagely accurate eye and a wonderful wit, was always a little closer to the spirit of outlawism than the rest of us (though believe me, we did our best).

Here he is writing about the Waylon/Willie concert which capped off Nashville's 1973 Disc Jockey Convention and, with its very clear status as the place to be for those ahead of the music business curve, set the stage for outlaw expansionism.

"As the crowd began to empty out, I saw the definitive sign of the end of the beginning. The pop-journalists and hangers-on were moving around the emptying hall whispering in one another's ear, everyone trying to make sure they ended up at the correct after-party. The pecking order was being established. It was a scene I was used to after rock concerts, but to my knowledge this was the first time I had seen it in Nashville. It meant that our boys had made it; but it also meant that Nash-

ville was no longer a safe place for us laid-back layabouts."

Hickey was all too right, for the great irony of the outlaw movement was that while Willie and Waylon did indeed win creative freedom (for a while, anyway), the long-term result of their commercial success on the country music business was really just a shift from one level of control to another—from a low-budget system in which artists were tightly controlled because so little profit could be squeezed from them to a big-budget system in which they were tightly controlled because so much profit depended on them. Pre-outlaws, just a few good ole middlepersons on Music Row made out; post-outlaws, all kinds of dudes from New York, L.A. and compass points hither and yon got in on the party (and in on Nashville).

On the creative front, Hickey's end of the beginning was in fact the beginning of the end. Waylon's musical peak—on record, anyway—began in 1972 with his *Good Hearted Woman* and *Ladies Love Outlaws* albums, and began to fade in 1974, after he and Jack Clement came up with the timelessly wonderful *Dreaming My Dreams*. The creative storm which attended Willie's move from RCA to Atlantic and produced *Shotgun Willie* in 1973 had blown itself out by the time *The Sound in Your Mind* appeared on Columbia in 1976. Another great irony of the outlaw movement, then, was that its prime movers were already tiring when *Wanted: The Outlaws* reached out to that great rock/pop audience in '76 and the cowboy-rebel image caught ahold of the popular

**In the studio again 20 years later, Willie and Waylon cut Steve Earle's "Nowhere Road." It's the only new song to be included on the album's '96 release.**



imagination. By the end of the decade, of course, the 'rebel' ingredient had disappeared entirely from the mix, John Travolta had become the cowboy to beat, every idiot on the Upper East Side was limo-ing down to Bloomingdale's for a \$1000 buckskin skirt and a pair of Tony Lama's and the music stank.

Willie and Waylon moved through the outlaw hoopla with varying degrees of bemusement, frustration, alienation and humor. Waylon put some of his feelings on tape, particularly the emotional arc between "Luckenbach, Texas," recorded in January 1977, and "Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got Out of Hand" in April of '78. The latter didn't prove very popular. The former became an anthem for all the yahoos who maybe even meant it when they sang along with "Let's go to Luckenbach, Texas, Waylon and Willie and the boys..."

Sitting in some Green Room in New York, Waylon looks over at Willie and starts laughing about that. "You know, I don't believe I've ever been to Luckenbach," he muses. "I do remember you calling me about it, though. You remember that thing you wanted me to do?"

Now Willie laughs. "Yeah," he tells us. "I thought we should

move there, buy up a whole bunch of land, sell it to people who wanted to be near us, then go live someplace else." He turns back to Waylon. "You wouldn't go for it, though, would you?"

"Hell, no, I wouldn't!" Waylon snorts. "If I'd gone for even half your schemes back then, I'd still be broke. It got so I hated for you to call. It'd be, like, four in the morning and the phone would ring, and 'Oh, no, not that little redheaded sonofabitch wantin' my money again!"

Willie shakes his head slowly and grins. "Speed planning," he says. "I was using the speed planning method."

**A**ny day with Waylon and Willie is going to have its moments. Not for nothing are their names linked so inextricably that at one point, Waylon asserts, the top man at RCA—"some South American guy, I think he was"—believed them to be one person. They do get along, and they do seem to inspire each other to levels at least as high as their individual norms.

Here's Willie, for instance, in response to a TV host in Phoenix (via satellite), who mentions that it was in Phoenix, over lunch, that the future outlaws first met. The host asks Willie if he remembers what he had for lunch. There's that half-second beat, and then, innocently, "Today?"

And here's Waylon on Steve Earle, the youngest of the 70's outlaw songwriters, who wrote and produced "Nowhere Road," the only genuinely new track on the new *Wanted: The Outlaws*: "Steve brings three dogs with him to sessions. One bites. You don't know which one it is."

And Willie again, after an interview by one particularly ignorant, unprepared, disinterested TV person: "He was so bad, he could be in radio."

Willie, by the way, seems fit and well. His hair is longer than it's ever been; facially he's looking more and more like a very calm hawk; and he's lithe and lean, moving smoothly and silently on his neat little New Balances. Waylon too is in fine shape, trim and alert and effective. Somehow he seems younger than Willie by more than the six years that actually separate them. Perhaps that comes from hanging out with Shooter, his and Jessi's son, these past 14 years.

I guess it says a lot for Waylon and Willie's bond that they can still be so easy with each other despite their divergent paths on the mood alteration road—one so committed to the sober path and one so fixed on the other. It also seems that their different states suit most people with whom they're involved, at least as music makers and celebrities. Folks in general seem to prefer both an unchanged Willie Nelson and a Waylon Jennings who can laugh, not to mention draw breath.

There are of course those who say that Waylon's music went to hell when he started winning out over drugs. That's not so. His music went to hell when the drugs started winning out over *him*—when the terminal phase of his addiction kicked in. When his music came back from hell, outlaws weren't in fashion anymore.

**E**very anniversary celebration needs a "Where Are They Now?" segment. Here's ours.

Jessi Colter, despite the fact that no record biz whiz seems interested in employing her talents, remains an intriguing singer and gifted songwriter (she wrote "I'm Not Lisa," and "I'm Looking for Blue Eyes" and "Storms Never Last"). She tours with Waylon and is featured in his show.

Tompall Glaser still lives in Nashville, but, alas, is no longer active in the music business.

If you don't know what Kris Kristofferson, Billy Joe Shaver,

Steve Young, Guy Clark, Lee Clayton, Bob McDill and the other songwriting stars of the outlaw days are up to, you need a subscription to this magazine.

Roger Schutt, a/k/a Captain Midnite, who with Hazel Smith was a fixture at Hillbilly Central, is married to a good woman, still working in radio, and still in touch with Waylon and Jessi. Kyle Lehning, who worked as the engineer in Tompall's studio, rose to wealth and fame as Randy Travis' producer and is now a big wheel. Neil Reshen still represents artists, but in the art, not music, business, and Mark Rothbaum, barely an adult when he first visited Nashville under Reshen's wing, has been doing just fine as Willie's manager these past 15 years or so.

That leaves a few others who were almost planets unto themselves in the 70's—Kinky Friedman, now a writer of humorous detective novels; Bobby Bare, still his graciously gifted but shamefully underemployed self; Jack Clement, still the clown prince of the cowboy waltz over there on Belmont Boulevard—and lastly and very much leastly, the journalists: Flippo working the Nashville desk for *Billboard*, Hickey teaching at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, and me.

And where am I? I'll tell you. I'm sitting here typing with the headphones on, listening to Waylon duetting with Kimmie Rhodes on "Maybe We'll Just Disappear" from her lovely new *West Texas Heaven* album—the song multi-layered with meaning and emotion, the writing craft flawless, Waylon's vocal deep and delicate, the mood set and driven, as was *Dreaming My Dreams*, by Jack Clement's magic rhythm guitar—and I'm just thrilled. This is wonderful work, just wonderful, and the next two discs I'm going to play, Waylon's own new *Right for the Time* and Willie's *Spirit*, are very nearly as great.

Here's how they go. Waylon, having once again tired of dancing on some producer's string and being jerked around by some executive's agenda, has once again done something decisive about it, fleeing RCA

for producer Randall Jamail's independent Houston label, Justice Records, and recording "just the way I felt like doing it, not to try to get a hit or nothin'." He has ended up with clearly his best album in, you guessed it, 20 years. So perhaps the botching of his career and the squandering of his talent these past far too many long, dry seasons need not necessarily remain the depressing sequel to any reflection on the enduring brilliance of his peak years.

Willie has also pulled off quite the anniversary coup, by giving us what *he* always did best: an album of himself singing a collection of his own new, scarily sad, wry, lonely, witty songs with minimal distraction. These days, though, you can no longer say that this arena is where he works best, because in the past few years he's also given us a superb pop-country set piece in *Across the Borderline* and a great, stylish little Texas country album in *Just One Love*. So as he himself admits, "I'm doing okay. I'm on a roll."

Which gets us to the bottom line. This anniversary stuff for which Waylon, Willie and Jessi are deadhead-hopping in Manhattan is meaningless in anything but a commercial sense—a marketing ploy to re-sell a marketing ploy from two decades ago—for it certainly won't do what somebody should, which is to bring the outlaws' best work, including their latest, to the attention of the kids who rushed to buy Johnny Cash's *American Recordings*, or those who are flocking to the banner of *Insurgent Country*.

Still, the hoopla can't hurt, and it certainly serves to remind us that although the outlaw movement was eradicated long ago, and its movers are now banished from the country mainstream, the music itself is thriving: growing, progressing, living. This is a dubious anniversary, but *that* is a clear-cut triumph. ■



Tompall, Waylon, Jessi and Willie go platinum with RCA execs Ken Glancy, Jerry Bradley and Chet Atkins in 1976.

# Newsletter

## REVIEWS & FEATURES

### It's Summertime (And We Couldn't Be Happier, Especially After This Winter)!

By the time you read this, summer—and its multitude of enjoyable leisure activities—will be in full swing. You know, all of the fun and even frivolous good times we've been waiting for all winter: vacations, concerts, get-togethers with family and friends, barbecues, picnics, beaches, lakes and mountains, state parks, baseball games, road trips (or train rides...) and all the rest. We hope you have a great time, and are able to enjoy all that this great land of ours has to offer this fine time of year. In fact, we hope you are reading this while sitting outside at the beach/mountains/lake with an ice tea/lemonade/beer, just taking it easy, soaking up the sun/enjoying the shade of a tree, laughing, having fun... (Are you sensing a little bit of cabin fever after our *record-breaking winter*...?)

And as always, if you do anything country music related, and

have a tale to tell, write it up and send it in to the *Newsletter*. We'd be happy to print your experiences, and your fellow members would love to read about them, and see your photographs, too. Did you go to Fan Fair this year? Branson? Take a road trip to see your favorite star in concert? Attend a country music or bluegrass festival? Tell us about it!

Moving along, a few more words about Collections are in order. Your entries have started to come in at a nice even pace again, with everything we had in house at the time of deadline used in this issue (no annoying backlog—yet!). What's more, almost everyone who sent in an entry followed the new guidelines. Those who didn't, didn't get in. Let's hope things continue to go so smoothly...

One last thing, did I mention we had a *record-breaking winter*?

### Country Radio Gets It Right!

*Now here's something we don't get to print very often: A member's letter describing how good their local country radio station is! Jerold Weaver hails from Chatham, New York, which is near both Albany and the Massachusetts border. Anyone else have an especially interesting station near them?*

Does a real country radio station make a sound if it falls into a forest of conventional country station of today? Boy, I sure hope so...

If you like old and new, plus classics, there's a new station in the Albany, New York, area. It is WTRY, 96.3 FM, and my radio dials are all set to it!

Finally, someone is listening to the fans. I have been a fan since the 50's, and I've had to carry a case full of tapes in my car in order to hear anything other than the Top 15 or 20 songs, over and over.

Now I can hear the Hag, Waylon and George, plus the ladies—including Kitty, Loretta and Jean. We get Opry members past and present, and many who never got the call to join. We also get the new folks, which makes it a truly great country mix. I'm writing this because I think the station deserves a plug. All of us real country fans in this area have a new friend in WTRY. No, I don't work for them, but I do get both of your magazines!

**Jerold Weaver**  
Chatham, New York



**Big-time Mavericks fan Dorothy Stanley (third from left), and her daughter Diana, surrounded by their favorite band: from left, Paul Deakin, Raul Malo, Nick Kane and Robert Reynolds (hubby of Trisha Yearwood). See next page for Dorothy's tribute poem to the boys.**

### Those Marvelous Mavericks

*Typically, poems, songs, etc., from members would go in the Readers Create section, but since this poem also included a photograph and a letter, it seemed to fit better here. Member Dorothy Stanley*

#### In This Issue

- About Collections...
- Ode to the Mavericks
- One Lucky Dwight Fan
- Notorious Legend Spade Cooley

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

*hails from Wilmington, Delaware, and is, clearly, a big Mavericks fan.*

I'm an avid fan of The Mavericks, and I wrote this poem, which I thought might fit in Readers Create. I've also enclosed a photograph of my daughter, Diana, and me when we met the band. It was great! They're gracious (gorgeous!), and so much fun! I love to see/read/hear everything and anything on them.

Your magazine and The Mavericks are here to stay!

**Dorothy Stanley**  
Wilmington, Delaware

### ODE TO THE MAVERICKS

I'd follow them to Timbuktu,  
For a song, a glimpse of Nick's tattoos.  
To Baltimore, Philly, even Vegas,

Anywhere The Mavs can take us.

I've applauded Robert's "get down" bass,  
Done in the finest musical taste.  
And Paul's terrific timely beats,  
Oh what a thrill! Those Meet and Greet!

But when on to the heavens I shall pass,  
I won't be touched with its unearthly class.

The angels' songs will be so shallow,  
For I've experienced the voice of Raul  
Malo.

—Dorothy Stanley

### Wall of Fame

Here's another one that almost goes in Readers Create, but since it included photos and an interesting story.... Bonnie Rathje is a member in Rising City, Nebraska, and she turned her hobby into a new business.

Last year I began drawing pencil and charcoal portraits of country artists whose shows I attended. The first portrait I did was in April of '94, of Brooks & Dunn. I was able to meet them before the show and got them to autograph my drawing. Since then, I've done portraits of almost 60 different performers whom I've seen in concert. All but three of them are autographed. One of my most recent portraits is of Merle Haggard. I saw his show at the Nebraska State Fair and was thrilled when he signed my drawing for me.

Bonnie Rathje, below, and one of her drawings that grace the "Wall of Fame" in her backyard art studio. She's had the stars autograph almost all of them.



What started out as a hobby led me to start a freelance art business, Off the Wall Graphics. Last fall I had an art studio built in my back yard, and I keep busy doing sign painting, original artwork, logo design, etc., but I especially like doing portraits. Enclosed are photos of some of my drawings, and one of me by my "portrait wall." I'll be starting on my second wall soon!

Bonnie Rathje  
Rising City, Nebraska

### Still More Collections Comment

In the March/April and May/June issues, when we discussed new rules for the Collections section upon its reopening, we asked for your comments. Here are a few of your responses. There's much food for thought here.

### NEW RULES FAIR

As a member of the CMSA, I'm quite happy with your new rules for the Pen Pal section. I feel that those who can not conform to these rules need not be included. The new rules are very fair, and will hopefully make the section easier on you! Thank you for providing this service.

Christi Pemberton  
New Providence, Iowa

### REWARDING RESULTS

This is in response to your request for input regarding the Collections section. My dealing with this section have *all* been extremely rewarding! I collect only on K.T. Oslin and have contacted several advertisers—with excellent results. Also, I have made several friends. In one instance, someone was looking for a Kathy Mattea video. I sent her the name of someone I knew had the tape. Since then, we've met during Fan Fair, and will again this year. We still correspond, and she collects K.T. Oslin stuff for me, while I collect Kathy Mattea material for her. I feel this section is wonderful and really appreciate your magazine offering this service to fans. Printing them by date received, and the other rules, are fair.

Fran Alsbrook  
Nashville, Tennessee

### DEALERS SHOULDN'T BE IN

As a member of the CMSA, I am appalled at the nerve of some dealers using up all the space to get "free" advertising for their businesses. I see certain people in almost every issue, and it's unfair to other people who may want to advertise some special thing just once. I would suggest that these ads be rejected, and that if they want to advertise their business that they do it in *Goldmine Magazine*.

Jan Genske  
Madison, Wisconsin

In many ways, we agree.—Ed.

### Top Five of 1995

Roxanne Johnston, CMSA member from Hibbing, Minnesota, took us up on our offer to print members' favorite country albums of the year. Says Roxanne, "Good thing you didn't ask for six, cuz five was it! Here they are in no particular order."

### TRAVIS TRITT

*Greatest Hits, From the Beginning*  
Can't come up with the words to describe this flawless collection of songs.

### MARTY STUART

*The Marty Party Hit Pack*  
It's too short. There are many more songs that could've been included.

### STACY DEAN CAMPBELL

*Hurt City*  
I literally ran out and bought this after hearing the single, "Eight Feet High."

### DWIGHT YOAKAM

*Gone*  
He runs us through the emotion scale here. "This Much I Know" is my favorite end of that scale!

### ALAN JACKSON

#### *The Greatest Hits Collection*

I knew he was destined to be someone big in country music back in 1990: He had run out of 8x10 glossies, so I had him autograph my popcorn box!

Roxanne Johnston  
Hibbing, Minnesota

### Lucky Dwight Fan

*Flo Eyestone (whose name I hope I spelled right!) is a member in Urbana, Illinois. She tells an interesting story below, about Dwight, her cat and the lottery. No kidding!*

Thought you might be interested in this photograph of my 1988 Mustang Convertible with the "DWIGHT Y" license plates. My hubby got them for me for Christmas. He knows I love Dwight's music so much, he thought I love the plates. Of course, I do!

I belong to Dwight's fan club, and my cat, Puddin' n Paws, is a member, too. Also, Larry (my hubby) and I won the Illinois State Lottery, and have nine years of security left. We bought a new house, two cars, and all kinds of antiques. We've really enjoyed it, and it's given me more time to listen to Dwight and watch his videos! I just wish he would come to Illinois to perform. Hope you can use this photo.

Flo Eyestone  
Urbana, Illinois



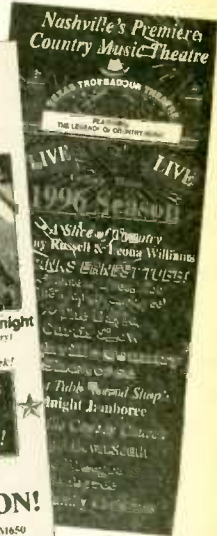
Flo Eyestone shows off her Dwight plates.

### E.T.'s Traditions Live On

Burlington, West Virginia, is home to Kathy Johnson, who recently paid a visit to the Texas Troubadour Theatre in Nashville, home of the Ernest Tubb Record Shop's *Midnight Jamboree*. She suggested we get someone to write about the Theatre, but she does quite well at it herself! Here are her thoughts.

Country music is full of traditions, landmarks and milestones, and I am writing to ask that you consider giving some coverage to another one this year. Are you

Singer/song-writer Leona Williams is one of the regulars at the Texas Troubadour Theatre in Nashville. The venue is now home to the Ernest Tubb Record Shop's *Midnight Jamboree* performance, a 50-year-old tradition begun by E.T.



aware that this is the 50th Anniversary of the Ernest Tubb Record Shop's *Midnight Jamboree*? That is something worth celebrating, especially for us traditional fans. Something else that amazes me is that it's still free. I was able to visit the broadcast recently and was totally awed. It brought back so many memories of listening to the Opry and then the *Midnight Jamboree* before falling asleep with my transistor radio tucked under my pillow.

An interesting twist, I think, is that

the co-owner of the Ernest Tubb Record Shop, Mr. David McCormick, began his career working for the legendary Troubadour while a teenager. And Leona Williams, one of the current headlining acts, toured with Ernest when she was a young entertainer just learning the music business. They both have lots of stories to tell. How ironic that two people who learned so much from Ernest are now instrumental in carrying on the traditions he began.

The influence of Ernest is very obvious to people who visit the Record Shop. When I visited, I was very impressed by the beautiful theater that now serves as home to the *Midnight Jamboree*, and by the friendliness of the staff. More than that, I saw the best country music show that I have ever seen in my 30-odd years of being a die-hard country fan. I was particularly impressed by the stage presence and talent of Leona Williams. She reaches out to the fans like no one I have ever seen. She learned from Ernest well. He was famous for signing autographs for hours and talking to his fans. I am sure that, if there really is a Hillbilly Heaven, as old Tex Ritter sang to us about, E.T. is smiling down on the Texas Troubadour Theatre often and thinking, "Give them a great song and a pretty smile, Leona." Then, of course, he'd add, "And, thanks!"

I am enclosing a brochure that I picked up just last weekend when I visited Nashville and the Texas Troubadour Theatre. Needless to say, I had a wonderful time and intend to return often. Let's make other fans aware that real country music is alive and well—thriving. Ernest would be proud.

Kathy Johnson  
Burlington, West Virginia

### March 1996 Poll

George Strait *Strait Out of the Box*  
George Strait "I Know She Still Loves Me"

Make it three in a row now for George at the top of both your Single and Album picks. And, like last issue, Alan Jackson runs a close second in both categories. Albums first: Following behind George's boxed set is Alan's *Greatest Hits Collection*. Third place goes to another CMSA favorite, Dwight Yoakam, and his latest release, *Gone*. Shania Twain's *The Woman in Me* moves up from fifth last issue, to fourth this time. And rounding out the Top Five is Vince Gill's *When Love Finds You*.

After George, your remaining Top Three singles were Alan's "I'll Try" in second, and the title track to Faith Hill's current album, "It Matters to Me," in third. Fourth place went to Wade Hayes and "What I Meant to Say." Rounding out the Top Five was Shania Twain's "(If You're Not in It for Love) I'm Outta Here." Don't forget to vote in this issue's Poll!

## Attention, Members!

All CMSA members are welcome to participate in the Collections section, but please keep in mind the following rules: 1) Membership number *must* accompany entry. 2) Entries *must* be kept to 40 words or less (we may occasionally be *slightly* flexible on this, but only in Information, Please. 3) Entries for Pen Pals from members under the age of 16 *must* be accompanied by a note from a parent or guardian giving permission. 4) Only one entry per member per issue. 5) We reserve the right to edit for space and style. 6) Requests for romance or photos will not be printed. 7) Entries that do not follow these guidelines will be discarded.

## Collecting the Magazine

Members, please help each other complete your magazine collections.

• Back issues of *Country Music Magazine*, *Music City News*, *Country Song Roundup* and a few others. Also some older LP's of many artists. Send SASE for list. **Ron Kluth, 215 W. Mullett St. Apt. 209, Portage, WI 53901**  
 • For sale: *Country Music Magazine*, 1980's-present. Also, complete set of *The Journal*. Like to sell all. Make offer. **Albert M. Spitzer Sr., Rt. 2 Box 299, Harrisburg, VA 22801**

## Information, Please

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

• Wanted: audio copy of Grand Ole Opry 70th Anniversary, aired October 14, 1995, over WSM-AM, 9:30 portion hosted by Porter Wagoner where Wilma Lee Cooper sang "The Legend of the Dogwood Tree." Also Opry memorabilia, plus Acuff, Minnie Pearl, Hank Snow, Wilma Lee, Brother Oswald LP's and memorabilia. **Craig E. Davis, 1730 E. 2nd #108, Edmond, OK 73034**

• For sale: close-up concert photos of Faith Hill, James House, Reba, Tanya, Loveless, Strait, Collie, Tritt, Dwight, Martina, Judds, many more. SASE for list and photocopy of your favorite artist. **Richard D. Moore, 20 Maple St., Hopedale, MA 01747-1116**

• 1000's of records (and memorabilia) for sale. Write with wants or ask for lists: general, country, Reba, Hag, Cash, Patsy, Dolly, Conway, Loretta, Glen Campbell, Hank Jr., Waylon, Crystal, Orbison, Buck Owens, many more. A stamp or two per list would be appreciated. **Jan Martin, RRL Box 333, Amboy, IN 46911**

• For sale: autographed photos of your favorite country stars. Send \$2.00 and SASE for complete list. **D. Luhn, 3504 Westvie Rd., Westminster, MD 21157-7735**

• Wanted: words to the song "If I Knew Then What I Know Now," recorded by Kenny Rogers and Gladys Knight. Please send to: **Lynn Henk, 1515 S. 57th Ct., Cicero, IL 60650-1710**

• Wanted: CD's—*In a Different Light* by Linda Davis, *Ultimately Fine* by Ricky Van Shelton. Also, CMT Showcases on the following artists: Trisha Yearwood, Doug Stone, Lorie, Diffie, Tritt, Martina

McBride, Faith, Sawyer Brown, Clay, Clint, Little Texas, Tracy Byrd, Sammy Kershaw, Tanya, Randy Travis and Marty Stuart. **David Berens, 1000 Orleans, Topeka, KS 66604-1724**

• For sale: Onstage and offstage photos of all your favorite country artists. Also magazines, LP's, trading cards, clippings and posters. Name favorites and send SASE for lists. **Galen Duncan, 3517 Grier Nursery Rd., Street, MD 21154**

• Wanted: Rodney Crowell tapes from 1981-84, plus any pictures and VHS of him also. Send SASE with price and description to **Andrea Current, P.O. Box 194, Grand Rapids, MI 49522**

• For sale: LP's. Have Reba's *Heart to Heart* LP. best offer takes it. Enclose want list and SASE for reply. **Wilfred J. Lerche, 3123 W. Larsen Rd., Neenah, WI 54956**

• Trading cards for sale: Country God, Country Classic, Branson, Elvis, Coca-Cola, Marilyn Monroe, Finish Line Racing, etc. Plus baseball magazines, LP's, family recipes. SASE to **Trecia Floyd, 510 Boston Hill Rd., Monticello, KY 42633**

• Wanted: photos, newspaper clipping, TV appearances, etc., on Dan Seals. **W. Oldeack, 5 Clent Rd., Great Neck, NY 11021**

• New list of items for sale: magazines, articles, photos, newsletters, cassettes, pin-ups, trading cards. Send SASE. **Sarah Zahm, 4060 9 Mile Rd., Sparta, MI 49345**

• Photos and cassettes of current artists for sale. Low prices! \$1.00 for list and photo sample. Dorine (?), please write—I owe you photos! **Mary Florane, P.O. Box 5872, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406**

• Tim McGraw collector seeks ticket stubs, photos, newspaper articles, *Gavin Report*, *Video Magazine*, TV appearances (*Video Morning*, *E.T.*, *E!*, *Wild Horse Saloon*), cassette of *Not a Moment Too Soon* world premiere. **Amy Carraway, Rt. 2, Box 210, Murray, KY 42071**

• Looking for the following Dolly CD's (new or used): *Burlap and Satin* (RCA 4691), *Great Pretender* (RCA 4940), *Real Love* (RCA 5415) and *Think About Love* (RCA 9508). Will pay top dollar. **Mike Manes, 2040 Industry Rd., Atwater, OH 44201**

• Country stuff for sale. Lists available: 1) Memorabilia; 2) CD singles; 3) Full-length CD's; 4) Concert/radio shows; 5) Dolly; 6) Reba; 7) Vince; 8) Magazines. Two stamps each list. LP catalog, four stamps. **R.J. Cunningham, P.O. Box 661-CM, Somersworth, NH 03878**

• For sale, items on Judds and Reba: newsletters, articles, mags, etc. Also Crystal Gayle LP's, Faith Hill items and newsletters on BRC, Brooks & Dunn, Billy Dean, Collin Raye, Ronna Reeves, more. **Torry Hansen, P.O. Box 594, Hayfork, CA 96041**

• For sale: country albums by Bob Wills, E.T., Conway and Loretta, Patsy, Tammy, Floyd Tillman, Charley Pride, Ray Price, Elvis, Dolly, Porter, Buck, Kitty, Marty Robbins, more. Two stamps for list. **Mary Barker, 17876 Sequoia Ave., Hisperia, CA 92345**

• Photos for sale: close-ups, on/off-stage. Dwight, Alan, Aaron, Ducas, Collie, BRC, Marty Stuart, Tritt, Lawrence,

Chesnutt, Strait, Garth, many more. Also, mags and posters. SASE to **Linda R. Weyandt, RD 1, Greenfields Apt. C-3, Claysburg, PA 16625**

• Searching for program from Canada's Much Music, *Outlaws & Heroes*. Need shows from 2/24/91 (Judds contest winners announced) and 2/6/94 (JMM as guest). **A.M.J., Rte. 5, Box 578, Malvern, AR 72104**

• Selling extras from collection of George Strait memorabilia (collected since 1982): VHS tapes, mags, posters, news articles, stand-ups. Also Garth and country mags. Three stamps for lists. **Cheryl Simkins, 4707 E. Oak St. #5, Phoenix, AZ 85008**

• Wanted: McBride & The Ride appearances on TNN. I'll supply tape/postage. **Theresa Gay, 2416 S. 13th #916, Temple, TX 76504**

• Wanted: Videos, articles, etc. on Joy Lynn White, Kelly Willis and Jann Browne. Also, Willis' *Well Travelled Love* album, and Browne's *Tell Me Why*. Also want to correspond with fans of these artists. **Scott M. Hart, Rte. 3, Box 66-B, Clyde, NC 28721**

• Wanted: Dolly's *Rhinestone* soundtrack CD; Dolly 45's; Loretta albums *Before I'm Over You*, *I Like 'Em Country* and *Singin' Again* (with E.T.). **John Roberts, W320 S8349 Beulah Rd., Mukwonago, WI 53149**

• For sale: large collection of Louvin Brothers 45's and LP's. **Bob Rowland, 537 N. Syracuse Ave., N. Massapequa, NY 11758**

• For sale: sheet music and songbooks. All performers past and present. Send wants list and SASE for reply. **Mel Steinmetz, 1148 Beach Ninth St., Far Rockaway, NY 11691**

• For sale: country CD's, records, posters, videos, songbooks, 1940's-90's. Specialize in Johnny Cash. Free catalog. Will buy Cash items. **Paul Neil Anderson, Pinnacle Square Apts., 8709 Rue Riviera, Apt. 1-A, Indianapolis, IN 46226**

• For sale: press kits—Alan Jackson, JMM. Drawings of Minnie Pearl and Steve Gatlin signed by artist. SASE to **Stephen Buma, P.O. Box 121953, Nashville, TN 37212-1953**

• Wanted: Reba items, anything and everything! Memorabilia, clippings, pictures, posters, TV appearances, mags, etc. Send list with prices. **Travis Berry, 11722 Prosperity Ln., Moreno Valley, CA 92557-5641**

• Wanted: anything and everything on Tanya Tucker. Will take anything off your hands! Also want to hear from diehard fans who may have extra items to spare. For sale: Tanya "Black Velvet Lady" stand-up, \$80.00, plus all Tanya extras. **Shania Twain stand-up, \$120.00 plus Tanya extras. Waitman Myers, 710 N. Lewis St., Glenville, WV 26351**

• Serious Kelly Willis fan! Interested in buying photos, posters, fan club and concert materials. Would also appreciate any info on an active fan club. Anything and everything will be considered. Would like to hear from other fans as well. **Carmen P. Musolino, AP-5097, P.O. Box 99901, Pittsburgh, PA 15233-0901**

• For sale: autographed photos of your favorite country stars. \$2.00 and SASE with two stamps for list. **D. Luhn, 3504 Westview Rd., Westminster, MD 21157-7735**

• For sale: tons of clippings on Garth,

Reba, Alabama, Alan, Aaron, Brooks & Dunn, Vince, BRC, Marty, Tritt, Patty, Clay, Chesnutt, Tim, Tracy L., many more. I collect everything on George Strait, Jason Gedrick and Tuff Hedeman. Send SASE with favorites. **Tammy Henrikson, 3152 W. Holladay St., Tucson, AZ 85746**

• Looking for Amazing Rhythm Aces records on CD. Russell Smith said they were going to be reissued. Also seeking Claire Lynch's *Friend for a Lifetime* CD on Brentwood. Anyone have them, or address of publisher or distributors? **Dan Reedy, III Waban Hill Rd. N., Newton, MA 02167**

• Attention collector of 78's: Searching for the song, "Please Santa, Don't Let Daddy Buy Any More Whiskey." Heard it in the 40's, may go back to the 20's or 30's. Would appreciate having it on tape. Will pay reasonable price. Please reply if you can help. **Jean Miller, 20 E. Tyler St., Mt. Union, PA 17066**

• Would like video copies of all Ricky Van Shelton TV appearances from May 1994 to May 1996. **Donna Barrington, 123 Brown Rd., Pitts, GA 31072**

## Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail. *Pen Pals* is a means of introducing CMSA members who wish to correspond. It is NOT a "personals" column. Physical descriptions and requests for romance or photographs will not be printed. We also reserve the right to edit for space and style. Parent's written permission required for those 16 and under. See additional rules in box at the start of this page.

• 43-year-old serving time in California, looking for someone to write to. I sing and play guitar. Enjoy handiwork, arts and crafts and more. **Jeff A. Bailey H-33812, Pleasant Valley State Prison, Box 8503, C-4, 116-L, Coalinga, CA 93210**

• 46-year-old born and raised on country music. I like it all, but my favorites will always be Patsy Cline and Marty Robbins. Hobbies include writing, outdoors, listening to music, meeting new friends. **Mary Anne Souza, 44 N. Jackson Ave. #1-2, San Jose, CA 95116**

• Hello! I'm 22, divorced mom of one. Love country music. Would love to hear from other Garth fans. Also like Tim McGraw, JMM, Tracy Lawrence, George Strait and Wynonna. Enjoy dancing, outdoors, letters. Like to hear from all, age 20-40. **Susan Mayers, P.O. Box 1554, Freer, TX 78357-1554**

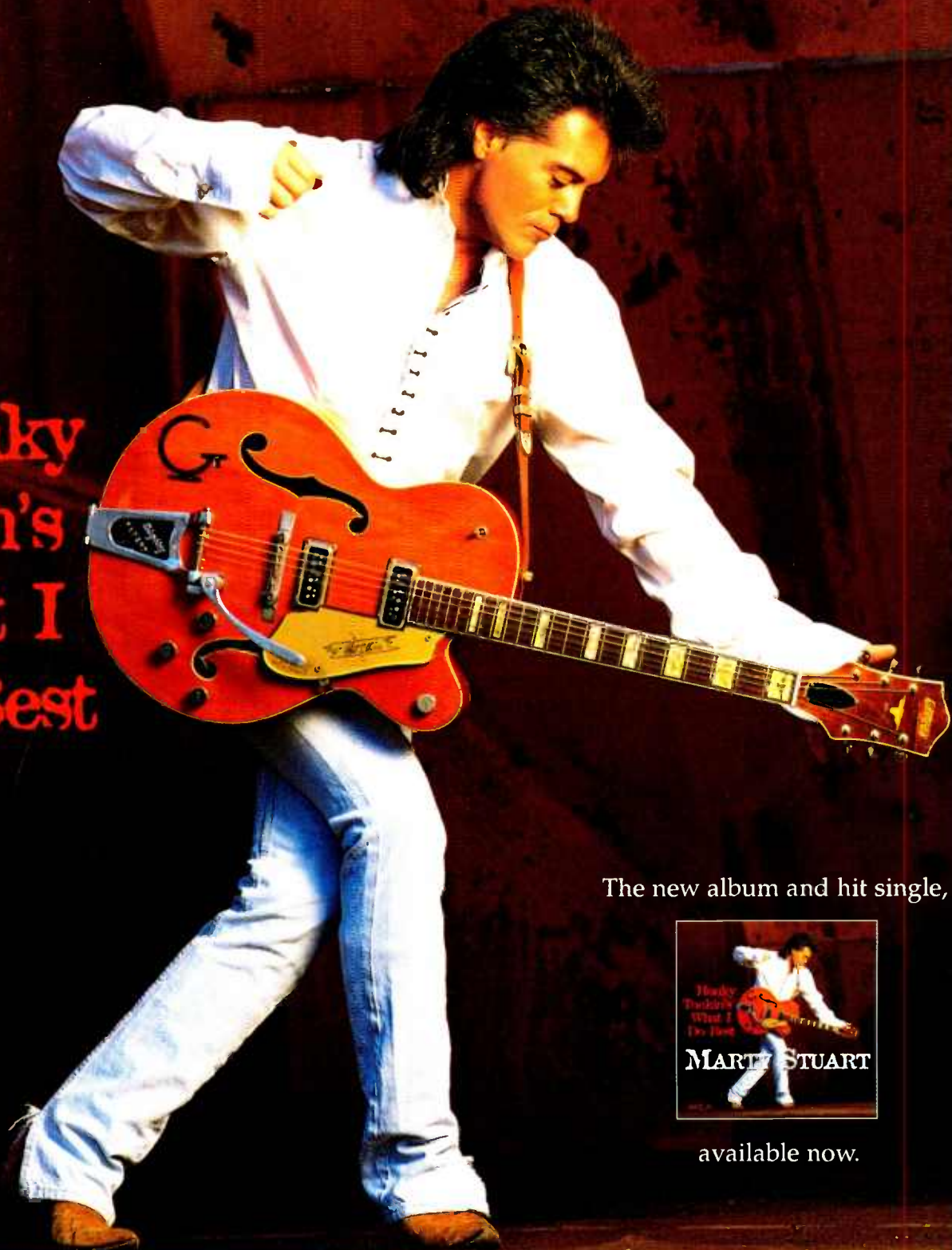
• Hello! I love country music. Favorites are Reba, Alabama, Travis Tritt and many more. Love to make new friends. I'm married and 43. **Gail Carter, 186 Miami St., Buffalo, NY 14204-2629**

• Greetings! 26-year-old country music lover: Faves are Rick Trevino, Neal McCoy, Lorie, Patsy. Enjoy going out, but always home for the Opry on Saturday! Like to make new friends, especially males, 18-45, but will answer all. **George S. Ellington, P.O. Box 463, Loganville, GA 30249-0463**

• Hello. 23-year-old country girl, born and raised on a dairy farm. Love all country music. Hobbies include camping, hiking, art, working with my show Guernseys. **Marie Goodwill, 40848 Buells Corners Rd., Centerville, PA 16404**

# MARTY STUART

Honky  
Tonkin's  
What I  
Do Best



The new album and hit single,



available now.

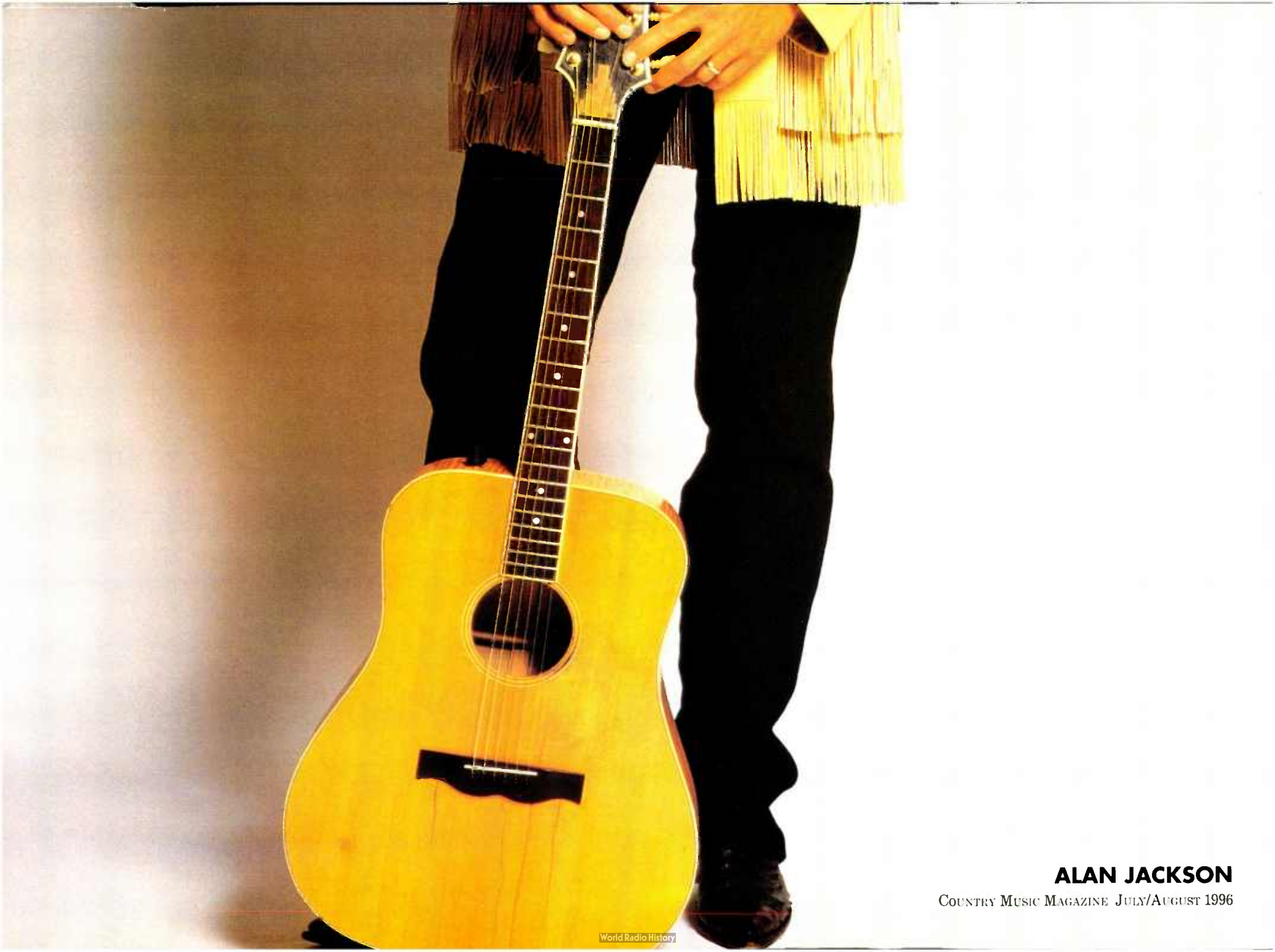
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Visit Marty on the internet at <http://www.mca-nashville.com>  
World Radio History

COUNTRY MUSIC







**ALAN JACKSON**

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE JULY/AUGUST 1996

# ALAN JACKSON

## Update

### Personal Data

*Given name:* Alan Eugene Jackson  
*Birthdate:* October 17, 1958  
*Birthplace:* Newnan, Georgia  
*Family:* Wife, Denise; daughters, Mattie Denise and Alexandra; mother, Ruth; father, Eugene; sisters, Diane, Cathy, Carol and Connie.

### Favorites

*Movie:* *The Outlaw Josey Wales*; *Actor:* Clint Eastwood; *Actress:* Jodi Foster; *Car:* 1955 Thunderbird convertible (the first car he owned); *Hobby:* Collecting classic cars and Harley-Davidson motorcycles; *Clothes:* T-shirt and jeans; *Hat:* Stetson Rancher Silver Belly; *Sport:* fishing; *Time off activity:* teaching his daughters to fish and water ski; *Self-penned song:* "Home"; *TV show:* *The Andy Griffith Show*; *Childhood Christmas gift:* go-cart built by his daddy; *Childhood pet:* a spider monkey named Peanuts; *Foods:* Brunswick Stew, pineapple and mayonnaise sandwich.

### Vital Statistics

Height: 6'4"  
Weight: 180 lbs.  
Color eyes: blue  
Color hair: blond

### Recording Career

*Record label:* Arista Records, One Music Circle North, Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Albums	Release Date
<i>Here in the Real World</i>	1990
<i>Don't Rock the Jukebox</i>	1991
<i>Honky Tonk Christmas</i>	1992
<i>A Lot About Livin'...</i>	
<i>(And a Little 'Bout Love)</i>	1992
<i>Who I Am</i>	1994
<i>Greatest Hits Collection</i>	1995
<i>Number One Singles</i>	
"Here in the Real World"	



"Wanted"  
"Chasin' That Neon Rainbow"  
"I'd Love You All Over Again"  
"Don't Rock the Jukebox"  
"Someday"  
"Midnight in Montgomery"  
"Dallas"  
"Love's Got a Hold on You"  
"She's Got the Rhythm and I Got the Blues"  
"Tonight I Climbed the Wall"  
"Chattahoochee"  
"Mercury Blues"  
"Who Says You Can't Have It All"  
"Summertime Blues"  
"Livin' on Love"  
"Gone Country"  
"Song for the Life"  
"I Don't Even Know Your Name"  
"Tall, Tall Trees"  
"I'll Try"

### Awards

*ASCAP:* Country Song of the Year, "Don't Rock the Jukebox," 1992; Country Songwriter of the Year, 1993; Country Songwriter of the Year, 1994; Country Song of the Year, "Chattahoochee," 1994.

*ACM Awards:* Top New Male Vocalist, 1990; Single of the Year, "Don't Rock the Jukebox," 1991; Album of the Year, *Don't Rock the Jukebox*, 1991; Single of the Year, "Chattahoochee," 1994; Album of the Year, *A Lot About Livin'...*, 1994; Male Vocalist of the Year, 1995; Male Vocalist of the Year, 1996.

*American Music Awards:* Favorite Country Album, *A Lot About Livin'...*, 1994; Favorite Country Single, "Chattahoochee," 1994.

*CMA Awards:* Music Video of the Year, "Midnight in Montgomery," 1992; Single of the Year, "Chattahoochee," 1993; Vocal Event of the Year, "I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair" (George Jones with Alan and others) 1993; Song of the Year, "Chattahoochee," 1994; Album of the Year, *Common Thread* (Eagles tribute, Alan's cut was "Tequila Sunrise"), 1994; Entertainer of the Year, 1995.

*Music City News Country Songwriter Awards:* Song of the Year, "Here in the Real World," 1990; Song of the Year, "Chattahoochee," 1993.

*TNN/Music City News Awards:* Album of the Year, *Here in the Real World*, 1991; Star of Tomorrow, 1991; Male Artist of the Year, 1992; Album of the Year, *Don't Rock the Jukebox*, 1992; Single of the Year, "Don't Rock the Jukebox," 1992; Male Artist of the Year, 1993; Entertainer of the Year, 1993; Single of the Year, "Chattahoochee," 1994; Video of the Year, "Chattahoochee," 1994; Album of the Year, *A Lot About Livin'...*, 1994; Male Artist of the Year, 1994; Entertainer of the Year, 1994; Single of the Year, "Livin' on Love," 1995; Vocal Event of the Year, "A Good Year for the Roses" with George Jones, 1995; Album of the Year, *Who I Am*, 1995; Male Artist of the Year, 1995; Entertainer of the Year, 1995.

# CMSA COLLECTIONS

•Howdy! Cowboy looking for friends to write to. I'm 21 and in the Marine Corps. Born and raised on a ranch in IA. Love all country music, from oldies to new, but George Strait is my favorite. Look forward to hearing from all. **LCPL Murphy, John P., HMX-1 MCAF Fiscal, MCCDC, Quantico, VA 22134.**

•Incarcerated. Looking for friendship. I love all country music, and some rock. I'm 27. Will answer all. **Bill Burgess, #A-210-448, P.O. Box 45699, Lucasville, OH 45699-0001**

•Hi! I'm a fan of country music looking for new pen pals. Favorite artists include Alabama, Bryan White and 4 Runner. Other interests include sports, movies and outdoors, to name a few. **Christi Penberton, P.O. Box 56, New Providence, IA 50206-9000.**

•Hi. I'm a 33-year-old, married female. Looking for pen pals, ages 20 and up who are Dwight and Billy Ray fans. No men, no prisoners. **Sheri Hockenberry, 3111 Federalist Wy., Sacramento, CA 95827.**

•Country boy serving time, in serious need of some mail! Favorites are Randy, Doug Stone, Clint Black and many more. Interests include poetry, drawing, sports and reading. Will answer all. **D.J. Terra H-99463, B-5-224-L, P.O. Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95331**

•Hi! I'm a 59-year-old widow, love country music, especially Dwight, Neal McCoy and Aaron Tippin. Enjoy country videos. Would like to hear from young men, 30-50. **Rose A. Rinehart, 125 Lakeview Ave., Manitou Beach, MI 49253.**

•Country music guy seeks pen pal gals, 18-25. Have my own band, work various country fairs. Like camping, song publishing. Faves are Garth, Alan and Mark Chesnut. **Jerry Minnick, P.O. Box 1946, Hiram, OH 44234.**

•Hi, I'm 45, married, mother of two sons. Love country music—everyone from Hank Sr. to Collin Raye. I enjoy auto racing, concerts and making new friends. Will try to answer all. No inmates. **Barb Faulkner, P.O. Box 275, Central Square, NY 13036.**

•Hi from KS! I'm 24 and country music crazy! Favorites include Alan Jackson, Aaron Tippin, Faith Hill, many more. Hobbies include cross-stitching, poetry, animals, writing letters. Will answer all. **Kimberly Burton, Rt. 1 Box 104, Moran, KS 66755.**

•My name is Jessica. I'm 18 and would love to write anyone, especially people here in CT. Will answer all. **Jessica Squier, 13 West St., E. Hampton, CT 06424-1411**

•Hey! 23-year-old country music fan looking for pen pals. Favorite artists are Reba, Garth, Mary Chapin and Lorrie Morgan. Will try to answer all! **Michael Wilt, 4424 Vista St., Philadelphia, PA 19136-3709.**

•23-year-old single gal—enjoy Alan, Reba, Vince, Randy and Alison Krauss. Collect anything Disney, like to go for walks, concerts, rodeos, travel, reading, singing, baseball. Would like to hear from anyone age 23 and up. **Charlene Baca, P.O. Box 6838, Farmington, NM 87499-6838.**

•I'm the 52-year-old lady who has had three open-heart surgeries. Thanks for all your cards and letters! Still want to

hear from fans of Minnie Pearl, Carl Perkins, Billy Ray, Loretta, Conway, Elvis, etc. Please keep mail coming! No chain letters. **Mrs. LaDema Williams, 630 McConnell Rd., Marietta, SC 29661.**

•Hello. 20-year-old country gal seeks pen pals from all over, especially Canada. Favorites are Kathy Mattea, k.d. lang, Michelle Wright, Alabama, BRC and more. Will answer all, fill my mailbox! **Melissa Singhaus, 169 S. 5th St., Newark, OH 43055.**

•Hi! Serious James House fan desperately seeking other House fans to share photos, etc. Will answer all. Also big fan of Dwight and The Mavericks. **Rebecca Freeman, 1530 E. Chesterfield, Ferndale, MI 48220.**

•Hi. 31-year-old country fan. Favorites are Garth, Alan, Travis Tritt, JMM, George Strait, Faith, Reba, Mark Chesnut, to name a few! Would like to hear from other fans, male or female, any age. **Brenda Dacumos, 4583 Greenwood Rd., Macomb, MO 65702.**

•Howdy! 38-year-old widower. Cowboy, love riding bulls, steer wrestling, clowning, dancing, etc. Locked up. Looking for cowgirls for correspondence. Will answer all. **Joey Stepp #216387, K-C-I A-1-41-B, 4344 Broad River Rd., Columbia, SC 29210.**

•38-year-old country music loving truck driver. Unfortunately got myself into trouble. Would love to hear from any country fans (old and new country), male or female, any age. Thank you! **Donald Fike #94B2207, P.O. Box 500, Elmira, NY 14902.**

•Hi. 27-year-old mother of two. Would like to hear from women only, any age. Favorites are Alan, Garth, JMM, Reba, Tanya and more. Will answer all except inmates. **Patti McClain, 3357 W. 123 St., Cleveland, OH 44111.**

•Hello! My name is DJ. Presently incarcerated. Country guy looking for friends. Would like to hear from anyone over 18 who loves country music. **D. Johnson #894822, I.S.P., P.O. Box 41, Michigan City, IN 46361-0041.**

•Howdy! 22-year-old, married female. Love country music! Faves are Garth, Reba, Clay and George. Hobbies are writing, dancing and darts. Love to hear from everyone. **Michelle White, 5358 Woodruff Farm Rd. Apt. 511, Columbus, CA 31907.**

•Howdy! Divorced male, age 37. Incarcerated in CT. Love country music, also like trucks, motorcycles, camping, outdoors, animals, auto racing, writing letters, horseback riding. Will answer all. **George Avery, 900 Highland Ave., Cheshire, CT 06410.**

•Hi! I'm 32 and would like some pen pals. Favorite singers are Alan, Garth, JMM, Travis, Tracy Lawrence. Interests are NASCAR, reading, animals, collecting bears. Would like to hear from anyone. No inmates, please. **Nancy Wright, P.O. Box 63, Pierron, IL 62273.**

•Hi! I'm a 22-year-old female. Would love to hear from all cowboys and cowgirls. Faves include Alan, Garth, Reba, Chesnut, John Anderson, G. Strait, Patsy, Brooks & Dunn, Tim McGraw. Love rodeo also. No inmates, please. **V. Thomas, 219 E. Garfield Ave., Glendale, CA 91205.**

•Hi! 21-year-old single female looking for pen pals. Enjoy both country and rock. Would love to hear from Vince and Dwight fans. Also like Daryle Singletary, Brooks & Dunn, Garth, Lorrie Morgan, Little Texas. Enjoy concerts, dancing, movies, collecting pigs. **Jodi Trago, P.O. Box 255, Louisville, IL 62858.**

•I'm 46 years old, and in or out of prison. I love country music. These walls and bars don't stop the sounds of Nashville from reaching my cell. Will write all, male or female, even if you've made mistakes. **Jerry Conway 91B1250, Attica Correctional Facility, Attica, NY 14011.**

•I'm a 30-year-old German country music fan. Looking for male and female pen pals everywhere. I like Collin Raye, Billy Dean, BRC, Steve Earle and more. Hobbies are squash, writing letters, traveling, concerts, reading. **Elisabeth Stalder, Markussi 10, 47574 Goch, Germany.**

•Incarcerated country boy, 40 years old, doing time in FL. Nashville was home for 35 years. Favorites: Jones, Haggard, Loretta, Sammy Kershaw, Lorrie Morgan. Enjoy jogging, camping, football, reading NASCAR. Will answer all. **Steve Ray Bunch #709856, Century C.I., P.O. Box 248, G-327, Century, FL 32535-0248.**

•Hi. Young 62, into country. Favorites are Sammy Kershaw, George Strait, JMM, Reba, Dolly, Brooks & Dunn and Neil Diamond. Would like to hear from males. Inmates okay, but no con jobs! Love travel, cooking, food and wine. Drop a line, will answer. **Hank Cary, 3761 Huntingdon Ln., Memphis, TN 38111.**

•34-year-old country boy. Faves are Reba, Garth, Trisha, Shania, Clay and Aaron. Hobbies are all outdoor sports. Will answer all. **Donald Wetherington #556253, JA40 Workcamp, Columbia Correctional Institution, Rte. 7, Box 378, Lake City, FL 32055-8776.**

•Hi! I'm a 42-year-old housewife. My favorite is Dwight, but I like them all. Hobby is pen pals. Fill my mailbox! **Patty A. Wright, 201 W. Bonta Ln., Greensburg, KY 42743.**

•"Never Knew Lonely" until most of my pen pals split. Seeking intelligent correspondence. Love old country as well as new. Vince is my favorite. Enjoy all the simple things in life. **Pamela Scott, 19819 Fort Valley Rd., Strasburg, VA 22657-5105.**

•38-year-old country boy wishes to make new friends. I like all country music. Will answer all, but no inmates (can't write other institutions). **Dale Owsley #17110, I.S.C.I.—Unit B-65A, P.O. Box 14, Boise, ID 83707.**

•Hi! I'm 45 and a single mom. I love country music, especially Vince Gill. Looking for friendship, will answer all. No inmates, please! **Mona Richardson, P.O. Box 472021, Miami, FL 33147-2021.**

•Hi. My name is Jessica. I'm 15 and love cowboys and country music. Favorite are Alan, George Jones, Hank, Roger Miller and Rhett Akins. Age not important. Love to hear from you. **Jessica Schieckoff, 1615 E. Dakota #101, Pierre, SD 57501.**

•Hello! Looking for pen pals. I love almost all country singers, old and new.

Will answer all. No inmates, please. **Evelyn Fetter, 5620 200 St. SW #107, Lynnwood, WA 98036.**

•City boy in a country state of mind.... Presently incarcerated in the Texas prison system. I'm 30 years old and a die-hard country fan. **Johnny C. Smith #645042, Rte. 4, Box 1500, Beaumont, TX 77705.**

•Hello! Country and blues guitarist, looking for pen friends. I'm incarcerated, but admit my mistakes. **Richard J. Griffiths N-18169, Shawnee CC, P.O. Box 300, Vienna, IL 62995.**

•Born in the city, but country to the bone. In prison, would like to hear from country girls. Will answer all. **Charlie Street #854769, P.O. Box 601 CIC, Pendleton, IN 46064.**

•26-year-old cowboy, would like to hear from ladies 20-30. Like country music, rodeos, working, writing. **Travis Sweeden, Nevada State Prison, P.O. Box 607-43651, Carson City, NV 89702.**

•Hi, country music lovers! Let's be friends. I'm 51, female, divorced. **Betty Muninger, P.O. Box 580567, Modesto, CA 95358-0567.**

•Hi. I'm a 48-year-old man. I love to read, I love country music, I love the arts. Would like to write to women with same interests. I also love to do crafts. I have unusual collections. **Jerry Stock, 1457 Navahoe Dr., Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228.**

•Hi. I'm in prison. I took life for granted and made a mistake. I like country music. Will write to women over 21. I'm 42. **Bobby Joe Spears Jr., 20884—Rm. 226, A East—Wasatch, Draper, UT 84020.**

•Grounded in Spudsville! Seek non-judgmental pen friends, 18-35, capable of comprehensible conversation on country music, activities, arts. All answered. **William Nickerson #38917, Idaho Dept. of Correction, P.O. Box 51, IMSI-A, Boise, ID 83707-0051.**

•Hey country fans! I'm 31, happily single, enjoy concerts, fairs, amusement parks, road trips, malls, photography, letters, cats and much more. Would like to hear from country fans from all over the U.S. and Canada. No prisoners. **Laurie Ferry, P.O. Box 1752, Bellingham, WA 98227-1752.**

•Hello. I'm a 25-year-old country gal. Country music is my favorite, but I like all kinds. Faves are Travis, Reba, Patty Loveless and Marty Stuart. Will answer all. **Diane C. Roy, P.O. Box 201, French Creek, WV 26218-0201.**

•Howdy! 41-years-young single mom of three. Love country music. Also enjoy reading, writing and flea markets. Two faves are Garth and Reba. Would like to hear from anyone. **Pat Caton, 363 Valle Vista Ave. #6, Hayward, CA 94544.**

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# SPADE COOLEY

*Innovative and flamboyant, Cooley was a leading performer on the West Coast country music scene in the 40's and 50's. His musical legacy was marred at the end by tragedy.*

— By Rich Kienzle —

In his time, Spade Cooley was an innovator who defined West Coast Western swing and was one of Southern California's first local TV superstars. Later, he became the O.J. Simpson of country music. But unlike Simpson, who was acquitted, Cooley was convicted and imprisoned for the 1961 fatal beating of his wife, some of it done in the presence of the couple's 14-year-old daughter. He spent his eight remaining years in prison, only to die on the eve of his parole.

One-quarter Cherokee, Donnell Clyde Cooley was born on a ranch near Grand, Oklahoma, on February 22, 1910. In an Indian school of that day, he studied classical violin and cello. As he grew, his card-playing prowess earned him the nickname of "Spade." Married by 1937, he fiddled at square dances, and, looking for more opportunity, hopped a train to Hollywood in 1937. There, he played music in taverns and did movie stunt work. His physical resemblance to Roy Rogers, who became a friend, landed him stunt work in many of Rogers' films. His fiddling quickly became noticed by local musicians.

By 1942 he'd joined the organization of California disc jockey Bert "Foreman" Phillips. Phillips' various dancehalls, including the Venice Pier ballroom, attracted thousands of country music-loving Southern and Southwestern immigrants, lured west by high-paying World War II defense plant work. At Venice Pier, Phillips hired various

acts and brought in Opry stars, but his customers wanted to dance. He told The Jimmy Wakely Trio, regulars at the Pier, to hire more musicians to play dance music. Cooley was one of those hired.

He made himself indispensable through his showmanship and arranging skills. When The Wakely Trio left, Cooley remained, leading the house band, which

evolved into his own group. They could play the Western swing that dancers there favored, and his classical training led him to adapt the music Bob Wills created by adding tightly arranged fiddle ensembles. Given the high number of trained musicians in Southern California's entertainment industry, it was inevitable that some of them would gravitate toward Cooley. Soon his sophisticated West Coast Western swing band featured classical string harp player Spike Featherstone.

Vocalist Jack Williams, singer-guitarist Smokey Rogers and bassist Deuce Spriggins were nicknamed by Phillips, well aware most of his audience were transplanted Southerners. Williams became "Tex" (though he hailed from Illinois). Rogers became "Smokey Okie," and Spriggins became "Arkie." Cooley also hired an eccentric teenaged steel guitarist named Earl Murphey, nicknamed "Joaquin." He hired Barbara "Bobbie" Bennett, wife of his pianist Eddie Bennett, as his manager.

Signed to Columbia in 1944, Cooley had three hits in 1945. His biggest was "Shame on You" followed by "A Pair of Broken Hearts" and "I've Taken All I'm Gonna Take From You." "Detour" and "You Can't Break My Heart" came in 1946; "Crazy 'Cause I Love You," recorded in 1946, was a hit in 1947. Tex Williams sang on all these numbers. Cooley, divorced from his first wife, married his female vocalist, Ella May Evans. In a play



Spade and his wife, Ella May. She was a vocalist in his band.

on Benny Goodman's "King of Swing" title, Cooley received the title "King of Western Swing." Eventually Joaquin Murphey quit to join Andy Parker and The Plainsmen, replaced by ex-Bob Wills steel virtuoso Noel Boggs.

As time went on, it became clear Cooley was no picnic to work for. Bobbie Bennett admitted in a 1976 interview that, as his fame grew, "Spade was getting a little conceited," adding that Tex Williams' fame as a singer was going to his head as well. When Tex was offered a Capitol recording contract, he proposed to stay with the band, singing as a guest on Spade's Columbia records, with Cooley's band the "guests" on Tex's Capitol releases. Spade refused and tensions grew, coming to a head one night in June 1946. Set to do shows in San Diego, then in L.A., the same night, the band was to travel by chartered plane. Then the plane was canceled: the band was to drive, and Tex refused to travel to San Diego. Spade fired Tex, who was waiting for them at the L.A. show. Most of the band, fed up with Cooley's attitude and his low pay, went with Tex as The Western Caravan, using the original Cooley sound on "Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)" and other hits.

Spade's next band was far different. He hired ex-Texas Playboy country-jazz guitarist Jimmy Wyble and drummer Monte Mountjoy and added a full horn section similar to that which Wills had in Tulsa. A new RCA contract began with some promising recordings like "Boggs Boogie" and "Texas Playboy Rag." Meanwhile, onstage, Cooley, dressed in his wild, flashy, N. Turk-designed Western outfits, cavorted all over the stage—never missing a note on the fiddle—his flamboyant movements the envy of professional dancers.

Despite the national hits, he remained a West Coast act. What made him a true celebrity there was his Saturday night KTLA-TV variety show, the *Hoffman Hayride*, sponsored by a TV-set manufacturer, that started in 1948. It quickly became a mainstay of Southern California TV. No one expected Cooley would get along with Klaus Landsberg, KTLA's short-fused German producer. But Landsberg, an innovator who created live, on-the-spot news coverage and, later, launched Lawrence Welk at KTLA, hit it off with Cooley from the start.

The show's variety format resembled Ed Sullivan's, featuring acrobats, comics, singers, actors and celebrities. It quickly became one of L.A.'s top TV attractions. Even movie stars appeared on the *Hoffman Hayride*, as did sports stars,

including one champion prizefighter who'd recently lost a bout.

Cooley's treatment of his musicians remained unpredictable. One band member whose wife was severely injured in a car crash was treated with compassion. He showed humor after firing one pianist who insisted he had an unbreakable contract: Cooley relented, having him work out that contract playing in the men's restroom. Speedy West, who briefly worked with Cooley, recalled Spade in a drunken rage, firing the entire band (including himself). Next morning a remorseful Cooley phoned everyone, begging them to return. Speedy, asserting he held no hard feelings, declined his offer. Even Bobbie Bennett called him a "Jekyll and Hyde type of person."

Cooley's music suffered. Playing sophisticated fiddle music, he was distinctive and innovative, but with the entire orchestra, as old friend Hank Penny—a comedian on Cooley's show and Western swing bandleader himself—once said, "His later releases for RCA were very bad, very ersatz. They weren't country, and they weren't pop." The typical Cooley effort was a dull instrumental novelty in the Lawrence Welk vein or an embarrassingly stupid novelty like "Big Chief Boogie." At the time, Penny was making far better Western swing records than Cooley.

As his wealth grew, his health suffered. While working on a 1950 movie, *Everybody's Dancin'*, Cooley suffered his first heart attack. The TV show faced competition from KCOP's *Hometown Jamboree*, but remained popular after KTLA convinced Cliffie Stone to move *Hometown* to the station. But by 1956, as network TV grew in strength, Cooley sought something different, dissolving his big band and hiring an all-female orchestra. Shortly after that failed, he gave up the show. Signing with Decca Records, he recorded small-band swing superior to most of the RCA material.

1958 saw him semi-retired at his Willow Springs ranch in the Mojave Desert between L.A. and Bakersfield. Though he recorded a final album for the tiny Raynote label in 1959, his new focus was real estate development, specifically a planned resort to be called Water Wonderland. At the same time, his health continued to fail. Despite a second coronary, he drank heavily as his marriage to Ella May deteriorated.

On the afternoon of April 3, 1961, Cooley drank heavily during a business meeting. Early that evening he snapped. Daughter Melody, 14 years old, returned

home to find her father, his clothes bloody, stomping her mother, waving a rifle and threatening to kill the girl as she fled the house. Hours later, Cooley called an ambulance. Dazed, he tried to explain that Ella May had fallen. She was pronounced dead at a local hospital. The suspicious bruises led the Kern County Sheriff to interrogate Spade. His story didn't wash with authorities, and he was charged with murder.

After his arrest, which made national headlines, came a trial that July that also attracted national headlines even though—despite his 15-year-old hits—Cooley was little-known east of California. He tried implying that his wife had had an affair with old friend Roy Rogers, destroying his friendship with Roy. Melody Cooley, composed but anguished, testified to what she'd seen, recalling her dad's insistence that "You're going to watch me kill her." Convicted, his health problems led the court to send him to California's Vacaville medical facility.

There, he became a model prisoner, but had few friends in the business. Hank Penny considered it a "crime of passion," and Hank Snow remained a friend and even performed at Vacaville. But most other performers, repelled by the brutality of the crime, turned their backs. Cooley led an all-inmate band, built violins and worked with his longtime hobby of gem-polishing. His exemplary behavior in prison led to application and approval for parole effective February 22, 1970. In November of 1969, he received a furlough to play fiddle at a benefit show for the Alameda County Sheriff's department on November 23. At the show, he told a reporter he was optimistic about his future, that "I have the feeling that today is the first day of the rest of my life." After receiving a standing ovation, he walked backstage and dropped dead of a massive heart attack.

A 1969 issue of *Rolling Stone* contained a sarcastic obituary, describing Cooley's "terrible C&W" music (an obvious reference to the RCA era). Cooley's legendary status is assured by his music, but also by his despicable crime. What the *Rolling Stone* writers didn't realize was the excellence and importance of his earliest music, which helped define California Western swing. Nevertheless, the facts of his life assure that Spade Cooley's name will always leave a decidedly mixed impression.

#### Albums Available

See For CMSA Members Only page.

# Readers Create

## A Poem for Lorrie

*Anna Marie Smith, a member in Antioch, Tennessee, enclosed this poem on Lorrie Morgan, whom she calls her "very favorite singer since Marty Robbins." Anna adds, "Thanks for every mention of Lorrie in the magazine. She is SO great!" Anna has contributed poems on Minnie Pearl and Hank Williams in the past.*

### Lorrie Morgan: The Pride of Nashville

She moves like Tennessee whiskey,  
soft and smooth  
as a deep sigh,  
like the rippling of a nether flow,  
like a sylphic breeze  
o'er fields o' rye.

A lithe vision,  
goddess of beauty,  
her loveliness to her fingertips;

soft skin,  
like milk 'n honey,  
vanilla hair, sweet cherry lips.

Hey! She sings!  
Like a Tennessee angel!  
Stirs my soul  
'til I could cry.  
She was meant for country music,  
like a bird was meant to fly.

When she sings  
the angels gather,  
listening from niveous clouds above.  
Euphonic voice,  
strong and vibrant,  
yet, with the softness of a dove.

—Anna Marie Smith

## Classic Country Word Search

CMSA member Francine Parrish of Jacksonville, Florida, sends along this puzzle featuring the names of her favorite country greats. Francine sent us a puzzle relating to Conway Twitty we used back in the March/April 1995 issue. Says Francine, "I'm from the old school of country music lovers." She also tells us she's been married "to the same lucky guy for the past 41 years," and that they have three children and four grandchildren.

R	C	H	U	X	M	O	P	T	Z	H	B	U	C	K	O	W	E	N	S
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E	U	E	C	R	E	I	P	B	B	E	W	A	V	Q	L	P	Y	H	B

## Word List:

- ROY ACUFF
- BILL ANDERSON
- EDDY ARNOLD
- BOBBY BARE
- JOHNNY CASH
- RED FOLEY
- LEFTY FRIZZELL
- DON GIBSON
- JACK GREENE
- MERLE HAGGARD
- TOM T. HALL
- FREDDIE HART
- FERLIN HUSKY
- SONNY JAMES
- GEORGE JONES
- ROGER MILLER
- GEORGE MORGAN
- BUCK OWENS
- WEBB PIERCE
- RAY PRICE
- CHARLEY PRIDE
- JIM REEVES
- CHARLIE RICH
- MARTY ROBBINS
- CARL SMITH
- HANK SNOW
- TENNESSEE ERNIE
- HANK THOMPSON
- ERNEST TUBB
- CONWAY TWITTY
- PORTER WAGONER
- DON WILLIAMS
- HANK WILLIAMS
- BOB WILLS
- FARON YOUNG

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# Faith Hill

## Contradictions and Affirmations



*There may be two sides to Faith Hill, but one thing is clear, she's handling her success with balance and harmony.*

**D**on't ask Faith Hill about her looks. "I want people to see there's more to me than my blonde hair," she declares. "I feel like I have to prove I can really sing, just like Brad Pitt, who is the sexiest man alive and every woman's dream, has had to prove he can really act. That's why he did *12 Monkeys*. When I first came out, that was the most asked question: Do I feel my looks had anything to do with my success? I hate that question."

It's a hard question to avoid when your record company floods the market with calendars, posters and videos, all featuring your long, wavy, strawberry-blonde tresses, 150-watt smile and long, long legs. It may be a bit disingenuous to pose for thousands of photos and then claim that your looks have had nothing to do with your career.

"I don't even think I look that great," she argues. "When Warner Bros. called me up last year and said *People Magazine* had named me one of the 50 Most Beautiful People, I thought it was a joke. I just laughed and said, 'If only they could see me now,' because I look really gross most of the time."

She has dressed down for this interview at the Warner Bros. offices on Music Row. She wears a black turtleneck pullover, plain black slacks and a small diamond stud in her ear; her long reddish hair has been chopped short and bleached blonde. The very simplicity of her clothes, though, seems to bring out the radiance of her perfectly shaped face and the elegance of her tall, thin figure. Push her a little, and Hill will finally admit how much she likes looking good.

"I love feeling like Cinderella," she concedes. "I love it when people do my nails and hair; I love it when I can

get dressed up. I love walking out of a show in a long gown, feeling glamorous." And she gives that small-town country smile which can light up a whole room.

That's Faith Hill—a bundle of contradictions. The 28-year-old singer is a photogenic star who will deny her good looks one moment and exult in them the next. She's an independent "Wild One" who longs to be a Cinderella. Her songs and her career are full of feminist messages, but she denies she's a feminist. She grew up on the white side of segregated Mississippi, but her strongest musical influence is black gospel. She's a video star whose powerful soprano is gaining confidence and authority with each album and tour.

One thing is clear, however: Faith Hill is a star of major proportions. Her 1993 single, "Wild One," became the first debut single by a female singer to top the country charts for four consecutive weeks since Connie Smith's "Once a Day" in 1964. Hill's debut album, *Take Me As I Am*, also went to Number One, sold more than a million copies and produced two more Number One singles—"Piece of My Heart" and the title track. Hill was named *Billboard's* Top Female Country Artist of 1994 and the Academy of Country Music's Top New Female Performer of 1994. Her second album, *It Matters to Me*, has sent its first single, "Let's Go to Vegas," into the Top Five and its second, the title track, to the top for three weeks.

Critical acceptance has been slower in coming. The resistance by reviewers to her music has a lot to do with her unfortunate version of "Piece of My Heart," which transformed Janis Joplin's blues-rock masterpiece into a bland, country-pop two-step. "I hadn't even heard the Janis Joplin version when I recorded

BY GEOFFREY HIMES







'Piece of My Heart',” she admits. “I was so embarrassed when I first came to Nashville because people would mention all these rock artists, and I didn’t know who any of them were. I didn’t even know who *The Doors* were till I saw the movie. I knew about Chicago and Journey, because they played their ballads at the prom and at the skating rink. And I like Linda Ronstadt, but she wasn’t the big influence on me that she was on Trisha, Martina and those girls.

“For me, the big influence wasn’t Linda; it was Aretha Franklin. I’ve always listened to Aretha. When you hear the drums and bass on my records, that’s where it comes from. The music I listened to 20 years ago is the same music I’m listening to now. I still listen to *Aretha’s Greatest Hits*, and my kids will listen to it.”

Hill’s devotion to Aretha Franklin isn’t so strange when you consider that both women got their musical start in church. For Hill, that start took place in the Star Baptist Church in the itty-bitty town of Star, Mississippi. “When I was three or four years old,” she remembers. “I stood up on the pew and sang along. It was just like that scene at the beginning of *What’s Love Got to Do With It* where the congregation is real subdued and Tina Turner is shouting with a lot of soul. That was me.”

As a teenager, Hill joined The Steele Family from Jackson, Mississippi, a gospel quartet in the style of The Kingsmen, The Hempfields and The Cathedrals. The Steeles toured all over the deep South, to white and black churches alike. “I always found myself gravitating toward the churches where the singers would fill themselves up with the spirit and just let it out,” she says. “The black churches were by far my favorites. I used to tell my mom I was supposed to have been born black, because I felt most at home in those churches. They showed their excitement like I wanted to show mine.”

Hill leans back in her chair and fills the room with a spirited, impromptu chorus from “I’ll Fly Away.” She leans forward again with a reddened face that’s half a blush and half a flush of joy. “I don’t understand how people can sing ‘I’ll Fly Away’ and not tap their feet and clap their hands,” she says with exasperation. “For me, when I sing about such an incredible message, I always feel the spirit. When something excites me, you can tell, and when something saddens me, you can tell. Even when I’m singing a love song today.”

Hill’s second album climaxes with “Keep Walkin’ On,” a toe-tapping, hand-clapping gospel hymn that she sings as a duet with Shelby Lynne. On this song, Hill finally opens her throat full-throttle and lets out all the natural lung power and church experience that she had kept pent up for so long. Enough of that liberated energy spills over into the rest of the album to make it a quantum leap forward over its predecessor.

Although she often performed in black churches, Hill attended an all-white school. “Unfortunately,” she says, “segregation still happens in Mississippi. But I brought my black and Asian friends over to my house all the time, and my family never objected—though some of my relatives did. To this day I can’t stand to be around prejudiced people. I

tell them to their face that they're ignorant."

Ironically, she got more flak at her school for loving country music than for singing in black churches. In a school where rock 'n' roll was king, Hill was one of a handful of nonconformists who preferred country. She liked it all—from Patsy Cline and Elvis Presley to Loretta Lynn and George Jones—but her biggest hero was Reba McEntire. When she saw McEntire in person at the Jimmie Rodgers Memorial Festival in Meridian, Mississippi, she resolved to follow the same path.

So it was at age 19 that she left Star, Mississippi, and headed for Nashville. It was a painful separation for both Hill and her mother, and the emotion is still fresh enough to make the song, "You Can't Lose Me," tingle with something special nine years later. The song's first verse tells of a mother helping her daughter get through the disappointment of losing a foot race; the second describes the same mother telling the same daughter that she's ready to go out in the world on her own and win any race. It's more or less what Hill's mother told her in 1988.

"I did basketball, softball, swimming, track, all the sports in our little town," Hill recalls, "and if I lost a game or a talent show, both my parents would say, 'You have to go on to the next thing and keep trying. Never give up; you can do it'—all the things I want to say to my children. I came up here when I was 19, and the tables were turned. I had to hold my mom's hand and reassure her that the backbone they gave me was strong enough to survive anything. When this song came along, I said, 'Golly, this is my life.'"

It took several years of selling T-shirts, working as a receptionist and then as a demo singer before Hill finally got her break, but when it came, she made the most of it. She was signed to Warner Bros. by Martha Sharp, and together they went hunting for the right producer for Hill's first album. One name on the short list was Scott Hendricks, who had worked with Brooks & Dunn, Alan Jackson and Lee Roy Parnell.

"He didn't have a female artist," Hill remembers, "and I thought he needed one. Martha went to him, and he turned me down. Then he saw me sing with the *Nashville Now* band on TV, and he called Martha back. We started meeting to listen to songs for hours and hours. We became great friends first, and only later did we fall in love with each other. It's such an advantage being friends before you fall in love," she emphasizes, "because it allows you to just be yourself. Sometimes you might share things with a friend you wouldn't tell your lover. I can tell Scott the craziest idea in the world, and he'll be interested. That's a friend, and that's what our relationship is based on."

After *Take Me As I Am* became such a commercial smash, the expectations for Hill's second album were incredibly high. She was offered the best songs from every publisher on Music Row, but the pressure was intense to pick just the right ones. Then, just as the recording sessions were getting under way at the end of 1994, something went wrong with her voice.

"I was in the studio trying to sing," she says, "and I couldn't. I didn't have my usual pitch, range or strength. I'd say, 'Let me take a day off,' but that didn't work. Finally Scott said, 'Something is wrong; let's go to the doctor.' They found an enlarged blood vessel, and there was really only one decision to make—surgery. I had to tell Warner Bros. that the album would be delayed; I had to tell Alan Jackson and George Strait that I couldn't tour with them. Everyone was very supportive and concerned. It gave me a lot of respect for a lot of people."

On February 8, 1995, Hill had the surgery and for two-and-a-half weeks afterward she wasn't allowed to make a sound—no whispering, no moaning, no mumbling, no anything—total silence. It was during this period that Hendricks called her up and asked her to marry him. And she couldn't even answer.

"The very first day I could talk again," Hill says, "I called Scott and said, 'Yes.' It was the first word I had spoken in almost three weeks, and my voice sounded so strange." At press time, Hill and Hendricks are waiting for an opening in their very busy schedules to set a wedding date.

After the 18 days of silence, she started her recovery therapy—five minutes of talking the first day, then an extra five minutes a day until she was talking all the time. By April she was back in the studio, and on April 27, she sang in concert for the first time in San Diego, opening up for George Strait. She used the extra time to listen to more songs, and one of the new ones she found became the title track, "It Matters to Me."

It's one of several songs on the album which come from the perspective of a strong woman who's demanding the right to run her own life. "A Man's Home Is His Castle" is sung by an abused spouse who argues that any man who hits his wife should be locked up. "I Can't Do That Anymore" is about a wife who's no longer willing to sacrifice everything for her husband and declares, "A woman needs a little something of her own." "You Will Be Mine" rejects the "unwritten law" that a woman should wait for the man to make the first move; the singer proclaims, "I always play by my own rules, and I don't believe in wasting time." "Someone Else's Dream" is the story of a 27-year-old woman who has spent her life trying to be the beauty queen of her mother's hopes and the perfect bride of her father's plans. She realizes, "All my life I've been pleasin' everyone but me," and she resolves to "make her life her own."

"I've been through that," Hill says of the last song. "I've been married and didn't have the Prince Charming experience my father wanted me to have. The most difficult thing in life is to go to your parents and say, 'I'm getting a divorce.' Growing up as a child, I thought I'd never have to do that. But I did, and I learned you can recover from a wrong turn. I learned that just because life didn't turn out according to expectations, it's still OK to be you."

When Hill was touring with Alan Jackson in 1994, she asked him to write a song for her. He came up with an uptempo number; but she decided it wasn't for her. "Can you imagine me telling him that?" she now says. "I can't believe I said it." A few days later, Jackson told her to come to soundcheck, because he had gone back and written a second song for her. It was "I Can't Do That Anymore," and before Jackson had finished singing it through the first time, Hill knew she wanted to record it.

"The woman in this song," she explains, "is sitting down with her husband and saying, 'I'm not walking out, but we've got to talk about it.' That's one thing I've learned these past three years. Time is too short to look back and wonder why I didn't talk about things. I'm not a passive person, especially in my relationships. If I'm having a problem with someone, I tell them. If I love someone, I tell them."

Hill is part of a generation of country women who assume equality as a birthright in both their relationships and their careers. Most of them, though, don't use words like "feminism" or "women's lib" for fear of offending their audience, even though feminists made their assumptions of equality possible.

"Times have changed," Hill admits. "The commercials on TV used to show women as a housewife; now they show a woman who rushes in to check the Code-a-Phone and puts down her briefcase. We have a choice now, whereas women didn't have a choice before. If I were home every day, I'd love to cook supper for Scott every night. I want to combine the best of both worlds. My mom says, 'How can you raise children with the kind of life you lead?' I say, 'Because I want children as much as I want to sing, so I'll make it happen.'"

"There have always been strong women in country music," she adds. "If you go back and listen to Loretta Lynn's stuff, that girl was tough. 'Don't come after my man or I'll tear your hair out.' Even Tammy Wynette's 'Stand by Your Man,' I hear that as a strong song. 'I'll love my man even if he strays.'"

Does Hill mean that a woman should forgive her husband no matter what he does? Doesn't that contradict many of the songs on her own new album?

"Oh, no," she quickly responds. "You should forgive your man, but only one time. I took that as a one-time song. It's about forgiveness, but not on an on-going basis." ■

# BANDS

## On the Run

Who are the bands breaking through the charts today? Bob Millard looks at ten of the current crop signed to major labels who are showing signs of Top Ten success. Will there be another Alabama, who took the country industry by storm 16 years ago and continues to make music even today? That's uncertain. But as long as there are people who want to play music together, there will be country bands. ■ *By Bob Millard*

**B**ands have always been a force in country music, from the string bands of the 20's and 30's, to the Western swing of the 40's and 50's. In the modern era, however, success hasn't always been a constant. You could say Alabama changed all that. Breaking out of the dance clubs and breaking all the records, they were the first band to dominate the country charts.

Today's country band has a different face from the country rock of The Byrds and The Flying Burrito Brothers or the Southern rock of The Marshall Tucker Band and The Charlie Daniels Band—bands that climbed the country charts in the 60's and 70's and early 80's. The new bands are mostly dance bands who kick up their heels for a new breed of fan.

Of course you can still find veterans like Sawyer Brown, Shenandoah and alternative heavy-hitters The Mavericks hauling home Gold and platinum record plaques, while Diamond Rio seems to be the state-of-the-art country vocal band.

With bands now commanding an average of 15% of the country singles charts, here's a look at ten contenders who've contributed to those sales and airplay figures. Others, like BR5-49, don't show up here, but may be hitmakers tomorrow.



### ◆ Boy Howdy ◆

This foursome is a tight unit, honed by years of carrying the water night in and night out at the West Coast's famous Palomino nightclub. They became one of the preeminent California-country bands. They first came to national notice in 1990 when they were named Non-Touring Band of the Year by the Academy of Country Music.

The four guys of Boy Howdy are like brothers—in fact, two of them are brothers. When drummer Hugh Wright was seriously injured in a 1992 car wreck, the band was sidetracked from capitalizing on their initial chart successes. By summer of 1994 they got Wright back in the

band. It was just in time, because they were suddenly on fire with a Top Five hit in "She'd Give Everything." Unfortunately, they weren't ready with a completed new album to take advantage of it. It took a little while and precious momentum was lost, but the CD, *Born That Way*, eventually filled the bill.

If Boy Howdy has had more than its share of bad luck, they also seem to have enough talent to overcome it, if they are able to keep the band together. The official/unofficial word is that Jeffrey Steele, the singer, is probably going to be working on a solo project for release late in 1996. At this point, members have been, and may still be, Jeffrey Steele, Hugh Wright, Larry Park and Cary Park.

### ◆ Smokin' Armadillos ◆

Handsome, studly, young and, for the most part, single guys—despite the reference to the official Texas state road kill (the 'possum-on-the-half-shell'), they hail from Bakersfield, California. They follow a recent trend as one of several bands in the last 18 months to graduate from strong, independently released regional record success to the majors. With indie

chart hits such as "My Girlfriend Might" and "Red Rock," Smokin' Armadillos are said to have sold a couple hundred thousand copies of a self-released EP/CD, writing and publishing their own regional hits before Curb Records hauled them in and released their first national single, "Let Your Heart Lead Your Mind," in early January.

The band plays a diverse mix of styles from twang, groove and power chords to the traditional dance riffs of championship fiddle. They exhibit a get-loose, get-happy atmosphere when they perform. "We're wild on stage, and we expect the audience to go right along with us," says Josh Graham, the self-proclaimed "countryest" of the act. "It's just a big party for us and for them." Lead guitarist and key songwriter Scott Meeks is even blunter about his intentions: "My whole goal in life is to have as much fun as possible and die spectacularly." By golly, I think Meeks may be the first true spiritual son of Faron Young of this generation! I like this guy already.

This six-man band cites diverse stylists such as The Eagles, Restless Heart, Van



Halen, Hank Williams Jr. and George Strait among their top influences, and prove their California roots by checking off sushi and Italian cuisine among their favorite foods. Members are Rick Russell, Josh Graham, Jason Theiste, Scott "Sheriff Jr." Meeks, Aaron Casida and Darrin Kirkindoll.

### ◆ 4 Runner ◆

Southern gospel four-part harmony may not be as original now as it was when The Oak Ridge Boys made it part of the country mainstream hit parade, but 4 Runner has as much bounce and energy, and vocals as tight, as any band recording today. What they haven't had yet is a bona fide monster hit.

Their debut single was "Cain's Blood," in which Bible themes mixed with an edge of sin and perdition in the wings to make something darkly intense. After a year of touring, they were back in Nashville, as of this writing, sifting through songs in advance of recording their sec-



ond album. Keep an ear open for these guys—they've had a rough time trying to catch on, but they're just one outstanding song from the top of the charts.

Original baritone Billy Crittenden quit just before the act went into the studio to record their second album, and was replaced by Billy Simon, making the 1996 lineup Jim Chapman, Lee Hilliard, Craig Morris and Simon.

### ◆ Frazier River ◆

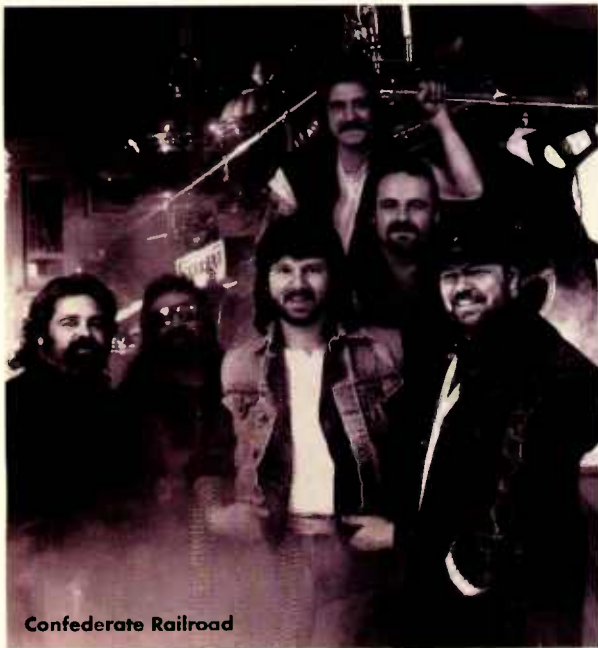
The hard part with new acts of any sort—band, solo, duo, you-name-it—is creating a sound that sets the act apart from the great mauling river of new product rolling out of Nashville studios every week. The most original element of

this ensemble of Western, Southern and Midwestern boys is the solo vocals by lead singer Danny Frazier, California-born but reared the son of a Kerrville, Texas, Pentecostal preacher. You won't mistake him for another flavor-of-the-month Haggard wanna-be. Ballads appear to be his strong point on their Decca Records debut. He has something of that emotion-laden, evocative, husky blues inflection of Hal Ketchum or Dave Loggins, but his voice is his own.

The five men backing Frazier are thorough-going professionals of impressive experience, playing jazz, rock, country, bluegrass, on TV pit bands, in studios working in Nashville, L.A. and France, but mostly as ace players in popular Cincinnati combos. None of the six members contributed any songwriting to this effort, which may limit their developing a truly intimate musical personality. The songs they have recorded are very decent for the most part, coming from the likes of Billy Burnette, Ronnie Rogers, Mark Wright, Alex Harvey and Mr. "Wind Beneath My Wings" Larry Henley.

The album, *Frazier River*, is so new at this writing that the debut single, "She Got What She Deserves," has yet to show what these guys can do. I have a few reservations. While I really like songs like "That's Why I'm Here," "Heaven Is Smiling" and "Birmingham Steel," there is in their presentation too much hackneyed lyric borrowings, guitar signatures and vocal harmonies of The Eagles, or a reasonable facsimile thereof. It's hardly a "fresh sound" or somehow "cutting edge" country—though Frazier River, the undisputed Kings of Cincinnati, certainly has a shot regardless. Band members are: Danny Frazier, Chuck Adair, Jim Morris, Bob Wilson, Brian Baverman and Greg Amburgy.





Confederate Railroad

## ◆ Confederate Railroad ◆

While they are one of the earliest of the 90's breakthrough bands, this former house band for Miss Kitty's in Marietta, Georgia, is made up of veteran country and rock players. Best known for rollicking Bubba humor in songs like "Trashy Women," "Queen of Memphis," "Elvis and Andy" and "Time Off for Bad Behavior," these guys are about the most fun live band performing in the country realm today. Their more serious side includes hits such as "Daddy Never Was the Cadillac Kind," "Jesus and Mama" and "When You Leave Like That."

They've toned down the novelty aspect of their recorded output lately, but they remain light-hearted more often than not, driven by Danny Shirley's distinctive burred and potatoey vocals. It's a voice that cannot disguise the laughter just behind any song it wraps around. Their latest CD is called *When and Where*, and I wouldn't take a whole cauldron of genuine Texas chili for my copy.

Members include Danny Shirley, Chris McDaniel, Michael Lamb, Wayne Secrest, Gates Nicholson and Mark DuFresne.

## ◆ Lonestar ◆

As you might suspect from the band's name, Lonestar is a Texas thing. Nobody meant to have a resident requirement, but when the original drummer quit—an Iowan—the fifth Texas native filled the gap, and the quintet had its concept in hand. Interestingly, the hub of the band, Richie McDonald and Dean Sams, moved to Nashville in 1992. They soon formed a quartet,

initially called *Texassee*, by pulling a singer/bassist and a drummer from a once-up-and-coming Dallas band called Canyon. With Rich McDonald and John Rich fronting, Lonestar had the one thing Canyon never did—a strong lead vocal sound.

Already smooth and experienced performance pros, they were tempered as a unit by Nashville tourist club stints and show lounge gigs around the country, particularly in Reno. None of the players wanted to haunt the small-time honky tonks much longer. Their attitude is indicative of the corporate culture of the music industry these days—the work hard, focus in and keep-

your-nose-clean school. Rarely do bands form anymore with their main purpose being to attract women and avoid meaningful employment, all relatively understandable goals of a previous country music culture.

"From the beginning we said none of us wanted to be in a bar band forever," said guitarist Michael Britt. "From the first month we were together, we said, 'Let's try to get a record deal.'"

Going for broke, they led with a song speaking to the atmosphere they were most familiar with—the little ol' honky tonk, with a solid mid-tempo hit, "Tequila Talkin'." Danceability and strong harmonies mark this bunch.

Don Cook, currently a hot Nashville producer with Brooks & Dunn, Shenandoah, The Mavericks and others under his wing, and Wally Wilson, pull it

all together in the studio for Lonestar. It's somewhat unusual these days for a band to emerge whose members, as songwriters, contribute so little to their own repertoire, but they kick the stuffings out of tunes by some of Music Row's best-known tunesmiths, including Mark D. Sanders, Bill LaBounty, Paul Nelson, Larry Boone and, of course, Don Cook.

Lonestar is Michael Britt, Richie McDonald, Keech Rainwater, John Rich and Dean Sams.

## ◆ Perfect Stranger ◆



This East Texas unit proves once again that good things can come direct from independent labels out in the hinterlands. Their Pacific Records single, "You Have the Right to Remain Silent," hit the charts so hard that Curb Records in Nashville snapped them up before the next week's chart was published. Turned down by every label in Nashville prior to this time, you could say that Perfect Stranger hit Nashville over the head with a fait accompli, which I believe is French for "a large dead fish." Before the record could stall out, an inevitable victim of underfunded promotions, Curb snatched them into the studio to cut a few new songs, issued a remixed edi-



tion of their self-made album, and stars were born.

"You Have the Right to Remain Silent" reached the Top Five. The band went from doing all-night slogfests as human jukeboxes in big dance halls to doing hour-and-a-half shows of their own music, yet they remain essentially a dance music band. You gotta love this sort of Cinderella story, especially when the music speaks for itself.

"Our initial intention was to record that album and shop it all around Nashville, but we couldn't get anybody to bite on it," says Shayne Morrison. "It was fun to pull it off on our own and finally get signed. We're real proud of our record: like when you're young and your parents make you buy your own car, that's kind of where we are right here."

Perfect Stranger has since toured with Sawyer Brown and Chris LeDoux. Band members are Morrison, Steve Murray, Andy Ginn and Richard Raines.

### ❖ BlackHawk ❖



This powerful trio was formed in the wake of a massive migration of aging rock 'n' roll listeners to the country format. Henry Paul, the distinctive vocalist for BlackHawk, was formerly with the groundbreaking, acoustic-based 70's rock band, The Outlaws. Van Stephenson hit the rock charts as a solo in the early 80's. Stephenson and the third BlackHawker, Dave Robbins, teamed up to co-write a goodly number of the hit singles issued by Restless Heart.

BlackHawk ran a little against prevailing wisdom, in that they were...well, essentially "old guys." They are simply excellent writers and dynamic, thoroughly professional performers, fronted by an unmistakable voice (something that sets them apart from the many look-alike/sound-alike Lounge Haggard solos martriculating through the charts).

Out such a relatively short time (these guys have two albums out, one having sold platinum, the other clearing Gold and going for platinum at a steady pace), BlackHawk is almost ready for a greatest hits compilation, which would naturally include "Good-Bye Says It All," "I Sure



Can Smell the Rain," "I'm Not Strong Enough to Say No," and one of the most artistic and thoughtful of recent country hit singles, "That's About Right."

### ❖ Ricochet ❖

Young, cute, good harmonies, bounding bass bumping and a classic fiddle/steel guitar underpinning: Ricochet is a dance band extraordinaire. Corporate Country is the motivation and modus here, as with many of these new bands. "Our intention from the start was to build a band that would be a reording act eventually," says lead singer Heath Wright. Okay, mission accomplished.

The six fellas here are all small town Oklahoma, Texas, upstate New York and Tennessee boys. They infuse their music with a driving intensity. Don't look for

Tractors



tension and release in the blues sense; it's all tension here. If you're a dancin' fool, these here boys will give you what it takes to scuff that boot heel leather. Out on the road a lot of bands check into motels to shower and catch a few winks, but Ricochet's tight vocalists may spend three or four hours honing their parts for a new song. They run flat out and are generally infectiously ram-bunctious.

Interestingly, however, they are a working band, solely a performance vehicle mining Music Row song mills for all their music. When an act proves to have good ears, you can't hate that, though. "What Do I Know" is one of those kind of singles that radio loves. Mark D. Sanders, Steve Seskin and Bob DiPiero's "Daddy's Money" kicks hard with good humor and enthusiasm. "I Can't Dance" is sort of an upscale "Bubba Can't Dance," but who's counting imitation against topnotch variation? Ricochet is Wright, Jeff Bryant, Junior Bryant, Teddy Carr, Greg Cook and Eddie Kilgallon.

### ❖ Tractors ❖

You could look at the bizarre cover art of The Tractors' eponymous debut album. Listen to their quirky, funky, semi-incoherent, yet wildly rhythmic music and think to yourself, "Man, this is so fabulously weird that radio will never hear it." And they almost didn't; not until someone judiciously edited one of their strange tracks so that at least one cut had a singular beginning and an end.

These guys had everything against the common wisdom of what it took to make it in today's country radio scene—they were old guys, and they were strictly studio men, never having played a gig together. (The first time anyone saw them perform live, the whole world saw them on the CMA Awards Show in 1995.) I was all set to mark them down as the best album of 1995 that you probably would never hear: That was before "Baby Likes to Rock It" was re-edited. With such derivative follow-ups as the seasonal "Santa Clause Is Comin' (On a Boogie Woogie Choo-Choo Train)," what The Tractors have yet to prove is whether or not they are one-hit wonders.

Band members are: Walt Richmond, Casey Van Beek, Ron Getman, Jamie Oldaker and Steve Ripley. ■

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by Cindy Shafer

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# COUNTRY MUSIC

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**The Bruce Ford Story—78 mins.**  
Hailed as one of the greatest films about rodeo ever made, this is the story of five-time world champion bareback rider Bruce Ford with music by Bob Wills, Johnny Horton, Doc and Merle Watson, Chris LeDoux, The Judds and others. Item No. V3S - \$29.95

## NEW! THE NASHVILLE STORY—71 mins.

Grant Turner takes you on tour as he narrates how Nashville became the Country Music Capitol of the World. You'll visit all the famous landmarks while Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff and Minnie Pearl tell you how they got started. You'll see all of these stars perform on the stage of the old Ryman Auditorium, as they sing some of their most famous songs. Also appearing are Porter Wagoner, Dolly Parton and others. Item No. V20E - \$39.95

## NEW! COUNTRY BOY—84 mins.

The best of Hollywood meets the best of Nashville in this touching, yet humorous motion picture. When Randy Boone (*The Virginian*), Paul "Wishbone" Brenninger and actor/singer Sheb Wooley get together with such country music stars as Grandpa Jones, Skeeter Davis and The Glaser Brothers, they tell the story of how Randy Boone comes to Nashville seeking stardom as a country music singer. This entertaining movie features 12 original songs. Item No. V20F - \$29.95



## RANDY TRAVIS

**This Is Me—40 mins.**  
This is Randy Travis' newest home video featuring "Heroes and Friends," "Better Class of Losers," "If I Didn't Have You," "Look Heart, No Hands," "An Old Pair of Shoes," "Cowboy Boogie," "Wind in the Wire" AND MORE! Item No. V9T - \$19.95

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**Kris Kristofferson—90 mins.**  
Here is the extraordinary life and career of the actor, songwriter and performer. It includes interviews with such notables as Willie Nelson, Dennis Hopper and Johnny Cash and features such songs as "Me and Bobby McGee," "Sunday Morning Coming Down," "The Pilgrim," "Beat the Devil" AND LOTS MORE! Item No. V6H - \$19.95

## CHARLEY PRIDE

**An Evening With—45 mins.**  
Listen to the rich baritone sounds of Charley Pride, the Country Music Association's 1971 Entertainer of the Year. This noteworthy performance includes many of his highly acclaimed hits, including "Kiss an Angel Good Morning," "A Whole Lot of Lovin'" AND 14 MORE! Item No. V1C - \$24.95

## LOUISIANA HAYRIDE—62 mins.

During its heyday the *Louisiana Hayride* rivaled the *Grand Ole Opry* in the number of careers that it spawned. Hank Williams Jr. narrates this documentary, which explores the Shreveport, Louisiana, musical roots of such venerable stars as Hank Williams Sr., Johnny Cash and George Jones. This unique program uses old photographs, film clips and live transcriptions of radio show recordings to tell its story. Item No. V8W - \$14.95

## NEW! COUNTRY OUTLAWS LIVE—23 mins.

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

## HAL KETCHUM

**Past the Point of Rescue—24 mins.**  
Don't miss Hal Ketchum's latest video release featuring "Small Town Saturday Night," "I Know Where Love Lives," "Past the Point of Rescue" and a live performance of "Some Place Far Away," plus interview footage. Item No. V4Z - \$14.95

## TIM MCGRAW

**An Hour With Tim—60 mins.**  
Here are interviews, behind the scenes footage and background information, plus all five videos from *Not a Moment Too Soon*, including "Refried Dreams." Item No. V7R - \$19.95

## TIM MCGRAW

**Indian Outlaw—17 mins.**  
Tim's fans won't want to miss this newest release either. It features three versions of "Indian Outlaw," including the original, the extended dance and the instrumental dance. There's also "Welcome to the Club" and "Memory Lane." Item No. V5A - \$14.95

## HANK WILLIAMS

**Hank Williams Tradition—60 mins.**  
*In the Hank Williams Tradition* traces Hank's life story through rare film clips, music and revealing interviews with friends and fellow performers such as Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl and Chet Atkins. Included are performances of many of Hank's greatest songs by today's top country artists, who also tell how Hank inspired their careers. There are also five hit songs performed by Hank himself. Item No. V2M - \$19.95

## HANK WILLIAMS SR.

**The Show He Never Gave—86 mins.**  
This movie permits the haunted singer to play one final show, during which all his fears and passions—all his genius—tumble out for us to see. "Sneezy" Waters plays the self-destructive superstar and admirably performs 23 songs. Adding to the authenticity of the project is the audience of supporting characters who populate the mythical roadhouse where Hank confronts his life, just as it is ending. Item No. V2L - \$19.95

## BILL MONROE

**Father of Bluegrass—90 mins.**  
With the cooperation of Bill Monroe, ex-Blue Grass Boys and other performers he influenced, this documentary clearly defines Bill Monroe's unique role in American music. It covers his early years in Kentucky with great footage. The era of The Monroe Brothers, his early years on the Opry, the Flatt-Scruggs-Wise version of The Bluegrass Boys—all are here in full. This video is a must for any Bill Monroe fan. Item No. V2K - \$19.95

## NEW! HUNKS WITH HATS

**Brooks, Jackson and Black—30 mins.**  
Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson and Clint Black, three of country music's biggest headliners, give you a rare look at what they're all about. They reveal their innermost feelings about their music, lives, families and fans. It is not often that you get a chance to get this close to a reigning star. Item No. V5K - \$19.95

## COUNTRY ON BROADWAY

**Filed in New York—96 mins.**  
See Hank Williams in his only filmed appearance, uncut. Enjoy 30 full songs by Hank and headliners like George Jones, Hank Snow and Porter Wagoner. Includes: Hank Sr., "Hey Good Looking"/George Jones, "White Lightning"/Hank Snow, "Moving On"/Porter Wagoner, "Satisfied Mind" AND MORE! Item No. G8F - \$39.95

## MERLE HAGGARD

**The Best of—60 mins.**  
"I have selected some of my favorite songs for this video...and I hope they will be your favorites too."—Merle Haggard. You be the judge: "My Favorite Memory," "Mama's Hungry Eyes," "Today I Started Loving You Again," "When Times Were Good," "Okie from Muskogee," "Stay Here and Drink" AND 11 MORE! Item No. G3F - \$19.95

## WE HAVE T-SHIRTS OF THE STARS TOO!

Here are eight of the biggest names in country music—everyone from the legendary Hank Williams to current headliners like Reba McEntire and John Michael Montgomery. Each shirt is concert quality—without the typically high concert price. Adult sizes only. Not all shirts are available in every size. **\$17.95 Each**



Reba McEntire (#G2D) - L, XL, XXL  
John Michael Montgomery (#G2L) - XL



Randy Travis (#G2K) - L, XL, XXL  
Vince Gill (#G5A) - L, XL, XXL



Clint Black (#G1J) - XL  
Travis Tritt (#G5X) - L, XL, XXL



Hank Williams (#G2V) - XL  
Johnny Cash (#G2X) - XL

## WE ALSO HAVE THESE TOP STARS (NOT SHOWN):

Alan Jackson (#G5J) - M, L, XL, XXL  
Tim McGraw (#G2Y) - L, XL, XXL

Brooks & Dunn (#G2Z) - L, XL, XXL  
Aaron Tippin (#G3N) - L, XL, XXL

## MARTY ROBBINS

**Super Legend—120 mins.**  
Here is the best selling home video on Marty Robbins ever released. And it's no wonder when you consider that it features 18 performances including "El Paso," "White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Ribbon of Darkness," "Don't Worry 'Bout Me," "This Time You Gave Me a Mountain" plus Marty's Grammy-winning song, "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife." It also includes rare appearances from early television shows and movies. Item No. G2A - \$39.95

## RICKY VAN SHELTON

**To Be Continued...—35 mins.**  
Here are some of Ricky's early videos plus two live performances and an interview. Included are "Crime of Passion" and "Living Proof." Item No. G5W - \$24.95

## ROY CLARK

**Live From Branson—60 mins.**  
*Roy Clark Live From Branson* finally brings you the show that has been the hottest ticket on the Branson strip for the past ten years. With his nine-piece band, Roy brings you such hits as "The Tip of my Fingers," "Thank God and Greyhound," "Under the Double Eagle," "I Would Crawl All the Way to the River," "We Got Love," "Oh Lonesome Me," "Riders in the Sky" AND MUCH MORE! Item No. V21C - \$19.95

## MARTY STUART

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

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# VIDEO BONANZA

## TRAVIS TRITT

**Greatest Hits From the Beginning—50 mins.**

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

## TOOTSIE'S ORCHID LOUNGE—60 mins.

Kris Kristofferson, Faron Young and others join host Willie Nelson for this all-star program celebrating Tootsie's famous Orchid Lounge, where a group of songwriters hung out together 30 years ago and penned some of America's most popular songs. Included is footage of Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, Ray Price and others. Item No. V1N - \$19.95

## JIM REEVES

**Golden Memories—50 mins.**

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

## HIGHWAYMEN LIVE

**On the Road Again—60 mins.**

Cash, Nelson, Kristofferson and Jennings are together on this European Tour. You'll meet them backstage, talking candidly about their lives and their music. Then you'll see them on stage from the opening bars of their theme song, "Highwayman," until the final chord of "On the Road Again." Item No. V25 - \$14.95



## NEW! ALAN JACKSON

**Greatest Video Hits Collection—75 mins.**

This new collection features 18 songs, including "Blue Blooded Woman," "Here in the Real World," "Wanted," "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow," "Don't Rock the Jukebox," "Someday," "Midnight in Montgomery," "Chattahoochee," "Mercury Blues," "(Who Says) You Can't Have It All," "I Don't Even Know Your Name," "Tall, Tall Trees," "Summertime Blues," "Livin' on Love," "Gone Country," "Song for the Life" AND MORE! Item No. V10J - \$29.95

## ALAN JACKSON

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

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

## TRACY BYRD

**Keeper of the Stars—20 mins.**

Included on this hot new video are "Someone to Give My Love To," "Holdin' Heaven," "Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Famous," "Watermelon Crawl," "The Keeper of the Stars" and "Walking to Jerusalem." Item No. V10N - \$14.95

## SHANIA TWAIN

**The Woman in Me—25 mins.**

This new video includes "The Woman in Me (Needs the Man in You)," "Any Man of Mine," "Whose Bed Have Your Boots Been Under," "You Lay a Whole Lot of Love on Me," "Dance with the One That Brought You" and "What Made You Say That." Item No. V10M - \$14.95

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

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

## WAYLON JENNINGS

**My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys—60 mins.**

Filled with good humor and great music, *My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys* presents the rugged world of cowboys against a background of Jennings' classic songs, including "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys," "Sweet Mother Texas," "A Long Time Ago" and "I've Always Been Crazy." Item No. V10W - \$24.95

## NEW! ALABAMA

**Greatest Video Hits—37 mins.**

This great video features nine Number One hits, including "40-Hour Week," "Mountain Music," "Fire in the Night," "Feels So Right," "Can't Keep a Good Man Down," "The Closer You Get," "There's No Way," "Dixieland Delight" and "I'm Not That Way Anymore." Item No. V21D - \$19.95

## DWIGHT YOAKAM

**Just Lookin' for a Hit—30 mins.**

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

## DWIGHT YOAKAM

**Pieces of Time—40 mins.**

Dwight's latest video features 11 songs, including "Suspicious Minds," "The Heart That You Own," "Turn It On, Turn It Up, Turn Me Loose," "Takes a Lot to Rock You," "You're the One," "Ain't That Lovely Yet" AND MORE! Item No. V9P - \$19.95

## DON WILLIAMS

**Video Collection Vol. 1: Echoes—55 mins.**

Here is Don's first-ever video collection featuring 14 of his favorite songs. Included are "Good Ole Boys Like Me," "The Ties That Bind," "That's the Thing About Love," "Till the Rivers All Run Dry," "It Must Be Love," "I'm Just a Country Boy" AND MORE! Item No. V10E - \$19.95

## SECOND FIDDLE TO A STEEL GUITAR—107 mins.

*Second Fiddle to a Steel Guitar* is a rare production featuring 17 old-time artists and 30 great songs including "Born to Lose," "Jambalaya," "Hello Walls," "Don't Let Me Cross Over" and "Two Worlds Collide." You'll see stars like Lefty Frizzell, Dottie West, Bill Monroe, Webb Pierce, Faron Young, Minnie Pearl and others, both on-stage and backstage. Item No. V7E - \$29.95

## LORETTA LYNN

**Honky Tonk Girl—60 mins.**

This personal portrait follows Loretta from rural Kentucky to the clubs of the Northwest, from her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry to the 1970's Country Music Entertainer of the Decade. This video features never-seen home movies and photos and over 20 songs and performances. Item No. V8A - \$24.95

## GEORGE JONES

**Same Ole Me—60 mins.**

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

## GEORGE JONES

**Live in Tennessee—54 mins.**

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

## THE STATLER BROS.

**What We Love to Do—40 mins.**

Celebrating their 31st anniversary this year, The Statlers have released their first video in over a decade. It features "Elizabeth," "My Only Love," "What We Love to Do," "Atlanta Blue," "Maple Street Memories," "Sweeter and Sweeter," "You've Been Like a Mother to Me," "Let's Get Started" AND MUCH MORE! Item No. V6A - \$19.95

## NEW! GARTH BROOKS

**Video Collection Vol. 2—34 mins.**

Now you can own your favorite Garth Brooks videos on one brand new tape release. Included are such chartbusters as "We Shall Be Free," "Standing Outside the Fire," "The Red Strokes" and "The Change" from Garth's new album, *Fresh Horses*. There's also behind-the-scenes footage and exclusive interview footage. If you're a Garth fan, don't miss it. Item No. V21B - \$16.95



## NEW! REBA McENTIRE

**Live—60 mins.**

This new video includes "Respect," "Is There Life Out There," "The Greatest Man I Never Knew," "Walk On," "For My Broken Heart," "Why Haven't I Heard From You," "Does He Love You" (with Linda Davis), "Take It Back," "Till You Love Me" and "Fancy." Item No. V10X - \$24.95

## NEAL MCCOY

**You Gotta Love That!—45 mins.**

This young star's career took off with his RIAA Gold album *No Doubt About It*, which yielded two Number One country singles (the title track and "Wink") and the Top Five "The City Put the Country Back in Me." This video also includes "If I Built a Fire," "This Time I Hurt Her More (Than She Loves Me)" AND MORE! Item No. V4N - \$19.95

## VINCE GILL

**I Still Believe in You—24 mins.**

Vince Gill has joined the esteemed ranks of country's premier entertainers. Now you can enjoy this popular star on his only home video performing: "When I Call Your Name," "Never Knew Lonely," "Pocket Full of Gold," "Liza Jane," "Look at Us" and "I Still Believe in You." Item No. V1M - \$19.95

## TRACY LAWRENCE

**In the Round—40 mins.**

Recorded live before a Nashville audience seated "in the round," this new video of Number One hits and Top 10 singles features "I Threw the Rest Away," "As Any Fool Can See," "Runnin' Behind," "Sticks and Stones," "Between the Moon and You," "Allibis" AND MORE! Item No. V10V - \$16.95

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# Letters

## Thanks for Randy

Thank you so much for the wonderful cover story on Randy Travis in the May/June issue. I have been a major fan of his for about six years now. Randy hasn't been in many of the publications lately, and I have missed hearing about him. The feature on him really did bring me up to date on his latest efforts, and the pictures were sensational! By the way, does anyone know just when his next CD will be released? Now we fans have gotten a chance to see how he's looking lately, but we're really getting ready to hear his latest sound—which we are sure will be country!

Bonnie Ikamas  
Clinton Township, Michigan

## Those CMS Blues

Because of what's been happening in country music today, I have endured a lot of CMS days lately. First, the price of concert tickets increasing every year. Who is worth \$40.00 a ticket? Listening to the radio, I may hear a song I love, but who's singing? They all sound the same. Garth and Reba don't have enough confidence in their music to get on the stage and just sing. They have to put on a circus. Then there is all the talk about Shania Twain's belly button.

Because Randy Travis disbanded his fan club without so much as a "thank you" to the members, he has contributed to my CMS days. But when I saw the cover of the May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*, I had to sit down and breathe into a bag. He is country music, always has been, always will be. I thought, my cure is at hand. No more Country Music Stinks days. I'll skip lunch for a week to buy a concert ticket. I'll learn the names of all the new artists. I'll tolerate Garth and Reba. I will *not* envy S.T.'s belly button. And then I saw the picture of Randy frolicking in the snow with Connie Selleca.

Juanita Curtis  
Ryersburg, Tennessee

## Trouble in Paradise

I received my May/June magazine and immediately hated the cover. I saw Randy Travis, with five o'clock shadow, in the "baggy" look! Who convinced him that his fans would accept that? I have followed and loved Randy since the first time I heard him sing. That is not him! Give the "real Randy" back and toss this poor imitation! God forbid that he should



go "Hollywood"! Randy is a unique, traditional country singer whom this 62-year-old lady thinks is the greatest since Hank Sr., Jim Reeves and Marty Robbins.

I loved the article on "Cousin" Minnie. Our family was listening when she first appeared on the Grand Ole Opry, and we will all miss her. Thanks for the latest on The Oaks (20 Questions with The Oaks). It's great to have them back together.

Mary Kennedy  
Holstein, Iowa

## Decent on Wy

I'm a new subscriber to your magazine, and I must say it's one of the best ones I've read. I was extremely excited to receive my March/April issue. On the front cover was a picture of my idol and the best singer ever to set foot in Nashville. Yes, I'm referring to the one and only Wynonna. Bob Allen did an excellent job on the interview and also on the article. I've been waiting two years to read a decent article on her, and thanks to you, I finally got to. I was wondering, though, when can I see a centerfold of this wonderful lady?

Alyson R. Walton  
Troy, Missouri

## Complex and Funny

Thank you so much for the cover article on Wynonna in the March/April issue. I have read other interviews with her but most were just flowery tell-nothings. Certainly none have been as interesting and truly beneath-the-surface as Bob

Allen's. He did a super job of allowing Wynonna to come across as the complex and funny character that she is.

The only shadow on the issue was Michael Bane's review of Wynonna's terrific new album. I was dismayed to read that Bane thought she lacked passion on it. Personally, I was almost blown back from the stereo by the intensity in *that voice*. Nothing lackluster about it. So to set the record straight, folks, Wynonna's new album, *revelations*, is an artistic triumph, and she sings her soulful heart out on it. Hey, don't worry, Wynonna—you're smokin'.

Adrian Stuart  
Bassfield, Mississippi

## Fan Digs It

I want to thank you for writing the articles about Wynonna Judd-Kelly in the March/April issue. I enjoyed reading them very much. However, the record review of *revelations* I agree with only in part. Go back to the article by Bob Allen. In it she says, "I'm singin', here's my record. Dig it if you can." Well, apparently a few have. I mean, as far as I know, they don't hand out bestsellers and Number Ones to just anybody.

It's like I said, Wy, you done good, kid. And as for this Baptist, I can dig it.

Blanche Breazeale  
Trinity, Texas

## Heatin' Up for House

I've been suffering from cabin fever the past five months: James House fever, actually. Since the last House concert I attended last November, I've been waiting for spring to arrive, and for James' new album to be released, and for tour information to find its way into my mailbox. So far, no cigar... But at least now, I have my *Country Music Magazine* article about James House (May/June issue) and photos to keep me occupied while waiting for the above.

Dawn Searle  
Mokena, Illinois

## House Proud

I loved the recent story you did on James House (May/June issue). I saw him in person in Seven Springs, Pennsylvania, with a friend of mine whose brother plays in James' band. His voice just took my breath away. He is going to go a long way. I would like to see you have a pull-out of him.

Mae Mickley  
Mt. Vernon, Ohio

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QUIZ

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

1. Name the artists involved in the album *Wanted: The Outlaws*.
2. How old was Faith Hill when she moved to Nashville?
3. Which 80's band is credited with opening the doors for the current crop of country bands?
4. Merle Haggard wrote or co-wrote all but one song on his new album. Who wrote that song?
5. How many years has Charley Pride been in the music business?
6. Chevy's new C/K Truck is the first to offer what convenient feature that makes loading and storage a cinch?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:  
1. A *Holiday to Remember* 2. Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada 3. William Lee Golden 4. "In a Week or Two" 5. 1940 6. The new Chevy Trucks can be driven 100,000 miles before the first scheduled tune-up.

**Chevy Trucks**  
**LIKE A ROCK**



**Hats Off to Terri**

I love the newest issue (May/June). Thank you so much for the article and pictures on Terri Clark. I love to read anything I can find on her. I also think it's great she wears a hat. You go, girl!

Lyndy "Lou" Pirinich  
Bay City, Texas

**Rockin' Richards/or Taste Buds**

Just writing to say I enjoyed your latest article on Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones on his "Honky Tonk Heroes" in the May/June issue. I do find it hard to believe that the 1964 song "It's All Over Now" was ever country-flavored. Originally recorded by soul and blues singer Bobby Womack, I think The Rolling Stones' version was more rock 'n' roll than country-flavored.

Jerry Minnick  
Hiram, Ohio

**Hunka Hunka Dean**

I just want to thank you for the great picture of Billy Dean in the May/June 1996 issue. He is without a doubt, *the* hunk of country music today. I had bought his new CD, *It's What I Do*, a few days earlier and think it is the best that he has ever done. I am especially drawn to the song, "In the Name of Love." What a great video that would be. My hat's off to Skip Ewing and Doug Stone, too. What a great team. I really enjoy your magazine. Thank you for giving me something to look forward to getting in the mail besides bills!

Christa Vago  
Burns, Tennessee

**Name That Muppet**

You may know how to get to Sesame Street, but you don't know who lives there. In your story about Mary Chapin Carpenter in the People section in the May/June issue, you incorrectly identified one of the muppets pictured as Telly. Mary Chapin was joined by The Count, Big Bird and Zoe, not Telly.

Michelle Moore  
Perryville, Arkansas  
*Apologies to the Mupsters.—Ed.*

**Call 911**

Oh, god, I've got goosebumps, having just finished your "The Business of Dead Reckoning" article in the March/April issue, in addition to the Final Note by the great Patrick Carr, who (don't tell me this is just coincidence) also wrote the Dead Reckoning article. I can't take it. I've never heard more good music being acknowledged in one place before. I'm at risk of going into major shock. Someone call 911. For all intents and purposes, this is an unnecessary question, but do you have any idea how unlikely it is that you'd find the name "Gram Parsons" mentioned in a *country* music magazine? Probably, but that's what I love about your maga-

zine, you don't give a damn about labels, you just feature good music. As for me, it's hard enough liking country music where I live, now I have people going 'what the hell? that's not country!' Oh, well, what do I know? I'm only 14, but anyway, just had to say thanks for all you've done, and keep up the good work.

Li Patterson  
Reed City, Michigan  
P.S.—Love ya, Pat, and I'd kill for your autograph.

**Dead On with Dead Reckoning**

I really do adore *Country Music*. You always have the greatest covers, the photography is delicious and you never shy away from asking the hard questions in your articles, reviews and interviews. In light of this, I am glad to see you are dealing straight-on with what I see as one of the biggest problems facing the industry today. That is, the total disregard for any artist over the age of 35 or who dares record something outside of the so-called "country pop" category. Dead Reckoning (March/April 1996) is certainly a breath of fresh air, and they surely deserve our support, so I hope you will keep reporting on the status of the artists they're recording. I know I am out-the-door to pick up Mike Henderson's *Edge of Night* the moment I put this pen down!

I mean, it's bad enough when talented artists like Marty Brown, Iris DeMent and even Nanci Griffith can't get radio airplay, but when a market like WXTU in Philadelphia won't play cuts from Dwight Yoakam's *Gone*, I know it's time for a change!

Kathi Meininger  
Collingswood, New Jersey

**Digging Dead Reckoning**

I am a first-time writer. I just want to say right on to Patrick Carr for the very informative piece on "The Business of Dead Reckoning" in the March/April 1996 issue. I am sure to some people it seemed like he was slamming the music business. Hopefully, it opened their eyes (as it did mine) as to how the "other" kind was operated. I am so glad that Kieran, Kevin, Harry, Mike and Tammy merged to form the label. They are a very gifted group of artists. I urge people who have not heard them to give them a listen. Also, write to the label and get on their mailing list. You'll get cards in the mail keeping you informed of what is happening with each artist as well as where they appear as a "Night of Reckoning."

Cheryl Jeter  
Lindsay, Oklahoma  
*Dead Reckoning, P.O. Box 22152, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.—Ed.*

**20 Questions with Connie Smith**

I'm writing to let you know how very much I enjoyed your 20 Questions with Connie Smith in the March/April issue. I

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agree she is the greatest girl singer in the world, past, present or future, and she is a warm lovely wonderful super Lady person as well!

You see, I've known Connie quite a long time, as we used to work a country radio show in Portsmouth, Ohio, together. When "Once a Day" came out. I was on a TV show in Charleston, West Virginia, WSHS-TV, and I would play the song and just plug the heck out of it! I was also there for some of her first Opry shows and saw her take encore after encore! It was and is great to see a great talent as well as a super nice person get a break.

Me, I'm still performing at local fairs and shows and such. Randy Travis sounds a lot like me, and I do a lot of Alan Jackson stuff. Greatest song in quite awhile is "Livin' on Love." Thanks for a great magazine!  
Big John Fritz  
Myrtle Point, Oregon

### Connie 'n' Merle

Just received my March/April 96 issue. Love the 20 Questions with Connie Smith. Can't tell you how much I have missed this great lady. My LP's I spin to hear her are old, but I love to hear her. March 8th in Fort Smith, Arkansas, I got to see a legend. The one and only *Great* Merle Haggard. There's not many like him. Loved every minute of his show. Just wasn't long enough. Bonnie Owens was with him. Didn't know they were still singing together. You have a great magazine, keep up the good work.  
Marilyn Robertson  
Spiro, Oklahoma

### LeDoux and Earle

God bless Geoffrey Himes and Rich Kienle for their wonderful reviews of the recent Steve Earle and Chris LeDoux albums respectively (May/June issue). Both of these performers do not get the attention they deserve and have earned. Steve Earle and Chris LeDoux are grossly underappreciated. While their music styles are different, they do have one thing in common (other than the fact that radio ignores them both like the plague). Their music is honest and sincere, sometimes blatant, but always to the point. They can say so much in three and a half minutes that it's impossible to take it all in until you've burned a hole in the CD. Steve Earle and Chris LeDoux are my living heroes. The lives that they have led are inspiring. Almost inspiring enough to shoot a hole in my radio every time I hear John Michael (just kidding). Thanks for the great magazine (go weekly) and keep writing about Earle and LeDoux.

Anthony Guerriero  
Holland, Michigan

### The Birds Have It

On page 22 of the review of Emmylou Harris' *Wrecking Ball* in the January/February issue, and I quote: "Her last,

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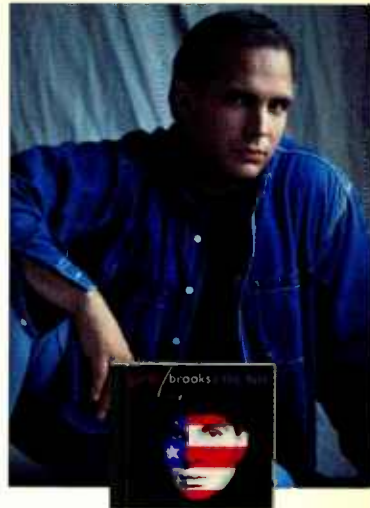
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Allen Ezard

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

*A bird by any other name....—Ed.*

#### **Patty—Less Is More**

Thanks to Geoffrey Himes for his on-the-mark review of Patty Loveless' new album in the March/April issue. Ever since changing record labels, Loveless has continued to flourish as an artist. This release, like her previous two, showcases great taste in material, excellent production and above all that incredible voice. Patty sings from the heart like no other woman in country music. I don't care how many millions of records Shania Twain sells, she'll never be in the same class with this lady. How about a long overdue cover story?

Terry Hrobat

La Salle, Illinois

#### **Distinctly Garth Brooks**

As a Garth Brooks fan since his beginnings, I was quite upset with Michael McCall's review of *Fresh Horses* in the March/April issue. If every album and every song from an artist sounded the same, it would be pointless to progress in music. "The Beaches of Cheyenne" is, in

my opinion, one of the best country songs on the charts. Each ballad and each rockin' song is definitely going to sound different, but they are all definitely Garth Brooks. If Mr. McCall would check the Top 25, he would see how much of the country audience agrees with me. Garth Brooks' albums reflect the best changes in country music.

C. Short

Honolulu, Hawaii

#### **And Again, From the Same Side**

I am writing in response to Michael McCall's review of Garth Brooks' album *Fresh Horses* in the March/April issue of your magazine. I will admit that upon hearing the first release, "She's Every Woman," I was somewhat disappointed, but after hearing "Fever," my faith in Garth was renewed. How can anyone claim that a song which is so exciting and different is "stale." Perhaps because it does not present Garth in a carbon copy image of George Jones or Merle Haggard which seem to be popular among young country musicians these days? Maybe it's because he actually has the originality to try a style of his own. In general, I am very pleased with this album, and I find such a review completely ridiculous.

Robert J. Clevenger Jr.

Knoxville, Tennessee

#### **"Let the Thunder Roll...."**

Let thunderous applause roll for Michael McCall's reality-checking review of Garth Brooks' new album, *Fresh Horses*, in the March/April 1996 issue. In my opinion, Garth's terrific career peaked with his *Ropin' the Wind* album. Since then I haven't seen hide nor hair of the "real Garth" around. Guess he's just too busy pushing his own agenda....I sure miss ol' Garth. Maybe he will "change," and "dance" once again without leaving his fans behind. I am a first-time subscriber to CMM. Great magazine!

Jennifer Graves  
Roberts, Wisconsin

#### **Butt, Hazel**

Oh, come on, Hazel. Your People section is the first thing I dive into when a new *Country Music Magazine* leaves my mailbox, but I get tired of your obsession with the rear ends of some of the good-looking country guys. I like fellows as much as you do, but I don't care how they look from the back. George Strait could be ugly as sin and I'd still love the sound that comes out of his mouth when he sings. Okay, I've said it, and I still think you're doing a great job.

Margaret C. Barnett  
Rocky River, Ohio

#### **Menu Item**

Re People item, "Opry Notes," in the March/April issue: "Country music's first honky tonk heroine, Jean Shepard...." Holy sassafras and boiled ham hocks! Did you people forget all about Kitty Wells?

Tom Garcia  
Tucson, Arizona

#### **Sweeps Winners**

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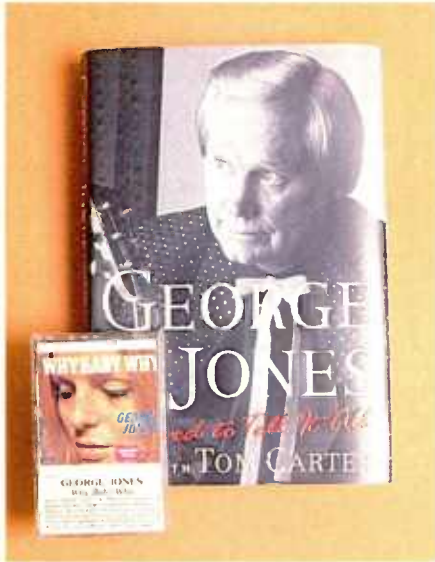
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# EDITOR'S CHOICE



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Boozing. Womanizing. Brawling. Singing. For the last 40 years, George Jones has reigned as country's king—the singer many have called the Frank Sinatra of country music. And for most of that time, his career has been marked by hard-living, hard-loving, and hard luck. From his early East Texas recordings through his marriage to

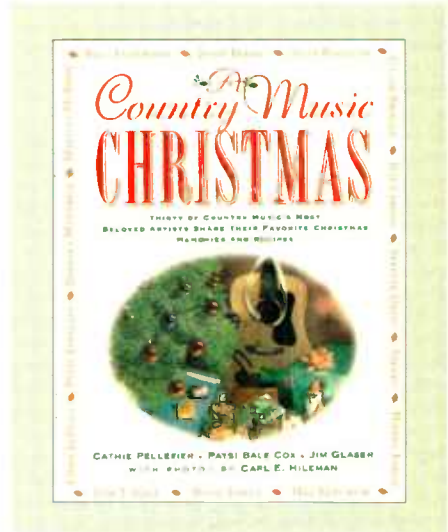
Tammy Wynette to his latest acclaim as solid citizen and “high-tech redneck,” Americans have been fascinated with Jones, never even knowing whether he'd show up for his next concert performance.

For the first time, in his new autobiography, *I Lived to Tell It All*, Jones delivers a no-holds-barred account of his excesses and ecstasies. How alcohol ruled his life and performances. How violence marred many friendships and relationships. How money was something to be made but never held on to. And, finally, how the love of a good woman can ultimately change a man, redeem him, and save his life.

Notorious for evading the press, the subject of two unauthorized biographies and countless cover stories that have offered little in the way of first-person revelations, George Jones finally comes forward with his own story, told to Tom Carter (highly respected co-author of books with Ralph Emery, Reba McEntire and others). Complete with never-before-seen personal photos, George Jones' memoir is a classic, candid story of an unforgettable star. Ask for item #B10A/R12, \$23.

**ORDER NOW AND YOU ALSO GET A GEORGE JONES ALBUM ON CASSETTE...FREE!**

*Why Baby Why* features the title song plus hits like “Frozen Heart,” “You Never Thought It Would Be You,” “One Is a Lonely Number,” “Settle Down” AND MORE!



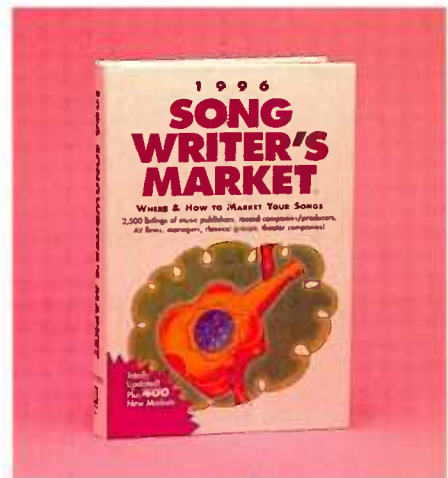
**NEW OCTOBER RELEASE—SAVE 10%! A COUNTRY MUSIC CHRISTMAS**

*A Country Music Christmas* brings together 30 of country music's biggest stars—from Grand Ole Opry legends like Bill Anderson and Tom T. Hall to today's new headliners like Aaron Tippin and Garth Brooks—who share their most memorable Christmases and favorite recipes. Each story is accompanied by an exquisite hand-colored photograph depicting a special Christmas vignette. Here is the best of country storytelling, country music, and Christmas in one beautiful book. Item #B4H, regularly \$22.00—NOW \$19.80.



**CLASSIC COLLECTIBLE VIDEOS!—50 MINS. EACH GET A SPECIAL DISCOUNT WHEN YOU ORDER MORE THAN ONE!**

Celebrate country music's glorious past with these three recently released black & white videos. First, there's *Grand Ole Opry Time, Volume 1* (1954). Direct from the stage of the Grand Ole Opry, you'll hear classic performances by Ernest Tubb, Bill Monroe, The Carter Family, Faron Young, Carl Smith, Minnie Pearl, Grandpa Jones and so many more. Item #V10K. *Grand Ole Opry Time, Volume 2* (1956), features Ray Price, Webb Pierce, June Carter, Chet Atkins and others performing classic songs like “All Alone” and “Please Release Me.” Item #V10H. Finally, there's *The Country Show* (1956), two great episodes of the show that highlighted the biggest stars of the Grand ole Opry, featuring Jim Reeves, Minnie Pearl, Faron Young, Marty Robbins, Ray Price, Justin Tubb and many more. Item #V10G. Each video is \$29.95, two for just \$56.95, all three for only \$83.95.



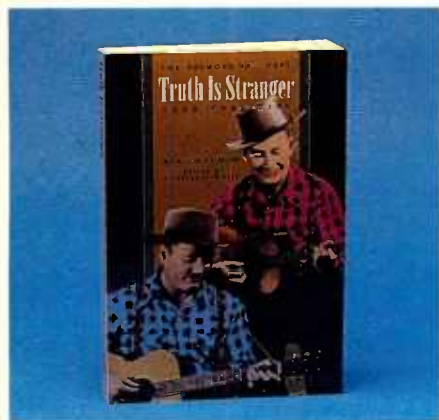
**1996 SONGWRITER'S MARKET**  
Get your songs into the right person's hands with this year's newly revised edition of the *Songwriter's Market*, containing 2,500 listings of song markets, each with the most complete and current information on contact names, royalty/pay rates, song submission, types of songs wanted and vital tips from the “buyers.” There are lists of clubs, associations, contests, workshops, publications AND MORE! Item #B2N, \$21.99.

# Nashville Warehouse



## THE ULTIMATE RICKY VAN SHELTON COLLECTION—FOUR CASSETTES, 40 HITS—FOR ONE LOW PRICE!

Nashville Warehouse is proud to bring you this four-tape collection featuring 40 of Ricky's best (including some fine gospel). Here's just a sample: "Life Turned Her That Way," "Don't We All Have The Right," "Statue of a Fool," "I've Cried My Last Tear for You," "I'll Leave This World Loving You," "Don't Send Me No Angels," "Crime of Passion," "Somebody Lied," "From a Jack to a King," "Ultimately Fine," "Don't Overlook Salvation," "I Don't Care," "Wild-Eyed Dream," "Crazy Over You," "Living Proof," "Oh Pretty Woman," "Swimming Upstream," "Hole in My Pocket" **AND MUCH MORE!** These are all CBS/Columbia released cassettes. Sorry, no CD's. Ask for Item #CS9B, \$21.95.



## THE DELMORE BROTHERS: TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN PUBLICITY

Alton Delmore and his younger brother Rabon molded blues and country-gospel into a guitar-driven harmony sound that influenced hundreds of country musicians who heard them on record during their tenure in the Grand Ole Opry from 1933 to 1938. Alton left a rare treasure in the hands of his son, an unpublished manuscript chronicling his days as a musician. *Truth Is Stranger Than Publicity* brings to life the world of the early Grand Ole Opry and the struggles of country music's first generation of musicians. Edited by noted historian Charles K. Wolfe, *Truth Is Stranger Than Publicity* lives up to its title. Item #B20L, \$14.95.



**NEW!**

## NEW! THE ELVIS PRESLEY T-SHIRT AND ADJUSTABLE BASEBALL CAP

The Welcome To My World Elvis T-Shirt is concert quality, in adult sizes M, L, XL, XXL. Item #G4F, \$15.95. For the Elvis Adjustable Cap ask for Item #G4G, \$10.95.



**NEW!**

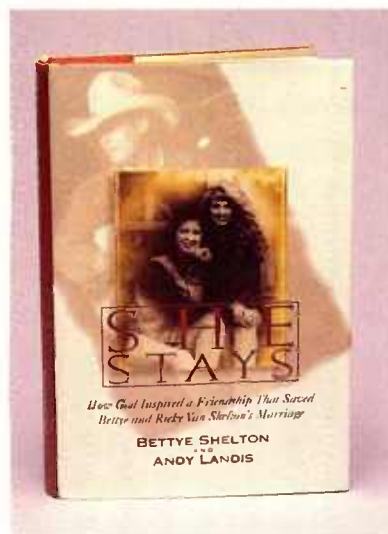
## NEW! THE LORRIE MORGAN T-SHIRT AND ADJUSTABLE BASEBALL CAP

Like the Elvis shirt, the Lorrie Morgan T-Shirt is concert quality, in adult sizes M, L, XL, XXL. Item #G4S, \$15.95. The Lorrie Morgan Cap is Item #G4T, \$13.95.



## NEW! DWIGHT YOAKAM PHOTO WATCH AND ELVIS PRESLEY GUITAR WATCH

Don't miss these two popular photo watches. First, there's the new Dwight Yoakam Watch (female model only) with a plastic strap (Item #J2L) for \$29.95, or leather strap (J2M) for \$39.95. Then there's the Elvis Watch with the unique rotating guitar second hand. Item #J2B, \$49.95 (specify male or female style).



## BESTSELLER! SHE STAYS: How God Inspired a Friendship That Saved Bettye and Ricky Van Shelton's Marriage

*She Stays* takes you behind the scenes of the dream-come-true romance of Bettye and Ricky Van Shelton into a world of personal struggle and turmoil that threatened to destroy their marriage and everything they held dear. When co-author Andy Landis picked up the phone to call a woman she scarcely knew, she entered into what would culminate in a friendship of shared confidences, tears, and triumph that Bettye believes could only have been part of God's wisdom and plan. In *She Stays*, which is also a featured song on the new album, *Common Ground*, and pays tribute to Bettye's courage, you'll see firsthand the impact of shared burdens and reaching out to others in pain. Visible throughout the Sheltons' separation and reconciliation, as well as Andy's sometimes troubled relationship with Ricky's longtime producer and friend, you'll find an overwhelming faith in God and prayer, and

witness the strength to be gained from having God's hand, as well as a fellow human's, to hold during times of despair and crisis. *She Stays* also brings you face-to-face with a woman's commitment to her marriage and the pain of forgiving what to many would be unforgivable—including infidelity and alcoholism—unless you knew that what you had was really worth keeping. Hardcover, 286 pages, eight pages of photos. Item B6M, only \$16.99.



### DOLLY PARTON DOLL

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



### 1997 PHOTO CALENDARS—RESERVE YOURS NOW AND SAVE 10%!

Elvis Presley Calendar Item #G6F97, regularly \$12.99—**NOW \$11.65.**

Country Music Foundation Calendar Item #G1B97, Regularly \$9.95—**NOW \$8.95.**

### NEW! THE OFFICIAL HOHNER EASY HARMONIC INSTRUCTION COURSE

Now, with this unique bestselling course, you can play the harmonica seemingly overnight, even if you can't read a note of music or have never played a musical instrument. Your complete harmonica package includes an easy-to-follow, written instruction guide, a complete one-hour audio instruction cassette tape, and most important, the professional class, world famous **Hohner Big River Harp** model harmonica. Now we offer it to *Country Music* readers for \$17.95—**YOU SAVE \$2.00!** Ask for Item #G9D.



### NEW COMPACT BOOK! GEORGE STRAIT: AN ILLUSTRATED MUSICAL HISTORY



This is one of the first releases in this brand new series of compact books from the Putnam Publishing Company. Edited by *New York Times* bestselling author Dave Marsh and authored by David Cantwell, the book lets fans follow the story of this boy from a small Texas town who made it big in Music City. Photos, timelines, historical data and music criticism combine to make it absolutely indispensable for the serious George Strait fan. And the unique CD package design is a perfect touch. This compact gem is being released even as you read this. Order yours now so you're sure not to be left out. Item #B10B, \$7.95.

## NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE EDITOR'S CHOICE ORDER FORM

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## Spade Cooley in Legends

Only one Spade Cooley reissue is available. *Spadella! The Essential Spade Cooley* (Sony Legacy 57392). This compiles all but one of Cooley's 1944-46 recordings (leaving out a politically incorrect anti-Japanese ditty recorded during World War II). Tex Williams handles the vocals, Joaquin Murphey (replaced in 1946 by Noel Boggs) handles steel guitar, and Johnny Weis handles most of the lead guitar chores. A total of 20 songs are included here, six of them instrumentals: "Troubled Over You," "Oklahoma Stomp," "You Can't Break My Heart," "Detour," "Crazy 'Cause I Love You," "Swingin' the Devil's Dream," "Shame on You," "Forgive Me One More Time," "You Better Do It Now," "Steel Guitar Rag," "You'll Rue the Day," "You Never Miss the Water (Till the Well Runs Dry)," "I Guess I've Been Dreaming Again," "A Pair of Broken Hearts," "Cow Bell Polka," "Hide Your Face," "I Can't Help the Way You Peel," "I've Taken All I'm Gonna Take from You," "Three Way Boogie" and "Spadella." The remastered sound is phenomenal, the only blot on the set being wisecrack-laden, shallow—and occasionally inaccurate—liner notes studded with unending comment about how little is known about Cooley's life and music. *Spadella!* is available on CD only. Regular price \$18.98. Members' price \$16.98. —R.K.

## Buried Treasures Special

CMSA members are entitled to a discount on all of the products featured in this section. This time out, take \$2.00 off the new reissue packages from Harlan Howard, The Maddox Brothers and Rose, Merle Travis, The Statler Brothers and Bill Monroe. On the boxed sets, members get a larger discount: You can deduct \$10.00 off the price of the new Merle Haggard CD boxed set—members pay just \$69.98. On the Carl Smith set from Bear Family, you can deduct *over* \$40.00 off regular price! Mem-

bers pay just \$123.75. Lastly, on the new Slim Whitman box, members pay just \$169.95. Include membership number if taking discount. See ordering instructions in Buried Treasures.

## Essential Collector Special

The CMSA members discount also applies to Essential Collector. This time out, members may take \$2.00 off the prices listed for each item. Among the high points of this issue's Essential Collector section are the new George Jones autobiography, a detailed history of Fender Guitars, a video tracing the roots of The Light Crust Doughboys, and fine reissues on George and Tammy, The Gatlin Brothers and more. See ordering instructions on Essential Collector page, and include membership number if taking discount.

## March/April's Classic Photo

We heard from Ken Griffis of Camarillo, California, regarding our photograph of "Elton Britt" with The Beverly Hill Billies band on the For Members Only page of our March/April 1996 issue. Mr. Griffis, a West Coast country music historian, has some interesting information on the photograph, and the history of The Hill Billies. He points out (including scrapbook material to prove it): "Hal" in your photograph certainly can't be Elton Britt. At the time of your photo, Elton hadn't yet joined the group, and when he did join, in August 1930, he would have appeared in a hillbilly costume, not a business suit. Britt was only 15 years old at the time." As for the identity of Hal, Ken says, "I'm not certain of Hal's last name. At that time there was a Hal Nichols operating in the area, but whether or not that's him, I can't be sure."

Mr. Griffis also notes that, despite what the lettering on the photograph says, the people in it are not the *original* Original Beverly Hill Billies. He includes an April 1930 clipping which shows Hank, Ezra and Lem, just as our photo does, but the original line-up also included a Tom and a Zeke, whereas our later shot features Jad, Charlie and Hal instead. Fascinating! Thanks, Ken Griffis, for all of this information.

## How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 070896N, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Include \$3.00 postage/handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional.

# VOTE

## MEMBERS POLL/JULY 1996

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

### Bought Any Good Records Lately?

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

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Your Choice for Album of the Month

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

Singles (list 5 numbers)      Albums (list 5 numbers)  
         

### Gardening and Tractors

5. Do you have a vegetable garden?  Yes  No

6. If yes, please check the size that comes closest to describing the size of your vegetable garden.  
 10 ft. x 12 ft.     20 ft. x 30 ft.     40 ft. x 60 ft.

7. Do you own a garden tractor?  Yes  No

8. a. If yes, which style of garden tractor do you own?  
 Riding     Walk-behind

b. Please specify the brand and model of your tractor:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Who Can Vote

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

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

Branson. Schmanson, but here I am back again, stuck in traffic. Well, at least the traffic's not quite so bad. I'm in Branson hot on the trail of Charley Pride, whose gargantuan Charley Pride Theater, or mansion, if you will, sits on a hill overlooking the town. Things are going great for Charley. It's early in the season, and he's packin' 'em in already. He tours when he wants to, signs autographs for hours and hours and, rumor has it, even gets in a little golf. After getting to the theater and beating on his door for a while, I finally wake him up and ask him 20 Questions.

**1** This is a heck of a theater—2000 seats. I believe you've played towns smaller than this theater.

(Laughs.) Well, maybe. At the beginning maybe. I hadn't thought of it that way. How long have you been in Branson?

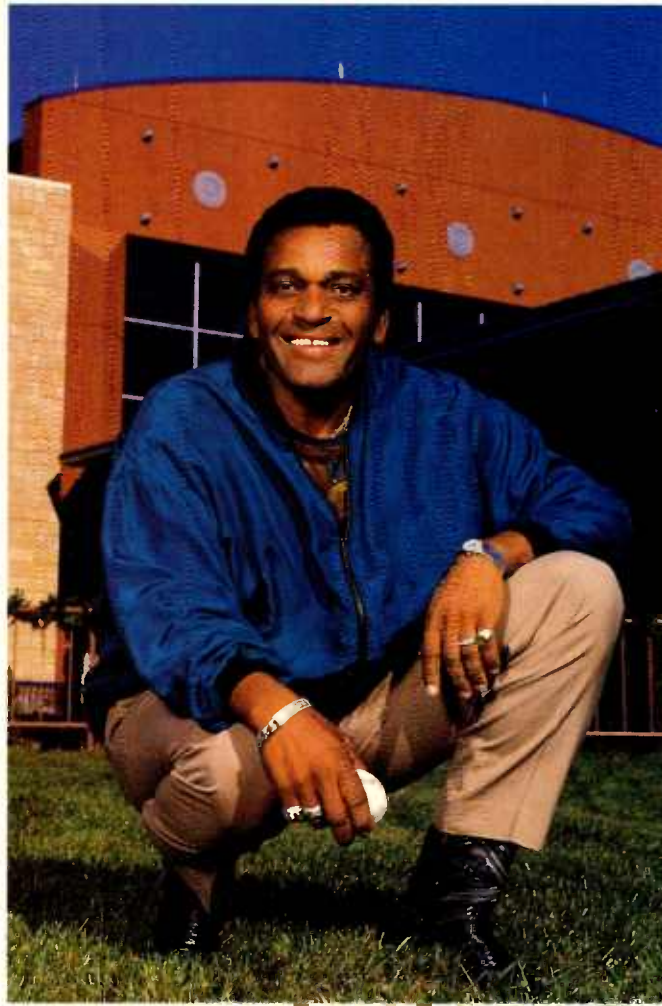
This is our third year now. Here, open. I think last night and the second week opening was the biggest we'd had, about 1200 or 1300. That makes you feel real good, doing those kind of numbers.

**2** So this is your 30th year in the business?

Yes, we're all kinda celebrating my 30 years in the business, not necessarily recording. But I guess mostly in the business overall...

**3** How many albums have you done? Do you know? I asked George Jones that once, and he just started laughing, who knows.

It is kinda hard, when you figure all the compilations and the ones you don't know anything about...When you get this far into a career like mine, of the magnitude I've been fortunate enough to be able to accomplish...I mean, this is the life I've built. Not just here, but I've been on the phone to my office in Dallas, and you just try to incorporate everything you can, and stay up with everything you can. Then try to get enough rest to do the kinds of shows you do on stage. One of my band members tried



## 20 Questions with CHARLEY PRIDE

By Michael "Biscuits & Gravy" Bane

to put together how many albums I've done. I think it's almost 500 some-odd songs, 54 albums. He said if I was to do all those songs, I'd be on stage here 21 hours, 15 minutes...

**4** Branson must be easier for you, not having to be on the road 10 months a year.

Well, travel-wise, yes. The

thing is, though, everything has a price. That part of it is easier, not to have to jump on a plane every night, but you still have to give the kind of performances you've always done. Plus, here, I'm one of the few stars still signing autographs after the show. Some try to do some kind of signing in the middle of the intermis-

sion, that sort of thing, but I don't see how I could get that done that way.

**5** The fans still come first with you, don't they...

That's the bottom line. Like we did a show down in Florida recently, and they asked me if I'd do 30-35 minutes signing. Then you see all these people lined up. You don't sign for 30-35 minutes, then cut the rest off. What are you going to do? A third or two-thirds? Who's going to cut it off? It's just one of those things, Michael. You have to make a decision, and mine is, I'm going to sign autographs until the last person is gone. All I do is tell the truth. My fans know if I tell them something, they can believe it, because I'll never lie to them.

**6** At this point in your life and career, what would you like to record? If you could go into the studio and cut 10 songs, what would they be?

There are certain people I always wanted to do a tribute album for, like what I did with the Hank Williams album. So there are various people that I want to do that for. That's the most serious thing I would like to do at the moment.

**7** Who would some of those people be?

I've already expressed some of them. But again a lot times, I don't like to express too many things, because a lot of people took my ideas and ran with them before I had a chance to get to them. So I have to be careful about what my ideas are, about even the business. For example, I've been very fortunate to have been involved in a lot of artists' careers, and I've seen many labels have taken my lead in terms of what I've done and how much I've contributed in that sector—to that part of the business. But you don't hear nothing about "similar to what Charley did."

**8** Would you like to go in and do another Hank record? That was a great record.

I think that would be good. I think there's enough of his other material. That's a

thought. But, again, I'm not to mention specifically what I'd like to do. Whether it be this feller or that feller.

**9** *Why do you think Hank Senior's music is timeless? I always thought you were one of the best interpreters ever.* He had a unique voice. I think that he was blessed with a unique voice. And I do think traditional country music does have a definite inflection, whoever the singer may be...I do think that there are young artists today coming up who have that ability, that traditional sound. Of course, overall, I think country music today is pretty, well...more *up tempo* now than I've ever seen it at any time that I've been in it. I think Hank Williams was blessed with it; I think I'm blessed with it. I think that's what makes him timeless. Once you hear that voice, there is no doubt who it is. A lot of singers came close to being traditional singers, namely Ray Price. I think Johnny Horton was traditional, and of course Hank Thompson. None, as far as I'm concerned, were as traditional and unique as Hank Williams, to my ear. They were good, but he was very unique.

**10** *I was thinking the other day that your version of "Kaw-Liga" was the one that came to mind when I thought of that song; I'd have to pull a record to dredge up Hank Sr.'s version...* I was fortunate enough to record a live album, where that cut came from. It was in front of a live audience, with all the excitement of doing a live album, and all that part of it not being in the studio. I think that maybe helped make that such a memorable record. And the pickers on that—it was just different than just being in the studio recording a song. Not that Hank's wasn't good. I'll never forget—I still laugh about it now—when my youngest son was about three or four years old, he came in and hollered to his mother, "Ma, someone's messing up Daddy's song on the radio!" I said, "Son, the man who's try-

ing to sing Daddy's song wrote and recorded that song long before Daddy did. That's his song." I'll never forget that.

**11** *Do you have a favorite, after all the hits you've had?* Well, it's kinda hard to just pick one favorite, because I've been fortunate to have so many records that have done so well. The best way I can answer is that there are certain ones that I like to do at certain times, on certain occasions, that I think fit that occasion. But I can give you the biggest I've had. "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" was my biggest selling record. "All I Can Offer You Is Me" was my first Number One and the next biggest-selling single record, and "Crystal Chandelier" is the most requested all over the world.

**12** *That must be really neat. Is it?* It is. I tell people even though it wasn't released in U.S., as long as they enjoy it, I'll have to keep playing it. It's that kind of thing with that song. I have a song called "In the Middle of Nowhere" that reminds me of my mother. It's a sad song. She's passed on, but it's a pretty song. I feel that there a lot of songs buried in the earlier albums that could be hit singles.

**13** *Name a few that would fall into that category...* Like "Mama Don't Cry for Me" is a fine song, in one of my albums. We were playing in Nottingham, England, and Ipswich the following night. A lady had written me ahead of time and asked me would I do "The Thorns of Life." So I had to go to my keyboard player and ask what album the song was on. He said, "It's on the *Pride of America* album." So this guy was coming through the line when I was signing autographs, and I asked, "Say, you don't happen to have the *Pride of America* album, do you?"—he did—"if I give you my address at the hotel, would you call me up so I can tape that song on the album off the telephone so I can refresh my

memory before we get to Ipswich tomorrow night?" And he said, "Oh, yeah." So he called up and had it ready, and I taped it right off the telephone on a little recorder, and I did the song for the lady in Ipswich.

**14** *Remember the old days, cranking an album out in four days or so...* They did record them that way, and, of course, I like that, because I truly don't think you need to go in and spend the kind of time and money that they're doing today. But that's the way they're doing it. I remember one night we recorded five songs, and I can tell you about three of them. I remember "Green Green Grass of Home" was one, "Busted," and—it was on my first album—"Folsom Prison Blues," I believe it was. We just did songs that were big, 'cause I didn't have any hits of my own. So Jack Clement, my producer, said, "We need to make an album. We'll get some big songs and let you learn them, and just put your own brand on them." And that was one of my million-selling albums.

**15** *Jack Clement is one of a kind. There's only one Cowboy...* I was very fortunate to be able to work with him. We did some fine stuff together. We still talk, and, in fact, he makes some fine sausage, eggs, bacon, biscuits and gravy. One time I went over to his house, and he got a piece stuck down his throat—we didn't know he was dying—he couldn't say anything—and he was sitting there choking to death. Finally it popped it out—you know, someone noticed something was wrong and helped him out. I asked him if he was all right, and he groaned. I said, "I don't know whether I should come over and have sausage and biscuits with you if you're going to scare me like that."

**16** *Didn't you two guys do six or seven Gold albums?* I think that of the 14 Gold records I have in America,

he's probably responsible for more than half of them. I was fortunate enough to be with him—he was touted as being the Genius of Nashville—he was the producer's producer back at that time. Looking back, it's hard for me to know how he did it. At one time, before we were done together, he was recording 17 artists. He was producing 17 artists. Now, you just try to produce one or two in terms of all of the things that involves. How did he do it? But, that's the Cowboy.

**17** *You play golf. Are you as good a golfer as you were a ballplayer?* No, but if I focused on it, I'd be out there. No brag, but if I had picked up a golf club, or been able to, when I picked up a bat, I would be right in that professional category.

**18** *Do ever think about what it would have been like if you'd...* No, no, I don't think about it...Well, I think about this—if I had got a chance to play, I wouldn't have been no bench warmer. I would have been up there among the top ones.

**19** *Do you like the way country music is going now?* It's all right as far as the artists. There's some great songs, and I like a lot of the songs I'm hearing. But my thing, again, is with the industry itself, in terms of how they're treating country music and artists themselves. They take the artists and just throw them up against a wall—that type of attitude. When I started, if you sold 50,000 albums as a country singer, you were a success!

**20** *But you still have your fans...* I've been a blessed person, I'm still being blessed. I've built up enough of a following—otherwise I wouldn't be drawing the crowds I'm drawing here and in Europe. I go to Europe, and it's sold out before I get there. So I'm not crying or anything, I'm blessed. Not a lot of artists can say that.

# Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

**Merle Travis:** Capitol-Nashville has just issued on CD two of the acoustic albums that Merle Travis fanatics have been seeking for years. I annotated and assisted on both, so facts only, as usual. *Folk Songs of the Hills* (Capitol 35810) was Travis' acoustic 78 rpm LP, issued in 1947, that included his original versions of "Sixteen Tons" and "Dark as a Dungeon." The new, 13-song version features all the numbers recorded during the folk song sessions as well as "This World Is Not My Home," an outtake released only on the Bear Family box set. The remaining four numbers, recorded for Capitol Transcriptions in the 1940's, were added when the album was again released on LP in 1957 as *Back Home* following the 1956 success of Tennessee Ernie Ford's "Sixteen Tons."



Previously unavailable on CD, *Walkin' the Strings* (Capitol 35809) consists of 1940's acoustic instrumental material Travis recorded, with Cliffie Stone producing, for the Capitol Transcriptions. With virtually no rehearsal, Stone simply told Travis to play whatever he wanted to for specific periods of time, from 29 seconds to over two and a half minutes. While "Bicycle Built for Two" and other traditional songs are well known, others were unnamed instrumentals (often old Muhlenberg fingerpicking favorites) assigned titles by Capitol long after the sessions. In 1960, Capitol released 22 of these instrumentals on LP.

The cover of this all-acoustic album depicted Travis not with an acoustic guitar, but holding his custom-built 1952 Gibson Super 400 Electric. One clarification in the credits: though Ken Nelson indeed produced the original 1960 LP, Stone produced the actual transcriptions.

**Merle Haggard:** Remember when Merle Haggard CD reissues were as impossible to find in record stores as ten-inch LP's? Just a few years ago, finding one or two greatest hits sets took time. Today, that's changed, due to a realization of Haggard's importance, fueled by the two multi-artist tribute albums on HighTone and Arista. On the heels of Bear Family's 1963-68 Haggard box, the series of Koch-reissued classic Haggard Capitol LP's, and Razor & Tie's double-CD hits package, Capitol-Nashville issued the 1973 *I Love Dixie Blues* album on CD earlier this year. Now, Capitol's gone even further with *Down Every Road* (Capitol 35711), a 100-song, four-CD Haggard collection, a project they should have undertaken five years ago.

The collection begins in 1962 with the A-side of his first Tally single, "Skid Row," and proceeds through the Capitol hits and high points at Epic and MCA, ending with a selection from his 1994 album on Curb. The material speaks for itself, and the sound is excellent. Six Capitol performances are previously unreleased, among them "I'm Looking for My Mind," from 1968, the 1969 studio recording of "White Line Fever" and a version of "I Can't Stop Loving You" recorded during the 1969 concert from which the live *Okie From Muskogee* LP came. Capitol also never released "I'll Be a Hero When I Strike," a hard-edged 1970 political song, or his re-creation of Bob Wills' recording of "Trouble in Mind" from the 1970 Bob Wills tribute ses-

sions. "Everybody's Had the Blues" comes from rehearsals for the 1973 New Orleans concert that produced the *I Love Dixie Blues* LP. The booklet is a beauty, with rare photos,



though no session information. Despite being written without access to Haggard, Daniel Cooper's notes are adequate, though Capitol's Ken Nelson never retired "as head of the label" as he states on page 80 of the booklet.

**Carl Smith:** It was inevitable that Carl Smith, best known today as a Nashville horse breeder and as Carlene Carter's dad, would get a Bear Family boxed set. *Satisfaction Guaranteed* (BCD 15849) is a five-CD box covering Smith's career from the beginning in 1950 through 1959, a total of 143 songs. It starts with his first non-hit Columbia tracks from 1950, recorded not long after Smith joined the Grand Ole Opry. All the hits are here, beginning with his first, "Let's Live a Little," from 1951, and his biggest, "Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way," also from 1951. All the top records from his peak years follow, including "(When You Feel Like You're in Love) Don't Just Stand There," "Hey Joe," "Loose Talk" and so on up through "Ten Thousand Drums." On most sessions, the musicians were Carl's outstanding band, The Tune-smiths, built around ex-Drifting Cowboy guitarist Sammy Pruett, fiddler Dale Potter, steel guitarist Johnny Sibert and pioneer drummer Buddy Harman.

Most material appears on CD for the first time, including such rarities as Smith's 1952 sacred sessions with The Carter Family (including his fiancée June Carter) that made up the rare 10-inch LP, *Softly and Tenderly*. Another rare Smith gospel effort, 1957's "Sunday Down South," is also included, with Mother Maybelle playing autoharp. Also here is Smith's work with the *Town Hall Party* cast for a re-creation of the popular Southern California TV show, including "You Are My Sunshine" with Gene Autry, pop star Rosemary Clooney and The Collins Kids singing with Smith. All the material from his *Carl Smith the Name* and *Let's Live a Little*, both 12" LP's, are also covered in this set. The photos in the booklet are excellent, and Charles Wolfe's too-brief essay was done with Smith's assistance.

**Slim Whitman:** Slim Whitman enjoyed a revival about 15 years ago, his made-for-TV albums selling to many who'd never heard of him—despite the fact he'd been an estab-



lished star here since 1952. Given Whitman's four decades of stardom in Europe, it's surprising Bear Family didn't tackle a comprehensive Whitman project before now. The six-disc, 163-song *Rose Marie* (BCD 15768) begins with his first recordings, done for RCA Victor, then moves through his complete 1951-1959 Imperial recordings in chronological order.



Slim's 1949-1950 RCA tracks were fine music, but even with backing from Chet Atkins, Don Helms, Jerry Byrd and Homer & Jethro, they didn't sell. In 1950, he began rising from obscurity on Shreveport's *Louisiana Hayride*, his distinct, yodeling style setting him apart from Faron Young, Webb Pierce and other *Hayride* honky tonk singers.

Late in 1951, Imperial Records head Lew Chudd signed Whitman. Recording at KWKH with *Hayride* staff musicians, Whitman had his first hit in 1952 with "Love Song of the Waterfall," billed on the record as "The Smilin' Star Duster." Over the next four years, his pure voice enjoyed wide national appeal. The pop ballad, "Indian Love Call," his only major crossover hit, earned him his first Gold record. "Secret Love," another pop chestnut, became his second Gold disc in 1954, followed by his third, "Rose-Marie," that same year. Then came "Singing Hills," late in '54, and his cover of "Cattle Call" in 1955. The mid-50's recordings reveal him trying, and failing, to adapt his style to anything resembling rock (those records embarrass him today) before returning to his trademark style. The booklet overflows with unpublished photos, and *Journal* contributor Kevin Coffey's fine biography is based on interviews with Slim and his musicians.

**Maddox Brothers and Rose:** Rose Maddox is finally getting her due for paving the way for female singers through her work with The Maddox Brothers and Rose, which took place years before Kitty Wells achieved fame. Based in California, the band, consisting of Rose, her brothers and a few sidemen, played intense, fiery music that anticipated rockabilly a decade before it emerged. *The Maddox Brothers & Rose Volume 2 America's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band* (Arhoolie 437) consists of 30 songs, 23 from the band's postwar recordings for Four Star Records, seven from acetates of unreleased

performances. This set complements *Volume 1*, assembling more of this seminal West Coast music. Even on ballads like "No One Will Ever Know," Rose's vocal intensity is unbelievable. The material here is equally intense, featuring Fred Maddox's slapping bass and throbbing lead guitar from Roy Nichols and other sidemen. The band fairly burns out on gutbucket numbers like "Texas Guitar Stomp," a psychotic demo recording of "Cherokee Maiden" and "New Mule Skinner Blues" (which was listed on *Volume 1*, but, due to a programming mistake, not included). Sound problems are absent due to George Morrow's excellent remastering of this set.



**Harlan Howard:** Harlan Howard will stand as one of country music's songwriter geniuses, so much so that 31 years ago, in 1965, he received a *Billboard* Disc Jockey Poll award for Outstanding Achievement as a songwriter. Following that award, Monument Records recorded him singing 12 of his best-known

songs. *All-Time Favorite Country Songwriter* (Koch KOC-3-9715) begins with "Busted," a hit for Johnny Cash, and includes the immortal "Heartaches by the Number" (hits for Guy Mitchell and for Ray Price), "Above and Beyond" and "I've Got a Tiger by the Tail" (Buck Owens), "Too Many Rivers" (Brenda Lee), "Mary Ann Regrets" and "Mister In Between" (Burl Ives). These are great songs, and that's the problem with the record. Howard, to his credit, never claimed to be a great vocalist. Though he had one minor hit single for another label in 1971, he lacks the voice to pull off an album, even of his own timeless material. Annotator Laura Cantrell interviewed both Howard and Monument founder Fred Foster, which provides first-hand accounts. On the other hand, I'd love to know where she got the statement that Southern California's Cliffie Stone produced the weekly *Town Hall Party* TV show and was a Columbia Records A&R man. The fact is that Stone, a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, created the competing *Hometown Jamboree* radio-TV program and did his A&R work exclusively for Capitol.

**The Statler Brothers:** Mercury Records made The Statler Brothers' reputation, but Columbia Records launched them. Johnny Cash, who'd hired them for his touring show in 1964, got them on Co-

lumbia, who gave the group three singles to find success. The first two didn't sell, while the third, "Flowers on the Wall," penned by group member Lew DeWitt, gave them impressive country and pop success in 1965. *The Essential Statler Brothers: 1964-1969* (Sony Legacy CK 64764) assembles 19 songs, including the hit singles "Flowers,"



"The Right One," "That'll Be the Day," "Ruthless," "You Can't Have Your Kate and Edith, Too," "Jump for Joy," "Sissy" and "I'm the Boy." The remaining numbers include "Hammers and Nails" with Johnny Cash, and the previously unreleased "Half a Man."

**Bill Monroe:** *16 Gems* (Sony Legacy CK 53908) is an adjunct to the earlier two-CD Legacy Monroe box, which featured alternate takes of 16 Columbia Monroe recordings instead of the issued versions. This disc features the original, released versions of "Kentucky Waltz," "Summertime Is Past and Gone," "True Life Blues," "Heavy Traffic Ahead," "I'm Going Back to Old Kentucky," "Good-Bye Old Pal," "Blue Grass Special," "Can't You Hear Me Calling," "Old Cross Road Is Waitin'," "Remember the Cross," "True Life Blues" and five others. It's a measure of Sony's short-sightedness that they didn't allow boxed-set producer Larry Cohn (who also produced this set) to include everything together on the box, even if it did require an additional CD. Having to do a third, separate disc might make sense to Sony's non-musical bean counters, but it makes less sense for anyone who knows music, like Larry Cohn.

### How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Merle Haggard, *Down Every Road* (Capitol 35711), a four-CD boxed set, \$79.98/Carl Smith, *Satisfaction Guaranteed* (BCD 15849), a five-CD boxed set, \$165.00/Slim Whitman, *Rose Marie* (BCD 15768), a six-CD boxed set, \$192.50/Harlan Howard, *All-Time Favorite Country Songwriter* (KOC-3-9715), available on CD only, \$19.98/Maddox Brothers & Rose, *America's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band, Volume 2* (Arhoolie 437), \$11.98 cassette, \$16.98 CD/Merle Travis, *Folk Song of the Hills* (Capitol 35810), CD only, \$12.98/Merle Travis, *Walking the Strings* (Capitol 35809), CD only, \$12.98/The Statler Brothers, *The Essential Statler Brothers* (CK 64764), \$9.98 cassette, \$16.98 CD. Bill Monroe, *16 Gems* (CK 53908), \$9.98 cassette, \$16.98 CD. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 070896, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling. Canadian orders, add an additional \$3.00 postage. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Offer expires November 30, 1996

# Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

## ■ Recordings ■

**Gatlin Brothers:** *All the Gold in California: The Best of the Gatlins* (Legacy CK 64760) is the first set to cover high points of The Gatlins' career from beginning to end, from 1973 to 1988, through 18 of their biggest numbers. The set begins with Larry Gatlin's 1973 solo single, "Sweet Becky Walker," which reached Number 40, going on to the



1974 hit, "Delta Dirt," which broke the Top 20. His next four singles, billed as "Larry Gatlin with Family & Friends," further established him, including "Broken Lady," "Statues Without Hearts," "I Don't Wanna Cry" and "Love Is Just a Game." Though Larry's solo, "Night Time Magic," isn't included, "I've Done Enough Dyin' Today" is. From there, the high points of The Gatlin Brothers Band years take center stage, beginning with "All the Gold," "Take Me to Your Lovin' Place" and the other Top Tens, ending with "Love of a Lifetime" in 1988. The packaging is nice, though the vast accomplishments of Larry, Steve and Rudy deserved more than the superficial, breezy liner notes included with this otherwise excellent set.

**Crash Craddock:** In some ways, Billy "Crash" Craddock was the Billy Ray Cyrus of the 1970's—his 1974 hit "Rub It In" having much in common with "Achy Breaky Heart," a simple song with a catchy enough hook to give it success on the charts and a moderate

amount of pop crossover appeal as well. *Crash's Smashes: The Best of Billy "Crash" Craddock* (Razor & Tie RE 2095) capably covers Craddock's peak years through his 20 biggest songs, beginning with his 1971 hit, "Knock Three Times," a cover of the Tony Orlando/Dawn pop hit released on Cartwheel. The other early 70's Cartwheel hits were countrified covers of rock songs (long before Garth got the idea) that earned Craddock more fans and got him signed to the larger ABC label in 1982. Eventually the rock cover idea petered out, and Craddock began seeking new material. The results were "Sweet Magnolia Blossom," "Rub It In" and then another oldie, "Ruby Baby."

Craddock kept the momentum going through the 70's with "Still Thinkin' About You," "Easy as Pie," "Walk Softly," "Broken Down in Tiny Pieces" and the predictable "You Rubbed It In All Wrong." His final big hits, "I Cheated on a Good Woman's Love" (1978) and "If I Could Write a Song as Beautiful as You" (1979) for Capitol, weren't the end of his career, but he never really regained the momentum. Still, today, Craddock's material wears far better than one might expect, and given that fact, this package is highly worthwhile in every respect. Craddock's roots were in 1950's rock, and his country successes never failed to reflect the spirit of that time. Robert Colson's liner notes, punctuated with ample quotes from Craddock himself, do a nice job of telling the story.

**George & Tammy:** Razor & Tie has also reissued, intact, a George Jones-Tammy Wynette duet LP from 1980: *Together Again* (RE 2094) originally appeared on Epic Records in 1980, five years after the pair were divorced, at a time when Jones was in grave danger of drinking and dosing himself into oblivion. He and Tammy

were still recording solo hits with Billy Sherrill as producer, and Sherrill produced this ten-song collection. The album contained two chart hits: "Two Story House" and "A Pair of Old Sneakers." The remaining songs included "Right in the Wrong Direction," "I Just Started Livin' Today," "Love in the Meantime," the Charley Pride hit "We Could," "If We Don't Make It," "It's Not My Fault," Tammy's "We'll Talk About It Later" and "Night Spell." Hopefully, Razor & Tie will be delving still deeper into the Jones Epic LP catalog in the near future.

**Moe Bandy:** I annotated this collection, so facts only. *Honky Tonk Amnesia: The Hard Country Sound of Moe Bandy* (RE 2096) concentrates on Bandy's first ten years or so, starting at the point when he revived an out-of-fashion sound known as honky tonk with his GRC hits "I Just Started Hatin' Cheatin' Songs Today," "Honky Tonk Amnesia," "It Was Always So Easy (To Find an Unhappy Woman)" and "Bandy The Rodeo Clown." Three Top Tens in a year and a



half got him a Columbia contract in 1975 (they also bought the GRC material). He continued his pursuit of twin fiddles and steel backed music with original producer Ray Baker and material from veteran honky tonk composers Whitey Shafer and Doodle Owens, who'd written most of his GRC hits. Bandy's covers were infrequent, but fell into the same style, be it Hank Sr.'s "I'm Sorry for You, My Friend" or

Jimmy Work's "That's What Makes the Juke Box Play."

Bandy's hits continued into the early 80's, with songs like "One of a Kind," "Yesterday Once More," "Following the Feeling" with Judy Bailey and "Let's Get Over Them Together" with Becky Hobbs. None of the Joe Stampley duets are included, nor is the later, softcore material towards which Bandy gravitated when he went to Curb (where he veered sharply away from barstool music.)

## ■ Books ■

### Story Behind the Songs:

Twenty-one years ago, New York writer Dorothy Horstman's *Sing Your Heart Out, Country Boy* was published. The book broke considerable new ground at the time, since Horstman published the song lyrics as well as accounts of how and why the songs were written, gleaned mostly from interviewing the songwriters themselves (many more were alive 21 years ago than now). The book was revised once in 1986. Now the Country Music Foundation Press has just published a third edition, adding selected songs from more recent years for a total of well over 300 numbers.

Horstman divides the chapters into 15 categories by subject, covering everything from "Songs of Home" to "Winning Love Songs," "Social Commentary," "Songs of War and Patriotism," "The Working Man" and so on. The songwriters' comments vary in length, some being little more than a sentence or two, others going for a couple of paragraphs. In some cases, where the writer was deceased, Horstman did her own research, or spoke to a survivor of the writer or writers: case in point, Mrs. Clayton McMichen discussing "Peach Picking Time in Georgia," the song her husband wrote for Jimmie Rodgers. John D. Loudermilk's regrets on the exaggerated characterizations

of his parents in the song "Tobacco Road" give insights into the writer's complexity. In the back, a discography chronicles the best-known versions of each of the songs featured. Since Horstman wrote the book at the dawn of serious country scholarship, its value as a reference work has appreciated over time. Any serious fan should have a copy.

**Fender Guitars:** The past couple of years have seen various books on the Fender company by former employees and guitar historians. The quality has varied. Anyone who knows anything of Fender guitar scholarship has been waiting for the book by Richard Smith. Smith, a California musician and educator, was researching Fender's company history long before such books became fashionable. Over the years he earned the respect and confidence of various Fender employees, including Leo Fender himself before he died. He collected archival material, found instruments and, over time, gathered enough interviews and documents to create what promised to be the definitive history of the company. Of course, promises can sometimes fall far short of the end result.

Not in this case. *Fender: The Sound Heard Round the World* sets new standards for books on guitar history. Laden with color photographs, reproductions of old catalogs, documents, candid shots of various factories and so forth, the book's text is also rich. Smith tells the story like it's never been told before, capturing the hardy, pioneering eccentricity of Fender and the group of individuals who helped him build the company. He sifts through the mythology and the sometimes flawed remembrances of elderly men. The eccentric, dedicated Leo Fender's life and fortunes before and after he sold the company to CBS in 1965 get ample scrutiny, as does the Fender company's decline under CBS and revival after being sold to private investors. If all this seems irrelevant to the subject of country, guess again. Fender;

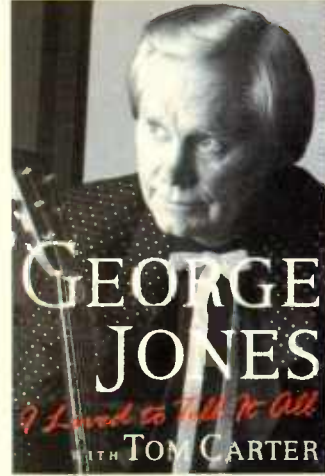
based in California, developed his greatest instruments after World War II with the help of friends like Bob Wills, Jimmy Bryant, Leon McAuliffe, Noel Boggs, Eldon Shamblin and Herb Remington, who "road tested" prototype Fender equipment. Smith also unravels controversies such as whether Leo picked up the idea for the Telecaster after seeing Merle Travis' solidbody Bigsby (he didn't), a guitar he denied ever seeing (he did). In 300 pages, Smith has told the Fender story for posterity, and the photography is as fine as the prose.

**George Jones:** At long last, *I Lived to Tell It All*, George Jones' autobiography, penned with Tom Carter, is in bookstores. Since George simply can't remember many details, expect little new data about his music or recording sessions (in this area Bob Allen's book remains an important resource). Many oft-told tales about hell-raising, trashing hotel rooms, shooting up tour buses, breaking his arm innumerable times, run-ins with Buck Owens, Mick Jagger and Faron Young, all hilarious, are retold. He also discusses how he and his band were interrogated after the 1965 slaying of his fan club secretary, who had met with him backstage at a Houston show. Cops caught the real murderer a year later.

Though generally accurate, the book would have benefited from an editor's closer look at two of the photo captions. One, showing George onstage with Tammy Wynette, reads "Me with my first wife." Correct me

if I'm wrong, but I think Tammy was wife Number Three. Another photo shows George with an elderly (but still functioning) Roy Acuff. It reads, "Roy Acuff and I share a moment in his dressing room at the Grand Ole Opry a few minutes before his death." Say, what?

He makes no excuses for his near-fatal 70's and 80's dissolu-



tion, though certain accounts seem pretty dramatic, given his wasted condition at the time. He credits wife Nancy for saving him when, given his mistreatment of her, she could've walked away. Though seldom harsh, he bears down on Tammy Wynette, revealing how compromising photos held by one of her ex-husbands were bought and destroyed and rebutting many of her published recollections about their marriage. Though current singers profess to idolize George, he's highly critical of the trendy quality of many contemporary "country" per-

formers and their music. In the end, one remark summarizes his lifelong humility. Commenting on his 1994 induction into the Hall of Fame alongside his idols, he says, "The award had been given to George Glenn Jones of Kountze, Texas. That's all I thought I ever was." Amen.

## ■ Videos ■

**Light Crust Doughboys:** The Light Crust Doughboys' proud Texas tradition goes back nearly 70 years, to the days when Bob Wills, Milton Brown and guitarist Herman Arnspiger began broadcasting for Burrus Mills on a show hosted by the company's General Manager, W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel. Though Brown left in 1932 and Wills in 1933, The Doughboys continued to thrive as a top-notch Western swing outfit. Today, with old and new members, they continue performing throughout Texas. *Texas Swing: A Memoir of Music, Politics and The Light Crust Doughboys* is an hour-long video that tells The Doughboys' story from beginning to end.

The band's early years were the toughest to chronicle firsthand, as everyone is long dead, with only Milton Brown's brother Roy Lee alive to provide memories. O'Daniel's arrogant contempt for Wills, Brown and Arnspiger, and for musicians in general, is dealt with frankly. After he and Burrus Mills parted ways, O'Daniel used a new band, The Hillbilly Boys, to get elected to the Texas Governor's office and the U.S. Senate. The Doughboys persevered in the 1930's and 40's with gifted musicians like banjoist Smokey Montgomery (still with the band today) along with guitarist Zeke Campbell and pianist Knocky Parker. The band today sounds quite different, as one might expect, yet they still honor their traditions, albeit with different instrumentation. The funniest part involves another politico: Texan Jim Wright, ex-Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, whose attempt to "sing" The Doughboys' theme song is, well...amusing.

### How to Get These Collectibles

**Books:** Dorothy Horstman, *Sing Your Heart Out. Country Boy* (B20E), \$24.95/George Jones with Tom Carter, *I Lived to Tell It All* (B10A), \$23.00/Richard Smith, *Fender: The Sound Heard Round the World* (B20G), \$50.00. **Videos:** The Light Crust Doughboys (V10Z), \$19.95. **Recordings:** Billy "Crash" Craddock, *Crash's Smashes* (RE 2095), \$18.98 CD, \$12.98 cassette/Moe Bandy, *Honky Tonk Amnesia* (RE 2096), \$18.98 CD, \$12.98 cassette/George Jones and Tammy Wynette, *Together Again* (RE 2094), \$18.98 CD, \$12.98 cassette/Larry Gatlin and The Gatlin Brothers, *All the Gold in California* (CK 64760), \$18.98 CD, \$12.98 cassette. To order, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 070896EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.** Offer expires November 30, 1996

# TOP 25

## Albums

1. Brooks & Dunn ..... *Borderline*
2. Shania Twain ..... *The Woman in Me*
3. George Strait ..... *Blue Clear Sky*
4. Tracy Lawrence ..... *Time Marches On*
5. Alan Jackson ..... *The Greatest Hits Collection*
6. Garth Brooks ..... *Fresh Horses*
7. Garth Brooks ..... *The Hits*
8. Toby Keith ..... *Blue Moon*
9. Bryan White ..... *Between Now and Forever*
10. Tim McGraw ..... *All I Want*
11. Wynonna ..... *revelations*
12. David Lee Murphy ..... *Gettin' Out the Good Stuff*
13. Faith Hill ..... *It Matters to Me*
14. Terri Clark ..... *Terri Clark*
15. Collin Raye ..... *I Think About You*
16. The Mavericks ..... *Music for All Occasions*
17. Mindy McCready ..... *Ten Thousand Angels*
18. Lonestar ..... *Lonestar*
19. Vince Gill ..... *Souvenirs*
20. John Michael Montgomery . *John Michael Montgomery*
21. Sammy Kershaw ..... *Politics, Religion and Her*
22. Jeff Foxworthy ..... *Games Rednecks Play*
23. Patty Loveless ..... *The Trouble with the Truth*
24. Neil Diamond ..... *Tennessee Moon*
25. Reba McEntire ..... *Starting Over*

## Singles

1. George Strait ..... *Blue Clear Sky*
2. Brooks & Dunn ..... *My Maria*
3. Collin Raye ..... *I Think About You*
4. Tracy Lawrence ..... *Time Marches On*
5. Bryan White ..... *I'm Not Supposed to Love You Anymore*
6. Toby Keith ..... *Does That Blue Moon Ever Shine on You*
7. Mindy McCready ..... *Ten Thousand Angels*
8. Terri Clark ..... *If I Were You*
9. Alan Jackson ..... *Home*
10. Billy Dean ..... *It's What I Do*
11. David Lee Murphy ..... *Every Time I Get Around You*
12. Vince Gill ..... *High Lonesome Sound*
13. Jeff Carson ..... *Holdin' On to Something*
14. Shania Twain ..... *No One Needs to Know*
15. Wynonna ..... *Heaven Help My Heart*
16. Faith Hill ..... *Someone Else's Dream*
17. Ricochet ..... *Daddy's Money*
18. Sammy Kershaw ..... *Meant to Be*
19. Jo Dee Messina ..... *Heads Carolina, Tails California*
20. Paul Brandt ..... *My Heart Has a History*
21. Reba McEntire ..... *Starting Over Again*
22. Sawyer Brown ..... *Treat Her Right*
23. Patty Loveless ..... *A Thousand Times a Day*
24. Marty Stuart & Travis Tritt . *Honky Tonkin's What I Do Best*
25. John Michael Montgomery . *Long As I Live*

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## Hell-Bent on the Honk Factor

Let me lay a couple of quotes on you. The first, from journalist Jody Farr's book, *Moguls and Madmen; The Pursuit of Power in Popular Music*, was spoken by Jimmy Bowen, the producer/executive who spent his 80's and early 90's doing more than anyone to push Nashville towards mass-pop values and numbers. Bowen was talking about how, precisely, country music needed "fixing" before it could make gentlemen such as himself filthy stinking rich.

"I call it the honk factor. It's about three thousand cycles, and it comes from singing through the head voice and singing hard through the nose. But to the average buyer, it hurts your ears...So one of the things we did, those of us who came from L.A., was to dehonk this stuff—actually go in with the EQ and soften it, so it'll appeal to everyone in the room and not just those hard of hearing."

There you go. Black and white, on the record, in the files. Whenever you find yourself wondering how the hell yesterday's country soul music—"stuff" by Hank Williams, George Jones and company—got transformed into today's suburban schlock, just read it (and weep?).

Take heart, though, for as all we good students know, one of the first laws of physics is that to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, and here, at last, is that reaction. I quote from the inside cover of *Hell-Bent: Insurgent Country Volume 2* (Bloodshot Records, 912 West Addison, Chicago, Illinois 60613).

"We come to exhume Hank, not to bury him. Unbury him not from the ground in which he achieves his final elusive rest, but from beneath the mounds of gutless swill which pass for his legacy, the suffocating spew of the Nashville hit factories."

You okay? This strong enough for you, or would you like more color?

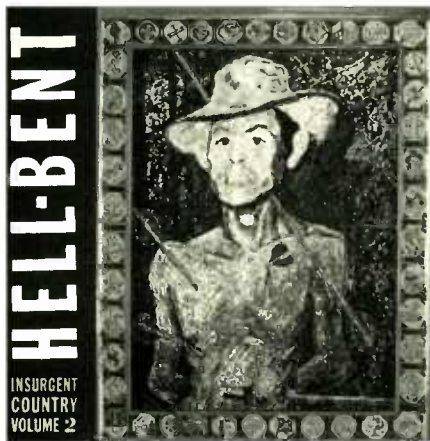
"...Exposed to the air, ol' Hank could properly begin to decompose and act as fertilizer to his spiritual spawn, his dust scattering and re-germinating in new mutations from sea to shining sea."

Nice, huh? Imagery notwithstanding, though, how about the point: country music as *Hank's* legacy, not some half-assed rocker's, faded folkie's or middle-of-the-mainstream marketeer's?

Think about it. Given the whole picture of Hank (and *Hell-Bent's* cover art comes pretty close), what would his musical legacy really be like? Might it not be com-

pletely contrary to the typical contemporary-country profile—comfortable, corporate, conventional, conservative, controlled—and be instead off the wall, over the edge, beyond the pale, outside the envelope: country music completely *undisciplined*, *antiauthoritarian*, and basically, fundamentally beyond control?

That certainly describes the *Hell-Bent* "stuff," an anarchic collection of 17 wild, spirit-filled, utterly un-dehonked performances by (in order of appearance) Earl C. Whitehead and The Grievous Angels,



*Hell-Bent* gives Patrick goosebumps.

The Waco Brothers, Robby Fulks, The Starkweathers, Bottle Rockets, Moonshine Willy, The Volbeats, Richard Buckner, Eleanor Roosevelt, Gwil Owen, Old 97's, The Cartwrights, Tarnation, The Riptones, The Cornell Hurd Band (our friends from the last *Final Note*), The Inbreds and The World Famous Bluejays.

Some questions. Is this music any good? Hell, yes, it is. The timing might be just coincidental, but some of it gives me the same goosebumps I got when Waylon and Willie bent country *their* way.

How does it sound? Well, it sounds like all sorts of other "stuff" (though not at all like Waylon and Willie). The Cartwrights sound like The Grateful Dead singing country on key, with a rhythm section that's actually been introduced to the rest of the band. The Waco Brothers, when they're not sounding like Mick Jagger fronting The Buckaroos, sound like Buck Owens fronting The Rolling Stones. Robby Fulks sounds a little Buck-ish, too, even if his song doesn't ("She Took a Lot of Pills and Died"). Tarnation sound like The Cowboy Junkies on smart pills. Eleanor

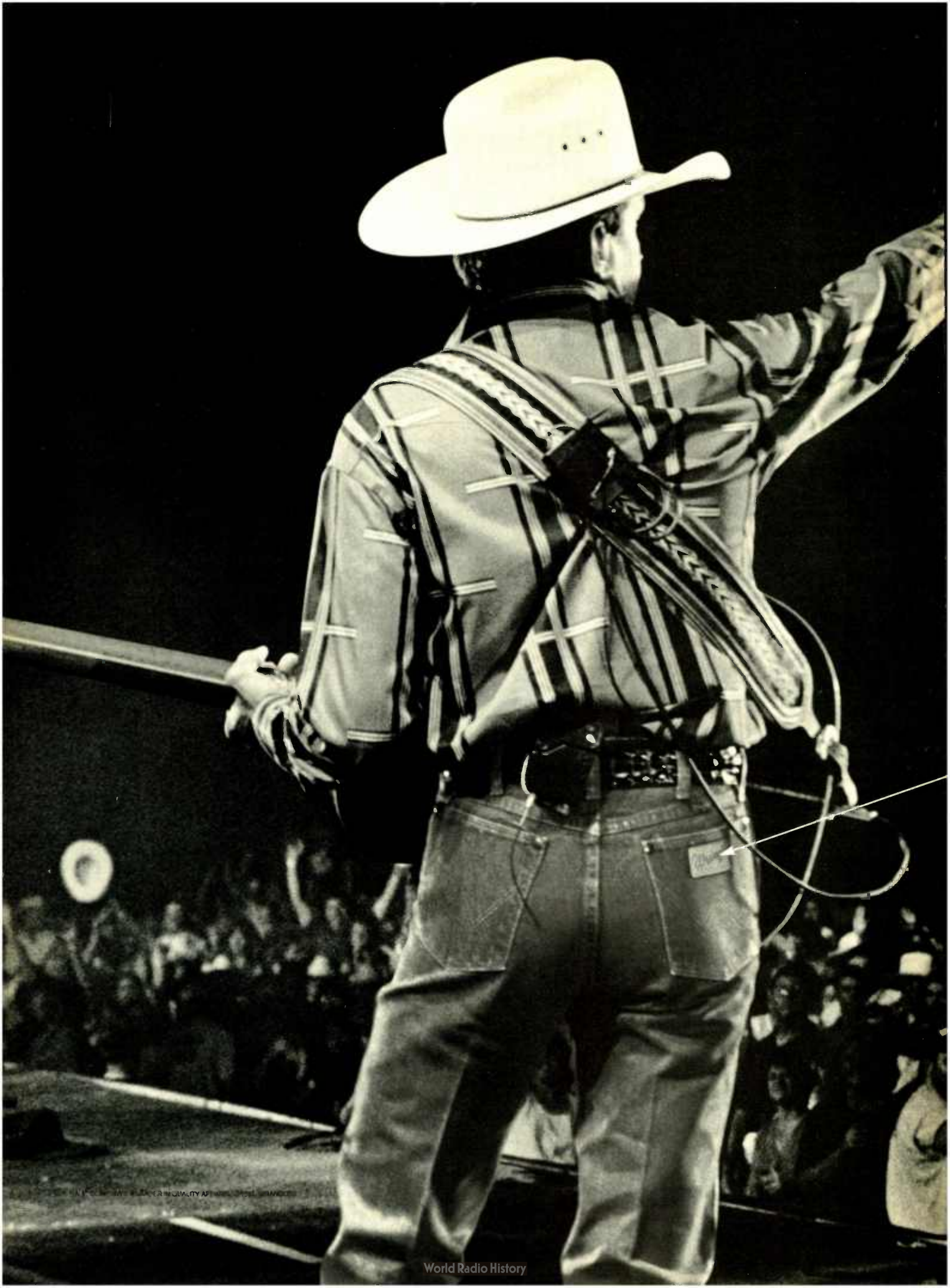
Roosevelt sound a little like Earl Scruggs jamming with The Velvet Underground. Moonshine Willy conjure up some fabulous, time-tripping collaboration between the Unholy Modal Rounders, Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks, and Michelle Shocked.


And so on. Further comparisons can of course be made with the bands which preceded the *Hell-Bent* crowd most immediately down the line of hyphenated-country descent—everyone from Lone Justice and Rank & File to Jason and The Scorchers, Webb Wilder, Uncle Tupelo, and all the California cow-punkers, New York nouveau rockabilies, and assorted twang-thangers in between—but in one way or another, at one time or another, the *Hell-Bent* folks also echo their archetypes: Jimmie Rodgers, The Stanley Brothers, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Wanda Jackson, Ray Price, Brenda Lee, Duane Eddy, Neil Young, Elvis Costello, the Nick Lowe/Dave Edmunds axis, The Pogues, and even (perhaps especially) The Sex Pistols—for make no mistake, friends and neighbors, these musicians *do* roam that far. The raw, urban-rebel energy of punk is just as vital to most of them as the deep old rural roots they dig with such style, knowledge and enthusiasm.

Where, you might ask, is this all coming from? Good question, even better answer: it's coming from everywhere. There are so-called "insurgent country" musicians, mostly young men and women in their late 20's and early 30's, as far apart as Detroit (The Volbeats), Dallas (Old 97's, The Cartwrights), San Francisco (Richard Buckner), and of course Chicago, where Bloodshot Records owner Eric Babcock first noticed their rise and corralled them for *Hell-Bent's* precursor, *For a Life of Sin; A Compilation of Chicago Insurgent Country*. In New York there's been enough action in the last few years to fill two fascinating CD compilations, *Rig Rock Jukebox* and *Rig Rock Truckstop* (Diesel Only Records, P.O. Box 440, Montclair, NJ 07042). In St. Louis right now, according to Babcock, "You can't swing a dead cat without hitting an Uncle Tupelo band."

You know what this means, don't you? It means that *Hell-Bent* is the tip of an iceberg—that there's a nationwide movement out there, cranked up and rolling. Is a giant bestirring itself? Stay tuned.

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





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