

KEITH WHITLEY REMEMBERED • OVER 25 REVIEWS

COUNTRYMUSIC

FEBRUARY 2002

**2001
Critics Poll
Winners**

LEE ANN WOMACK

The story of how
a little bitty
Texas gal took
the heat – and
wrangled exactly
what she wanted

MERLE HAGGARD
Honors Lefty

Open Letter
To SHANIA

GARY ALLAN
An outsider
makes his mark

JAMIE O'NEAL
Up from
Down Under

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Issue 217 / Display until Feb. 19, 2002

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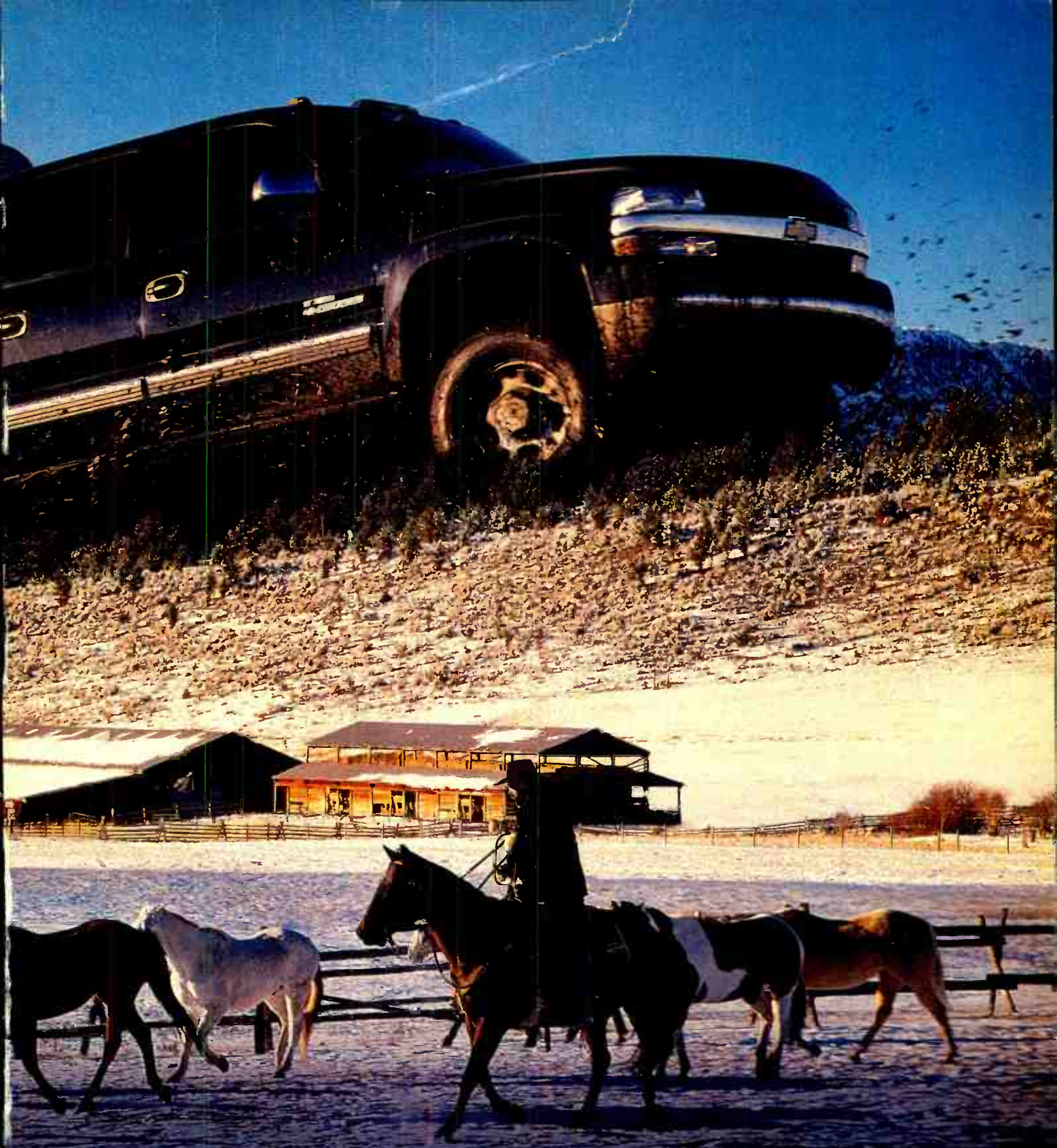
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LIKE A ROCK

COUNTRYMUSIC

February 2002



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Don't mess with Lee Ann Womack. The CMA Female Vocalist of the Year found her success by stubbornly believing that being told *no* is a challenge to overcome, not an answer to accept.

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34 The Winners Circle

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As a member of The Band in the '70s, Levon Helm helped bring country instrumentation into rock. He reflects on a career that intersected with Bob Dylan, Bill Monroe and Conway Twitty.

50 Blond Ambition

Jamie O'Neal sang in Las Vegas as a child but dreamed that one day she and her sister would work as hotel maids. "We decided we better stick to singing," she says. Good choice.

54 O Sister, Where Art Thou?

Shania arrived quietly, but showed us just how quickly she could shake up sleepy little Nashville. Only after she rode off did we realize how much she means to us.

74 Terms Of Endearment

For years Dale Watson waved the banner for hard-charging music with classic country themes like cheating and drinking. Then he endured a heart-breaking personal tragedy that infiltrated his music, leading to a the most personal album of his career.

78 Man Of Mystery

Gary Allan's California cool confounds Nashville expectations, but who cares? Certainly not the surfing singer who'd rather share a good vibe than impress the music industry elite.



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KEVIN FERGUSON



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FORBES/WULF/PRAAT



★ WILLIE ★
NELSON
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NEW STUDIO ALBUM FEATURING TRACKS WITH:

SHERYL CROW ★ KID ROCK

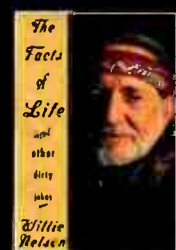
ALISON KRAUSS ★ BRIAN MCKNIGHT

BONNIE RAITT ★ ROB THOMAS

LEE ANN WOMACK

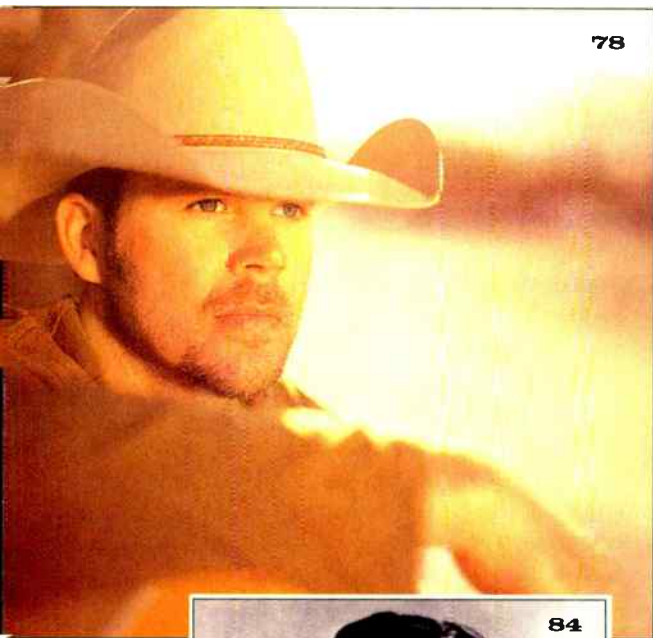
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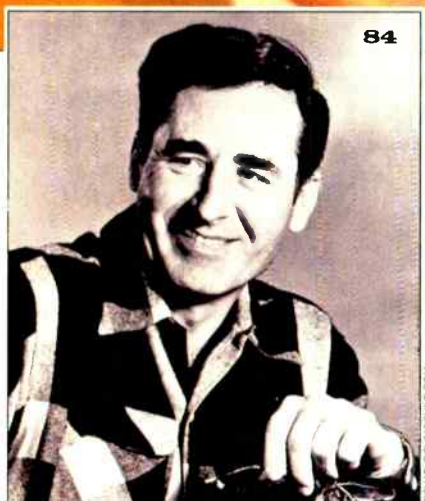


FROM RANDOM HOUSE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD. **THE WHISKEY RIVER**

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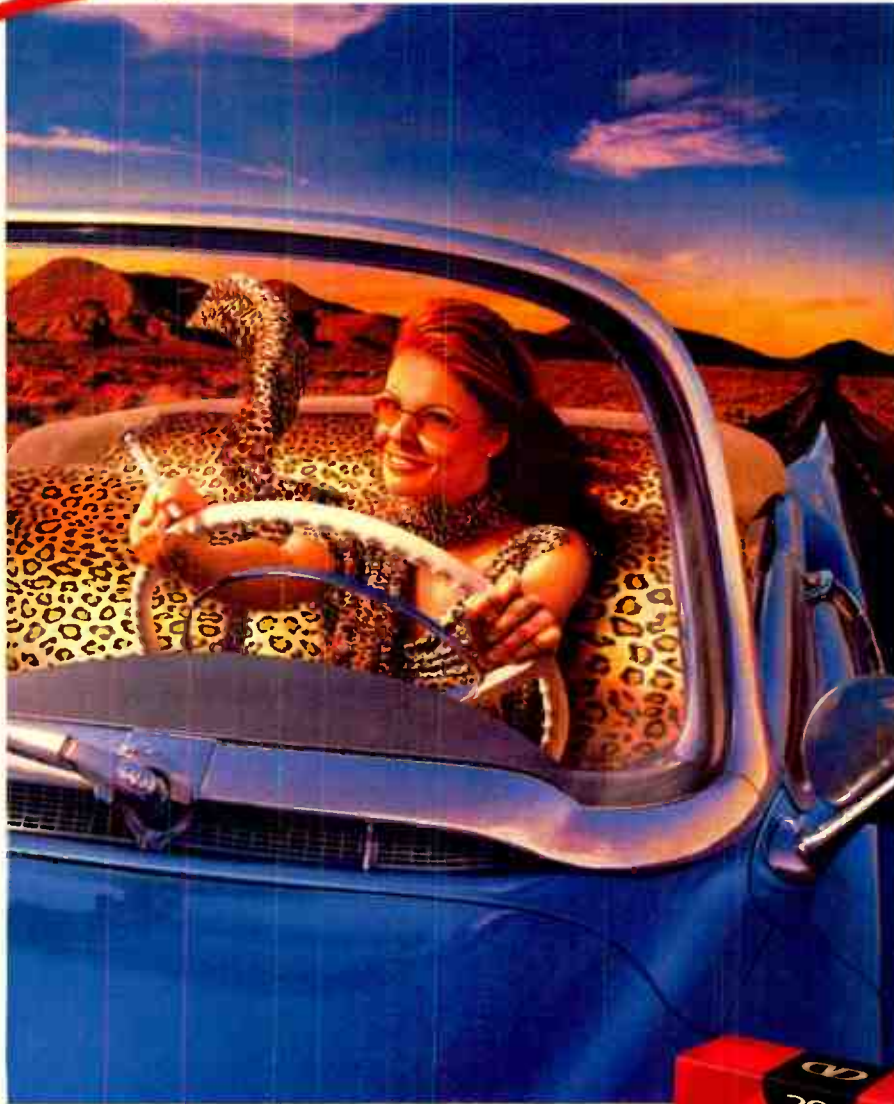
A second musical look at Route 66 ... The late Champ Hood epitomized the Austin music scene ... A new book gets the picture on Hank Williams ... Examining the whys and wherefores of Western wear.

112 Great Moments

A historic snapshot of the past.

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GETTING THE BUSINESS

I read with interest your story "Lawyers, Stars And Money" (*December/January*), especially Radney Foster's account of his experiences. I can't believe he only received \$35,000 for making his album *Del Rio, Texas, 1959*. Arista Records should be ashamed of themselves. At one show I attended, Radney joked to the audience that we needed to buy lots of his CDs because he needed diaper money for his new baby. Guess it really wasn't a joke! Glad to see that he has found a more fair and equitable partnership. Maybe he'll be more inspired to put out more great music, although I'd buy his CDs even if he was pressing discs in his garage and selling them from the trunk of his car!

CLAIRE F. ECKENRODE

BEL AIR, MARYLAND

When I read "Lawyers, Stars And Money" I recalled a story from many years ago about music stars of country, gospel, folk, pop and rock calling for Congress, the IRS and the Justice Department to investigate the unfair contracts they had to sign with record labels and music publishers if they wanted to work in the music business. This has been going on for as long as people have been recording music, and it's why artists like Charlie Daniels, Lari White and Radney Foster now record for smaller labels, or form their own. I hope the Dixie Chicks win their lawsuit.

PAUL B. KOFFER

LEBANON, MISSOURI

COWBOY FAN

I am so pleased that your magazine let Chris LeDoux write his own account of his recent health problems (*December/January*). Chris wrote his story beautifully, taking into account his family, friends and his fans. I have been fortunate enough to have attended 11 concerts that Chris has



LETTERS

performed since his return in June. I was seated in the front row at his first night back at the Crazy Horse Saloon in Irvine, Calif. When Chris stepped out on the stage that night, he amazed us all! He looked so healthy, and his performance was as electrifying as ever. Chris gives his whole self into every performance he does. God bless Chris LeDoux!

NOLA UNSWORTH
LAKE ELSINORE,
CALIFORNIA

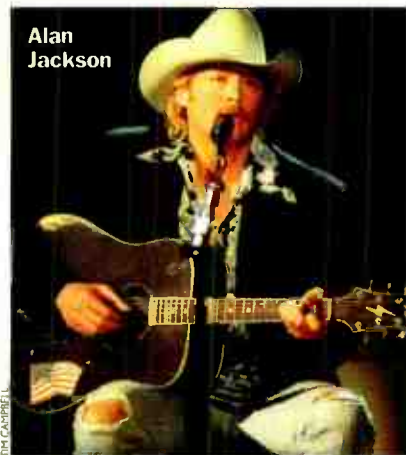
UNITED WE STAND

In the "Note From The Editor" (*December/January*) about country songs that show patriotism, you forgot to mention my favorite, "Some Gave All" by Billy Ray Cyrus. This song has history and it has endured, meaning as much today as it did when Billy Ray first wrote it. Why does country radio and the Nashville music establishment always overlook this wonderful man?

MYRENE NORTHEY
KENNEWICK, WASHINGTON

I do believe the song you spoke of looking for – "a country song that perfectly encapsulates the way we feel about [Sept. 11], a song that distills a complex, terrifying and – even so – somehow unifying time down to three chords and the truth" – has now come along. I speak of "Where Were You (When The World Stopped Turning)," the song that Alan Jackson wrote himself and sang for the first time on the CMA Awards. It epitomizes all that happened that dreadful day. I believe that song will help all of us heal. Mr. Jackson wrote, *I know Jesus ... faith, hope and love are some good things he gave us! And the greatest is love.* I believe personally that's the only way we will ever begin to heal, through the Lord's gracious help and love.

CHERYL A. FARRINGTON
JAY, MAINE



Alan Jackson

There wasn't a song that fit the Sept. 11 tragedy until the CMA Awards show. Alan Jackson is not my favorite artist, but the song he wrote and sang fit my feelings to a 'T' and I would be willing to bet a lot of your readers feel the same way.

JENNY BOYD
MIAMI, OKLAHOMA

Did you see the CMA Awards show? Alan Jackson sang a beautiful song about all the feelings we all went through and said about Sept. 11. I wanted to hear his song over and over – it just hit the spot that we are all feeling. He is one extraordinary tunesmith.

SHEILA RICHARDSON
TURNER, MAINE

ALONG CAME JONES

It was so great to see George Jones on your cover (*December/January*) and better yet to read the wonderful article about his great career. He is one in a million and still the "King Of Country." We really do appreciate reading about the "classic country" stars. Keep up the good work!

SUE JOHNSON
GLENCOE, MINNESOTA

What a wonderful picture of my favorite singer, George Jones. I love the old country singing. These young people could learn a lot from the old singers. George, don't ever give up singing, you're at your peak. God kept you here for that reason, and to be happy with your lovely wife, Nancy. She really believes in you. Enjoy life. I'm 80 years old but still get around, and I love to dance.

ELIZABETH FISHER
KEWANEE, ILLINOIS

YOUNG GUNS

In response to the article "Youthquake" (*October/November*): I don't think it was fair to show some teens one video of each artist and rate them. Some of their comments and observations were unfair to the artists.

LINDA BLANEY
GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN

CONTRIBUTORS

Meet this issue's esteemed guest stars

Holly George-Warren is co-author of *How The West Was Worn*, author of *Shake, Rattle, & Roll: The Founders Of Rock & Roll* and co-editor of *American Roots Music* and *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia Of Rock & Roll*. She first interviewed Dale Watson in 1996 for *Rolling Stone* magazine and has seen him perform many times, including just after the death of his fiancée. Talking with Watson for this article was one of the more difficult interviews she's ever conducted – but also one of the most emotionally catnartic.



Geoffrey Himes, a longtime *Country Music* contributor who orchestrated our critics poll for the second year, also writes for the *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Oxford American*, *No Depression*, *Baltimore*

City Paper and *Sonicnet.com*. There are few things he enjoys more than a good argument about music – so he hopes this year's poll sparks lots of debate!

Alanna Nash, who wrote our cover story on Lee Ann Womack, contributes regularly to *Entertainment Weekly* and is the author of five books, including *Behind Closed Doors: Talking With The Legends Of Country Music* and *Dolly Parton: The Early Years*. Her latest, *Secrets And Shadows: Colonel Tom Parker And The Hidden Shaping Of Elvis Presley*, will appear later this year.



Jon Weisberger has played bluegrass for 20 years and written about it for 10. He was named the International Bluegrass Music Association's Print Media Person of the Year in 2000 and won the IBMA's award for Best Liner Notes (for John Duffey's *Always In Style*) in 2001. He's written about everyone from Loretta Lynn and Ralph Stanley to Ricky Skaggs and Dan Tyminski in *Country Music*, *No Depression*, *Bluegrass Unlimited* and *Bluegrass Now*. In this issue, he takes an in-depth look at the Osborne Brothers, bluegrass pioneers who he's followed intently for decades.

As I was leafing through the pages of your magazine and got to the "Youthquake" article, I was happy to see the pictures of Dan Cahoon and Jesse Littleton of Marshall Dyllon. I was hoping they would finally get the credit they deserved, but when I saw their rating by the teens you surveyed, I was highly disappointed. I try to respect other people's opinions, but saying that this band sounds "like girls" is hard to respect. I hope you feature these talented guys again soon, but with positive comments. Dan, Jesse, Todd, Paul and Michael deserve the best, and I wish them luck with their future in country music.

CANDI HARBOLD
WELLSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

INDECENT EXPOSURE

As I like to tell my Sunday School class, during my 68 years I have seen lots of changes. I am not a negative person, but I cannot help but feel that most of these changes have not been good. Case in point: the October/November issue of *Country Music*. The cover shows Toby Keith with a foxy smile on his face because he has maniacally demolished the guitar he is holding! Once inside, we are treated to a picture of Tim McGraw handcuffed and escorted into a police van because he decided to deck some police officer. Has the whole world gone crazy? Temper tantrums are reserved for 2-year-olds, not people many hold up as role models. People who find these types entertaining are hurting for amusement. Years ago we old hillbillies had our role models, too: A.P. Carter, Roy Acuff, Porter Wagoner, Bill Monroe. Can anyone imagine any of them as a participant in this foolishness? Perhaps the next idiot will demolish his guitar over the head of some cop. That should win him a centerfold – and a place of honor in the local jail.

GEORGE E. NEWTON
FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

NOT DUNN YET

Is Marcia Daines (Letters, *December/January*) listening to the same Brooks & Dunn that I am? I have a master's degree in [vocal performance] music and I think Ronnie Dunn's voice, although untrained, has a very appealing

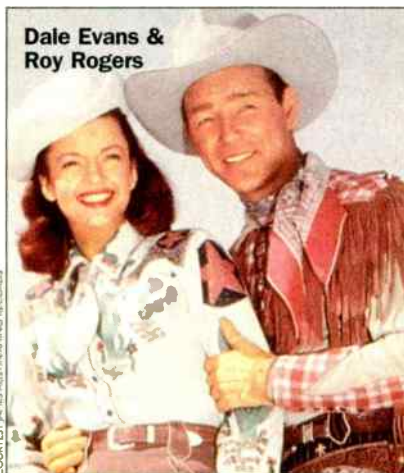
quality. It's a perfectly respectable tenor, and it certainly doesn't sound "as if someone is using a cattle prod on him." What an unkind remark! Her letter is very mean-spirited. Didn't her mother ever tell her, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all"?

JULIE A. CROFT
KENNESAW, GEORGIA

HAPPY TRAILS

I really look forward to *Country Music*, especially the Journal section and the more traditional country artists. "Queen Of The West: How Dale Evans Became America's Favorite Cowgirl" (*October/November*) was the greatest. I shall keep this issue in my Roy Rogers collection. Dale and Roy contributed so much to good entertainment, did a lot for charity and had high morals. They will always be remembered by all who have enjoyed them from the days of yesteryear. I can imagine them riding the golden range together.

JEAN REEDY
HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA



COURTESY JAMES ALSTON/RECORDS

A QUESTION ...

What in the world has happened to good old country music? This bubblegum country just doesn't cut it. It is sad to listen to what they are playing on the radio today.

LOUISE ALONZO
MEDFORD, OREGON

... AND AN ANSWER

There has been lots of talk lately about country music losing its identity. Here's my theory about what has happened. Country music was invented by

people who lived on farms and ranches, raised crops and livestock and sang about their lifestyle. Then the economic situation forced them to leave the country and move to town. They took the music with them, and lot of city slickers began to take a liking to it. But they didn't understand the rural lifestyle so they began writing songs that they could understand. That's why we no longer hear songs like Johnny Cash's "Busted" and "Pickin' Time"; Loretta Lynn's "Coal Miner's Daughter" and "You're Lookin' At Country"; or Dolly Parton's "Tennessee Mountain Home" and "In The Good Old Days When Times Were Bad." Most of what we're hearing is citified songs with a countrified sound. With all the electronic equipment now being used, the sound is also changing. So a lot of us real country fans just go back to the old songs.

NEIL HARBISON
SOUTH HAVEN, KANSAS

HOORAY!

Thank you for a wonderful country magazine. It truly tells the ups and down of show business. I have been a subscriber for a while. Each issue educates me with the stories, though I admit I miss the pull-out centerfold. I used to collect them.

ROBIN MILLER
RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY

CHANGING THE CHANNEL

I hope that TNN will consider giving country music at least an hour of time each day. There are thousands of country fans out here, and we greatly miss all the programs they took off TNN. I am a lifetime country music fan; since the 1930s I have collected records – from 78s, to 45s, 33s and CDs – and I miss those real country songs.

LOUISE MANDELLA
LA HABRA, CALIFORNIA

Have a comment? A complaint? A compliment? Send your letter by e-mail to letters@countrymusicmagazine.com or by regular mail to Country Music magazine, 118 16th Ave. S, Suite 230 Nashville, TN, 37203. Mark envelope: Letters. We will not print any letters that do not contain a name and contact address. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity.



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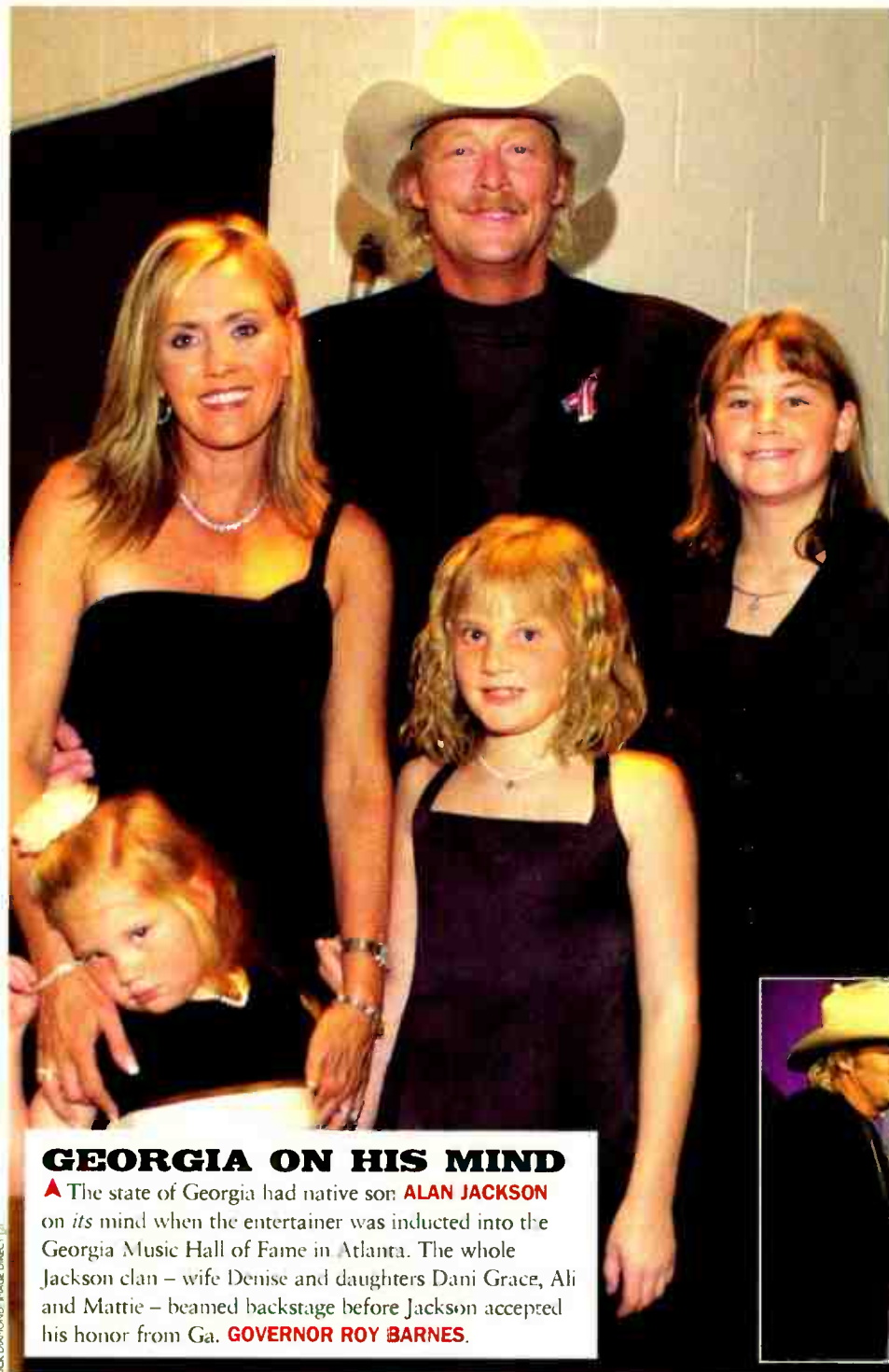
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COUNTRY ON THE TOWN

PARTIES • PEOPLE • NEWS • HAPPENINGS



GEORGIA ON HIS MIND

▲ The state of Georgia had native son **ALAN JACKSON** on its mind when the entertainer was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame in Atlanta. The whole Jackson clan – wife Denise and daughters Dani Grace, Ali and Mattie – beamed backstage before Jackson accepted his honor from Ga. **GOVERNOR ROY BARNES**.

ROCK DIAMOND IMAGE DIRECT (2)



COURTESY THE BUCKLE UP FOR KIDS

BRENDA'S BIG NIGHT

▲ Diminutive diva **BRENDA LEE** received one of the biggest honors of her career, a Lifetime Achievement award from the International Entertainment Buyers Association. **BARBARA MANDRELL**, who presented the Pioneer Award to her father, Irby, was on hand to congratulate her.





STARS SHINE AT CCMAS

▲ **BRYAN WHITE**, **SCOTT REEVES** from TV's *Young & The Restless*, **CRYSTAL GAYLE** and **JOHN BERRY** share some backstage fellowship at the Christian Country Music Association (CCMA) Awards in Nashville. Berry took home the evening's highest honor, Artist of the Year, while **TAMMY COCHRAN** won Video of the Year for her inspiring "Angels In Waiting."



WONDERFUL WORLD

▲ **ANNE MURRAY** celebrated the holidays with a two-disc CD, *What A Wonderful Christmas*, and a Christmas TV special that aired in her native Canada. The "Snowbird" singer spread seasonal cheer with jazz sensation **DIANA KRALL**, who appeared on the holiday TV show.



CHICKS ROCK

▲ The **DIXIE CHICKS** headlined an all-star, all-female cast for the Lifetime television special, *Women Rock! Girls And Guitars*, taped at the second annual Breast Cancer Awareness Concert in Los Angeles. Rocker **SHERYL CROW** joined the Dixie Chicks for a tune (above), while another songfest featured (right, from left) Shea Seagar, Crow, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Emmylou Harris and Pat Benatar.





JULES WEISZMAN



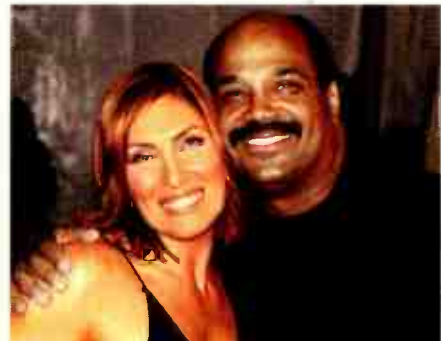
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TROUPERS FOR THE TROOPS

▲ President **GEORGE W. BUSH** and a company of country stars helped lift the spirits of American troops at the Fort Campbell Army base in Kentucky. Lining up with the commander-in-chief were **PHIL VASSAR**, **CAROLYN DAWN JOHNSON**, First Lady **LAURA BUSH**, **GORDON KENNEDY**, **SHEDAISY** sisters **KELSI**, **KRISTYN** and **KASSIDY OSBORN**, **CRAIG MORGAN** and **SARA EVANS**. After spending a few personal moments with the Prez (below), the stars signed autographs for the soldiers.



COURTESY RLG



RONNIE BURIN

FORECAST: STARRY AND BRIGHT

▲ **JO DEE MESSINA** catches up with weather wizard **MARK MCEWEN** of CBS' *The Early Show* backstage at the CMA Awards. McEwen became an instant fan when Messina performed on one of the show's outdoor summer concerts in July.



PATRICIA PRESLEY (C)

65 AND COUNTING!

A CHARLIE DANIELS reached another milestone – his 65th birthday – and friends helped him mark the occasion with a party at his Nashville home. He also received his first Social Security check, which he happily displayed with wife Hazel.



PATRICIA PRESLEY (C)

REBA ET AL. STAND TALL

A REBA MCENTIRE did her part for AIDS research, co-hosting the Macy's/American Express Passport gala with basketball legend **MAGIC JOHNSON** and **ELIZABETH TAYLOR**. The gala raised money to help find a cure for the AIDS virus.



STEVE COLE/IMPHOTO.COM

FAST TRACK

A "Austin" singer BLAKE SHELTON enjoyed a day at the races, performing the National Anthem at the Talladega 500 NASCAR event and hanging out with driver **RICHARD PETTY**.

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COUNTRY ON THE TOWN



PAUL MATYKIN/IMAGE DIRECT

LET FREEDOM RING

◀ Country's hottest stars turned out in their patriotic best for the Country Freedom Concert in Nashville, raising funds for the victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. **BROOKS & DUNN** (left) rolled out their anthemic "Only In America" and performed a version of The Youngbloods' '70s classic "Get Together," backed by **KEITH URBAN** (below) on guitar. Backstage, **HANK WILLIAMS JR.** visited with **TIM MCGRAW** (inset).

COVER QUEENS

◀ Rapper **QUEEN LATIFAH** and country's **FAITH HILL** have been sharing a lot of face time lately. The two posed for a Cover Girl CG Smoothers ad campaign, and will also be heard beckoning listeners with their version of Cover Girl's "Easy, breezy, beautiful" jingle.

COURTESY MARINA MAHER COMMUNICATIONS



ERIC CHARBONNEAU/BEI

MIXING, MINGLING AT THE MOVIES

▲ **DWIGHT YOAKAM** seems perfectly comfortable mingling with the Hollywood crowd, chatting with film stars **BILLY BOB THORNTON** and **ANGELINA JOLIE** at the premiere of *The Man Who Wasn't There*. The film was directed by **JOEL** and **ETHAN COEN**, fresh off their smash, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*



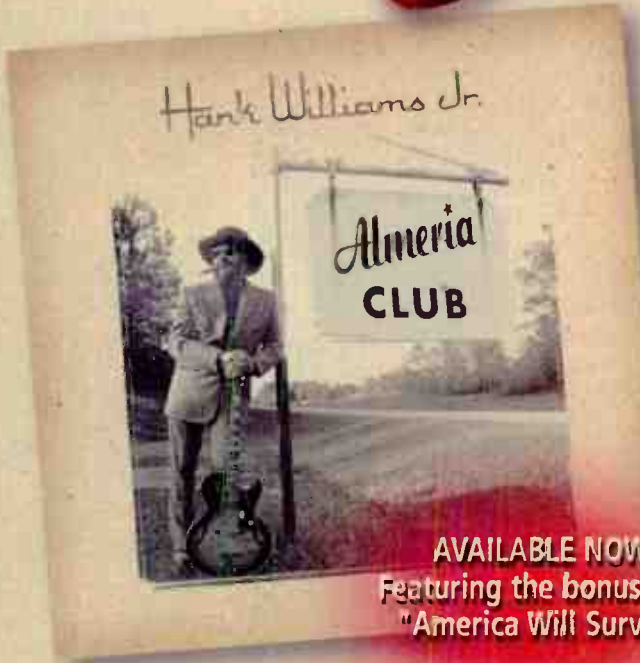
CURTIS HILBUN, INSET: RICK CHAMPOND/IMAGE DIRECT



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World Radio History



THE INSIDER

BY HAZEL SMITH



A PATRIOTIC NOTE

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, country airwaves are singing a different tune. Less fluff and more patriotism, as songs about freedom inundate playlists. I for one think it's about time. Give me a good ol' story song, sans body parts, and I'm happy.

"God Bless The USA," **Lee Greenwood's** patriotic hit and the CMA Song of the Year in 1985, is back on the air where it belongs, zooming up the

charts and selling CDs. Lee had thousands in tears when he performed the song at **Oprah Winfrey's** interfaith service at New York's Yankee Stadium. Ditto when he sang on *Larry King Live* and at Yankee Stadium during the World Series.



AP PHOTO/THE HAZON TELEGRAPH, DANNY GILKLAND

charts and selling CDs. Lee had thousands in tears when he performed the song at **Oprah Winfrey's** interfaith service at New York's Yankee Stadium. Ditto when he sang on *Larry King Live* and at Yankee Stadium during the World Series.

Reba McEntire and **Billy Gilman** pitched in with a bevy of pop stars to help sing **Michael Jackson's** relief song, "What More Can I Give," for the ABC show *United We Stand*. Also, Reba joined *Larry King Live* for a rousing rendition of "I'm A Survivor," which moved the host to tears.

FREEDOM CONCERT

Clint Black chimed in with a new flag-waver of his own,

the self-penned "America," which he introduced during the great Country Freedom Concert that CMT broadcast from Music City. Directly after his performance, Clint boarded an official jet and departed for Europe, where he performed for servicemen and women at four different bases. Clint's concerts, called the Citizen Patriot Tour, were arranged by Janet Langhart Cohen, wife of former Secretary of Defense William Cohen.

Meanwhile, the Country Freedom Concert drew a record-setting six million viewers to CMT and raised more than \$5 million for the Salvation Army. The finest voice in any genre, **Trisha Yearwood**, closed the show with a heartwarming version of "America The Beautiful."

The Cowboy, **George Strait**, dedicated his perfect rendition of "The Fireman" to the firemen in attendance and those at the World Trade Center. Said the great Mr. Strait: "Doesn't it make you feel good just to help out."

Brooks & Dunn did their hit "Only In America." **Ronnie Dunn** said that since Sept. 11, when he and **Kix** open their shows with "Only

In America," the fans roar as soon as they hear the first note of the song and will not let go. Lord, I love country music fans!

But it was **Hank Williams Jr.** who stole the Country Freedom Concert by re-wording "A Country Boy Can Survive" into "America Will Survive" to fit the occasion. He touched the hearts of everybody in the audience, and they responded with a roar like a southern freight train – loud and long. **Bocephus** knew he had a winner, so he recorded it before you could say diddy squat – and the song flew onto the charts just as fast as it flew into the hearts of the audience at the Gaylord Entertainment Center.

Another Freedom Concert participant, the great **Alan Jackson**, also raised \$200,000 in his hometown of Newnan, Ga., for Angel's House, a home for young people who need a safe, nurturing place to live. "We hope angels surround these children on earth so they can live comfortably without fear," said Alan. (While I'm on the subject of Alan, he was recently inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame.)

In other patriotic tidings, **Toby Keith** and **Trace Adkins** went to Ground Zero and shook hands with the saints with shovels in their hands at the WTC. **Travis Tritt** went to a military base in Georgia and visited with the troops. **Wynonna** volunteered to sing and entertain the 101st Airborne Division at Ft. Campbell, Ky., while the elite fighting unit was awaiting orders to deploy.

It makes me proud that so many have done so much for the cause of freedom. God bless America and God bless

all the makers of country music. They are my people and the best that ever were.

DANIELS DENIED

Charlie Daniels, a great American, pulled out of the Country Freedom Concert, and it's a shame. The singer sent lyrics to his new song "This Ain't No Rag, It's A Flag" and got a call back saying the song was "too much." Charlie was also told that "this is a time for healing."

Charlie raved on local radio: "We are *past* healing. It's time to rub salt in the wounds. If we don't follow through now right down to the last man, they will destroy this country. They've already destroyed thousands at the World Trade Center. We don't need to leave a world for our children and grandchildren that I can't even think about."

I'm just sorry that the freedom-lovingest person I've ever met had to choose not to sing on the Country Freedom Concert because somebody didn't like a song that country fans are eating up.

RIDIN' WITH DAVID

David Ball sure proved to be in the right place at the right time with his song "Riding With Private Malone." The song was moving slowly on the charts before the terrorist attacks. But it's a great song that deserved better, and after the tragic events of Sept. 11, programmers sent the song rushing up the radio charts. The song has rekindled David's career – which certainly deserved it.

A LIFESAVER

Someone named Carol wrote a letter to Dear Abby some 20 years ago. Back then, school kids poked fun at Carol's mismatched, worn clothes – even a teacher joined in their game. Carol considered suicide, but then she heard “Coat Of Many Colors” by **Dolly Parton**. The song inspired her to finish high school, college and to become the successful, happy person she is today.

When I rant on and on about needing story songs on the airwaves, this is one of the reasons. Aren't you proud a life was saved? I am.

REBA RULES

Like Dolly Parton, **Reba McEntire** has talent and then some. One of country music's most precious treasures, Reba wants fans to know she is *not* putting her singing on the back burner. Just because her sitcom, *Reba*, is a major hit – and the ratings have assured the Oklahoma redhead of 22 episodes, according to WB brass – doesn't mean she will solely concentrate on TV. Hurray, Reba!

When I compared Reba to Dolly when I visited with her recently, Reba's eyes widened



and she turned to her husband. “Narvel, did you hear that?” she gushed. “Best compliment I ever had. Hazel compared me to Dolly!”

Makes sense, don't it? Dolly can do everything, Reba can do anything.

BIG NIGHTS

The best awards show I've ever witnessed was the 35th annual CMA Awards. Guiding the show to perfection was host **Vince Gill**, who played mandolin and sang harmony on the Single of the Year, “I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow,” with winner **Dan Tyminski**, fiddler **Alison Krauss** and friends. Moments later **Emmylou Harris** announced the Album winner, the acoustic *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* movie soundtrack.



The finest performance of the night belonged to **Alan Jackson**, whose version of his self-penned “Where Were You (When The World Stopped Turning),” a new anthem for Sept. 11, left the audience mesmerized. Other memorable performances: **Reba McEntire's** “I'm A Survivor,” the **Garth Brooks/George Jones** collaboration on “Beer Run,” **Diamond Rio's** powerful “One More Day,” Entertainer of the Year **Tim McGraw's** “The Cowboy In Me,” **George Strait's** “Run,” the **Dixie Chicks' “Travelin' Soldier,”** Duo of the Year **Brooks & Dunn's** red, white and blue opening, “Only In America,” awesome **Trisha Yearwood's** “Melancholy Blue,” **Martina McBride's** sassy “When God-Fearin' Women Get The Blues” and red-hot bluegrass picking by **Nickel Creek**.

Toby Keith and **Lee Ann Womack** got the Male and Female Vocalist honors, beating out bigger names. **Brad Paisley**, **George Jones**, **Bill Anderson** and **Buck Owens** were awarded the Vocal Event trophy, which marked new Hall of Fame inductee Anderson's first CMA honor.

Sara Evans got the award for video, **Lonestar** was named the year's top vocal group, **Dann Huff** got Musician of the Year and the multitalented **Keith Urban**, dressed in a tan suit with 9/11/01 etched into the embroidery, took home the coveted Horizon Award.

But you had to see the show



bride and groom motored 3,000 miles for a New England getaway. Lorrie said she liked Vermont and Sammy liked the covered bridges. I wonder if they're like the ones in Madison County?

Speaking of the newlyweds, I finally got the chance to visit their new Nashville eatery, Hot Chickens.com. *Grand Ole Opry* announcer **Keith Billbrey** took me to supper there, and Lord it was so good! I had my son accompany me on a return visit the next day. Then the following Saturday, my grandson and I went back again.

50th ANNIVERSARY

Buck White, patriarch of the outstanding musical group **The Whites**, and his lovely wife, Patty, celebrated 50 years of matrimony at a party in Smyrna, Tenn., in September. The celebration was hosted by their four beautiful daughters – Sharon White Skaggs, Cheryl White, Rosie White Franklin and Melissa White Wilson – and their grandchildren and sons-in-law, including Sharon's famous hubby, **Ricky Skaggs**.

More than 300 friends turned out, including Queen of Country Music **Kitty Wells** and husband **Johnny Wright**, Hall of Famer **Earl Scruggs** and wife Louise and the legendary **Carl Smith** and wife Goldie Hill Smith. There were scores of other musicians, too, including **Jerry Douglas**, **Hal Ketchum**, **Billy Walker**, **Jim Ed Brown**, **Jan Howard**, **Jimmy C. Newman**, **Jeannie Seely**, **Sam Bush** and *Opry* announcers **Keith Billbrey** and **Eddie Stubbs**.

to realize how well our music was represented that evening. Country music was done up proud. What a show!

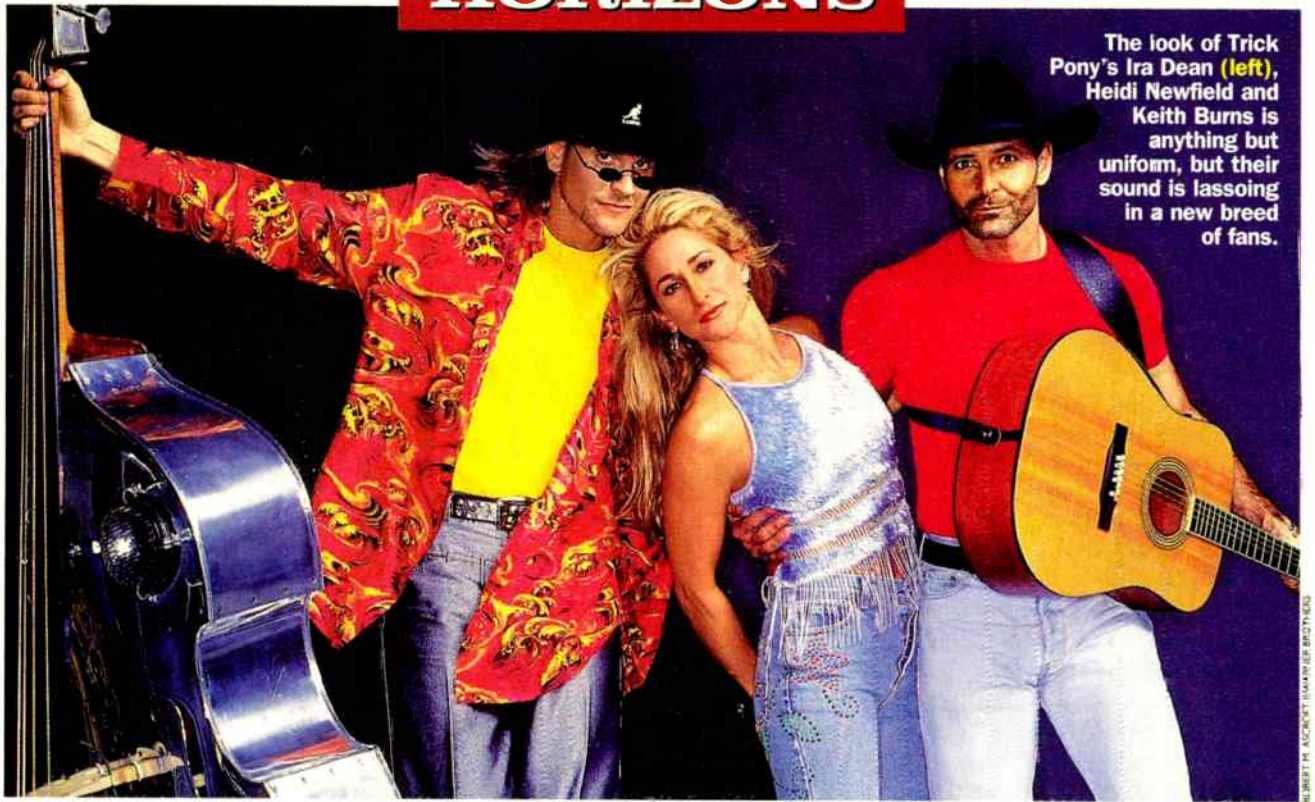
The country music veterans organization ROPE also held its parties during CMA week. The great **Jack Greene** was named ROPE's top entertainer. *Opry* guitarist **Jimmy Capps** was named best musician. WSM radio's **Bill Cody** won the media award and veteran Music Row manager **Tandy Rice** got the business award.

Out in Tucson, the *Opry's* **Riders In The Sky** picked up the Entertainer of the Year Award at the Western Music Association Awards.

NEWLYWEDS

The much-awaited, all-white wedding of **Sammy Kershaw** and **Lorrie Morgan** came off without a glitch. For their honeymoon, the beaming

The look of Trick Pony's Ira Dean (left), Heidi Newfield and Keith Burns is anything but uniform, but their sound is lassoing in a new breed of fans.



Show Horses

Trick Pony shoots out of the gate with more than a fashion statement

The members of Trick Pony still can't believe the ongoing fuss over how they look. "Last night, Warner Brothers gave us this huge booklet filled with every article that's been written about us," says Heidi Newfield, the raspy-voiced, blond firecracker who fronts the group. "I was up until 5:30 this morning, 'cause I couldn't stop reading it. Our 'look' came up almost in every single one. The hilarious thing about it is that nothing about the way we dress was ever planned."

Anyone who has seen Trick Pony's cartoonish appearance may question Newfield's claims. Each member has a distinct look that could have been devised by a marketing consultant hired to make sure the trio appealed to different demographic groups.

There's Newfield, the sassy, independent career woman with platinum hair, tight jeans and hand-me-the-car-keys attitude. There's Keith Burns, the cowboy with Marlboro-Man looks, black hat and macho stubble. And there's Ira Dean, the funny guy in the floppy hat, granny glasses, wildly patterned shirts and baggy pants who wields a funky, stand-up bass – with car headlights.

"Nothing about our looks is contrived," Newfield swears. "Nobody at the record label told us to do anything. All three of us have *always* looked this way."

Questions of image aside, these ponies are certainly

off to a fast start. The group's roadhouse rave-up "Pour Me" went to the Top 15, while the follow-up, "On A Night Like This" – which kicks off with a spoken come-on from Newfield declaring "My dad warned me about the *op-po-site* sex" – reached the Top 5.

As the band's hard-driving mix of rock, spoken word and country suggests, Trick Pony aims to attract fans whose radio pre-sets likely include rock and hip-hop as well as country.

Formed in the mid-'90s by Burns, Trick Pony epitomizes today's under-30 country fan, a person more likely to have been raised in the shadow of a satellite dish than a silo. Their eclectic influences range from jukebox country to Southern rock to rap to '80s metal – their concerts even include a raucous cover of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long."

California native Newfield – who can sing the rust off a tin roof – cites Tanya Tucker as an early influence, and her throaty singing certainly conjures memories of "Delta Dawn." Burns was a country musician playing Atlanta bars when Joe Diffie enlisted him for his band. Dean, from North Carolina, spent years on the road as a bassist, including a stint with Tucker.

As a trio, the group worked six years playing any smoky bar that would have them. In 2000, they signed to Warner Brothers, the label that believed the group could bring the MTV crowd to CMT.

"Sure, we want to bring more listeners to country music," Newfield admits. "We love the old stuff – Waylon, Buck Owens, Marty Robbins, Elvis. We have very strong ties to the roots of country music. But it's important and really cool to keep country music hip."

— Miriam Pace Longino

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Do It Yourself

Texan Pat Green takes grass-roots route to success

Does Nashville need Pat Green more than Pat Green needs Nashville? You'd think the country music capital would salivate over a young performer who has grown into the hottest new artist in Texas, selling 200,000 albums on his own. What's more, he's attracted the assistance of Willie Nelson, who duets with Green on his new album, *Three Days*.

Despite those credentials, Green isn't launching his national debut through Nashville. Instead, the Texas rebel has signed to New York's Universal Records, a rock label with no country experience.

"The reason we didn't go with Nashville is that Universal came first, and they offered exactly what we wanted in terms of creative freedom," says the 29-year-old Green. "When we took that offer to some of the Nashville guys, they said, 'Go for it.'"

As that statement suggests, Green found himself in an unusual bargaining position when looking for his first major-label deal. Most aspiring country artists arrive in Nashville willing to compromise for any opportunity. But Green's enormous regional success in Texas placed him in a position to call his own shots. He was a proven commodity instead of an unknown wannabe.

Green had spent the late '90s establishing himself as the biggest grass-roots phenomenon in Texas country since the outlaw days of Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and Jerry Jeff Walker. Only the more experienced Robert Earl Keen rivals Green as a college draw in the Lone Star State, with raucous concerts that quickly transform into beer-fueled singalongs.

Such quick success inevitably spawned a backlash. In the hipper circles of Austin, where Green is now based, he may be the most disdained artist this side of Garth Brooks. Critics who champion the Texas

singer/songwriter tradition dismiss Green's music as the fizz of a beer commercial. Keen's songs have dark ambiguities, even if the frat boys who hoot and holler their way through his shows are oblivious to these qualities. But with Green, there *is* no dark side.

"I think I've written a lot of songs that explore deeper meanings and different pathways, but I'm still very much a part of the crowd that I play to," says Green, who started his career as a student at Lubbock's Texas Tech University. "I really enjoy my life a whole lot, and I'm having more fun than ever."

Producer Lloyd Maines, who worked with Green on *Three Days*, defends the populist nature of the singer's following.

"I don't know if it's jealousy or resentment, but people slam him unjustly just because he's gotten all the marbles," says Maines, who's the father of Dixie Chick singer Natalie Maines. "He's a great guy with a lot of charisma, and he's gone out and created his own huge niche."

If his fans are more concerned with chugging the next round than with concentrating on subtle songcraft, you won't hear Green complain.

"Not at all," he says. "I'm a big 'whatever' man. They've paid their money to get in, and as long as they don't hit me with a full beer bottle, I'm going to leave them alone."

— Don McLeese

Greening of America:
Pat Green sold
200,000 albums on his
own and now seeks
broader pastures with
his Universal Records
CD, *Three Days*.

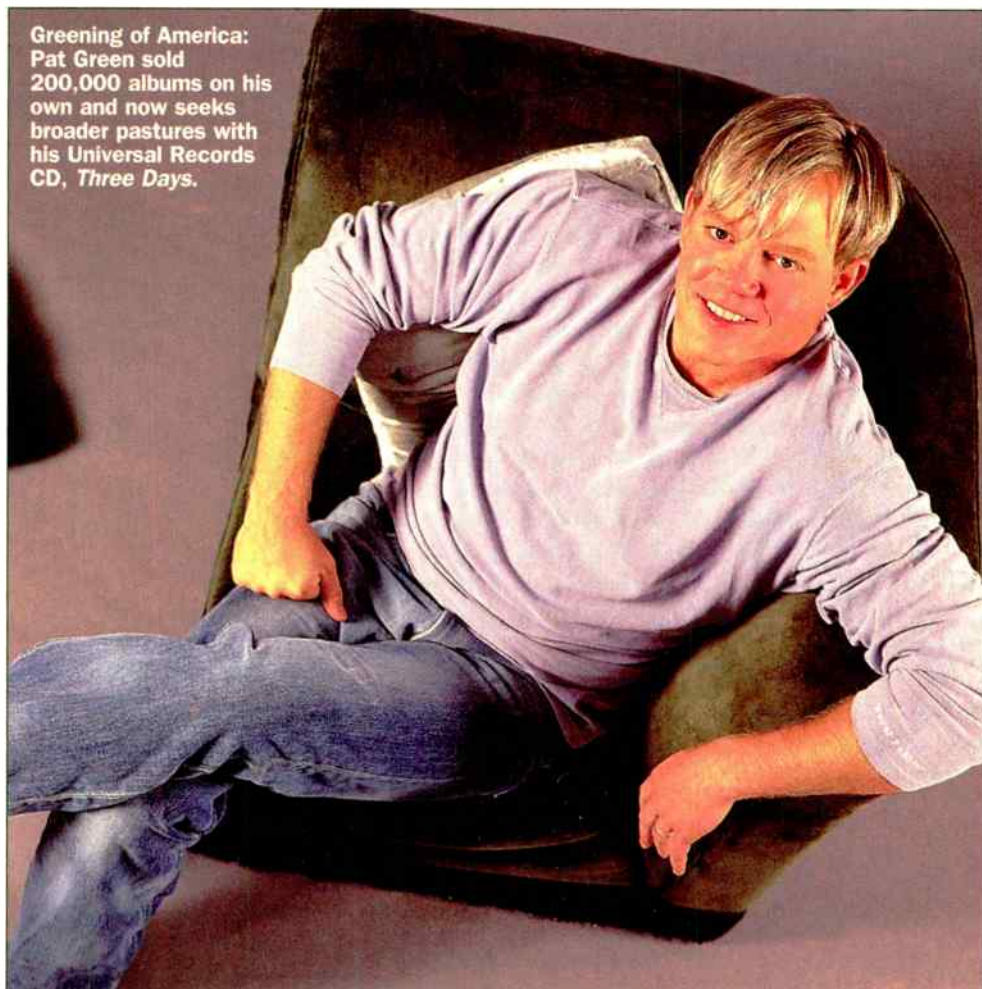


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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MERLE HAGGARD salutes his greatest influence, the legendary **LEFTY FRIZZELL**

By David Cantwell

On the Friday following September 11, when Merle Haggard took the stage in Kansas City, fans pelted him with requests for his flag-waving, Vietnam-era hit, "The Fightin' Side Of Me." The Hag, however, began his show with a very different sort of song.



COURTESY EPIC RECORDS

PLAYING WITH FIRE



Lee Ann Womack took the heat and stuck to her plan - and got exactly what she wanted

Lee Ann Womack adjusts the leather lacing of her size-2 denim pantsuit, then crouches on her hands and knees on a roll of seamless paper.

by Alanna Nash

Photos by Nancy Lee Andrews

"OK," the 35-year-old says as she looks up into the camera of the photographer. "What do you want me to do?"

That's a question one doesn't normally hear from the petite Texas fireball, who has taken a hands-on approach to her success even before arriving in Nashville in 1986. Like Reba McEntire or Dolly Parton, two other determined performers, Womack is intensely focused, assertive and knowledgeable about all aspects of her music and her business. Fresh from her win as the CMA

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World Radio History

LEE ANN WOMACK

Female Vocalist of the Year, and with her breakthrough *I Hope You Dance* album approaching three million in sales, the singer acknowledges that these crowning achievements are all part of a deliberate, focused plan.

"I always believed I could do it," she says after the photo session, sitting in a booth at Nashville's Palm restaurant and picking over a light dinner of Monday Night Salad, a finely chopped concoction that she eats without once touching the tempting bread basket. "I didn't know for sure if I would, because maybe God wouldn't see fit to let me have what I wanted so badly. But I always knew that I *could*. As soon as you tell me, 'Oh, that can't be done,' it becomes more important to me."

Take, for example, Womack's latest single, "Does My Ring Burn Your Finger." She fought to include Buddy and Julie Miller's anguished song of failed love on her album – recording it three times until she captured the crazed desperation and ache she wanted in the grooves. The alternative-country tune isn't normal mainstream radio fare, but Womack argued for it to be a single all along. Still, she let her label pick "Why They Call It Falling" as the follow-up to previous hits "Ashes By Now" and the gigantic smash "I Hope You Dance," the inspirational song that offers hope for cherished loved ones.

When "Falling" stalled at No. 13 on the *Billboard* country charts, Womack knew she had the ammunition to insist on the opportunity to pick the next single – so insist she did. That kind of strategy has served her well.

"She's very smart, without being calculating," assesses her producer, Mark Wright, who originally signed her to Decca and brought her to MCA when the former label closed. "She really does fight for doing what her heart tells her to, and then she has the brain power to give her heart all the right information."

Bookending a string of hit singles with an adult contemporary song ("I Hope You Dance") and an edgy, bluegrass-rock offering ("Does My Ring Burn Your Finger") not only shows Womack's versatility, it also underscores the philosophy that has made her a standard-bearer for an audience that craves substance and complexity in its lyrics. While she knows that it takes hits to keep her

record deal, she's equally consumed with finding songs of integrity and deep emotion – songs about pain and loss that have a lasting impact, even if they don't necessarily chart as high as her more commercial fare.

Such convictions – along with her leanings toward both traditional and progressive music in a time when homogenized pop rules the airwaves – have helped Womack push mainstream country in new directions, with records that sound organic, minus the drum loops and synthesizers that often

“I think a lot of people had probably written me off, and I knew I needed to take care of business.”

propel mediocre offerings to the top of the charts.

"This last week we cut a track with a full band," says Wright of the work they've begun for her fourth album, "and as we were listening back, she said, 'The song is getting covered up by the track. I want to strip it down to just guitars and percussion and bass, and put a fiddle and a mandolin on it.' So we worked all morning on the band track, and then that afternoon, we went in and did her unplugged version. And it was much better. She was right."

From her self-titled debut album in 1997, Womack was intent on making

records that reflected her personal tastes and attitudes, insisting on input into production, suggesting musicians and backup singers, and picking the repertoire with Wright and Frank Liddell. Liddell, now her husband, was Decca's A&R man when they met, and Womack felt an instant distrust for him. "I thought he just worked his way up the ladder, finally got the A&R gig, and if he thought he was going to pick songs for my record, he had another think coming."

Little did she realize that Liddell not only possessed a great song sense, but

that he had an affinity for the stone-country songs she liked, particularly those that best showcase her quavering soprano. While Womack brought in most of the material for the album, including "Never Again, Again," in which a tortured woman keeps breaking her own promise to forsake her ex-lover, Liddell convinced her to cut "The Fool," which she initially found "a little progressive," but which became her first Top 5 hit.

Since then, working in tandem with Wright, she's overseen almost every detail of her albums, including embossing a photograph of her baby's chubby feet on the *I Hope You Dance* CD.

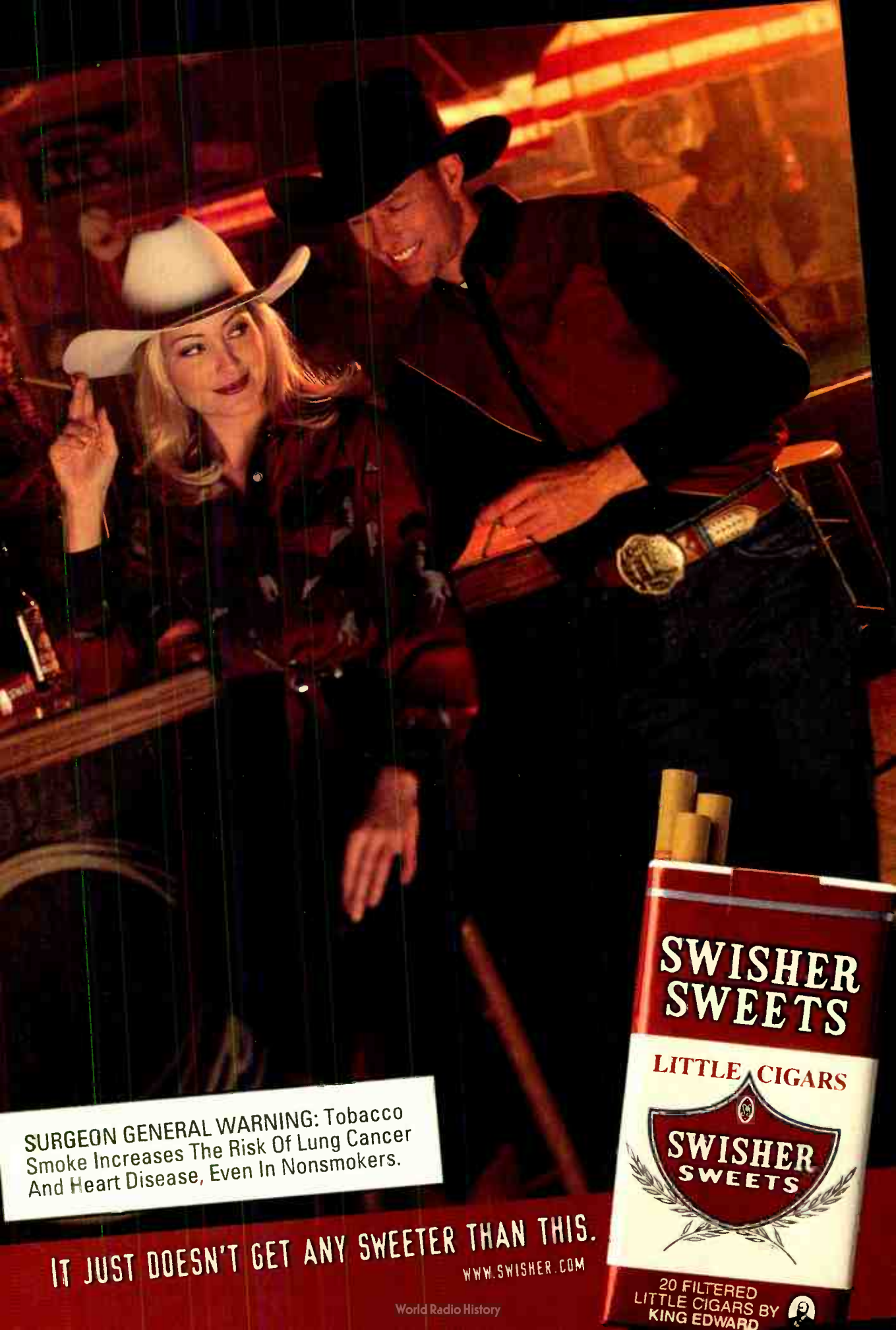
"We went round and round on stuff on the last record, but that was an important album for me, because I had been away," she explains, referencing her shift to MCA after Decca closed down, and her pregnancy with baby Anna Lise. Because she had been away from radio for a while, "I think a lot of people had probably written me off, and I knew I needed to take care of business." As such, she says, "I know that I was aggravating to people at the label, because look at how many records they put out and how many careers come over their desks. Well, you know how many careers I have? One."

Womack says she was born with such moxie, just another in a line of strong women like her great-grandmother, who earned a master's degree when most women didn't even go to college. Her parents were both educators, and her father, a high school principal in Jacksonville, Texas, also spun country platters on radio station KEBE. A determined child, Womack says she got everything she wanted – except a go-cart. "My parents knew that as soon as



"I always believed I could do it," says the reigning CMA queen.

TANSHY VAN WINKLE



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World Radio History

LEE ANN WOMACK

they told me, 'Don't go ride in the street,' I'd do it as soon as their back was turned," she says. Last Christmas, she got the go-cart by proxy, buying one for her older daughter, Aubrie.

Still, she was a "sad little girl ... I'd sit at the piano and make up sad little melodies and cry." She longed to one day be on those records her father played. She eagerly watched the CMA Awards show each fall, and she sat in her room listening to records – Loretta Lynn, and eventually Vince Gill, both of whom would be tremendous influences – and plotting how to get into the music business. An average student, her head was filled with nothing but notes and rhythms.

"I'd be sitting in class humming, not even realizing that I was doing it, you know, and the teacher would say, 'Lee Ann, you were singing out loud.' I'm sure there were people who pulled my parents aside and said, 'We're a little worried about Lee Ann.' The minute the bell rang, the earphones went on, and I'd be walking down that hall listening to Vern Gosdin or Gene Watson. I couldn't have cared less about school. Looking back, I'm surprised I didn't quit when I was about 16. I really looked at school as a prison, that it was stifling me as an artist."

She also hated the small-town atmosphere of Jacksonville, and begged her parents to move to a bigger city where, she says, "there was something going on. I can remember every day in the sixth grade, getting on a bus and riding across town. It just seemed so isolated. I felt like the bus was taking me nowhere, and all of the action was somewhere else. That's where I wanted to be."

Her motivation, she says, wasn't really tied to an event, though the movie *Coal Miner's Daughter* had a huge impact on her. "I hate to sound weird, but I just think it was a calling," she says, "what I was meant to do."

She got her first taste of performing at South Plains College in the Texas panhandle. For a year, she played in a band, where she says she "learned more than anywhere else." She traveled around on a bus, setting up and tearing down equipment, playing shows and rolling to the next gig. In 1986, she transferred to Nashville's Belmont University for the music business program, and while she

has yet to earn her degree, she picked up another diploma of sorts during an internship at MCA Records. There, she kept her eyes open, busying herself with more than filing memos and mailing out press releases.

"All my life I had pictured the people who worked with the artists and producers and songwriters as being some kind of geniuses who had figured something out. But I saw these people didn't have it any more figured out than I did, you know," she says with a laugh. "And it

All my life I had pictured the people who worked with the artists and producers and songwriters as being some kind of geniuses who had figured something out.

just seemed more possible to reach my goals once I got in the thick of it and looked around, even though it took me 10 years to get anything going."

Her path took another important turn during a college break back home, when she met musician Jason Sellers, who soon fulfilled his aspirations of moving to Nashville to play in the bands of both Vince Gill and Ricky Skaggs, and to earn his own record deal on BNA. Sellers and Womack married in 1990. Their daughter Aubrie was born in 1991, but the marriage would falter seven years later.

"If truth be told, we never should have married in the first place," she explains

somewhat wistfully. "I was really focused on my career, and he was focused on his, and it just didn't work out. But I would take a bullet for that guy. I learned so much from him."

With Tammy Wynette-ish determination, Womack pushed a baby stroller between record companies on Music Row, dropping off tapes and wondering when she would ever get past the receptionist. As country began to sound more like pop than the twin-fiddle and steel guitar sound she embraced, Womack

panicked, afraid that by the time she got a record deal, "no one would even want to hear what I do. I was sick about it. I didn't realize it at the time, but I think I was literally clinically depressed. Could have used some medication, probably."

She got her break by financing a showcase for herself at a Nashville nightclub, catching the ear of Pat McMakin from Sony/ATV Tree Productions. McMakin was impressed with her original song "Am I The Only Thing That You've Done Wrong?," and he signed her to Tree under the company's artist development program, which means the publishing company would work to help her secure a record deal.

Armed with the support of a big-time publishing company, Womack became even more determined to sign a recording contract. But only one company appealed to her – the deep-country-rooted MCA, with music-first marketing practices that most approximated her own philosophy.

"I can't stand it when I hear A&R people talk about how this new act they've just signed 'looks like a star,' " she complains. "Did Merle Haggard look like a star? Did Willie Nelson? I mean, find somebody who makes great music first, and then help him look like a star."

With a mix of pluck and logic, Womack saw that Dawn Sears had just left MCA's little-sister label, Decca, and she set her sights on plugging that slot in the Decca roster. When Tree balked at funding a showcase for only one label, Womack paid for it herself. Her strategy paid off: After her performance, MCA's Wright took her to dinner and suggested an attorney to help her close the deal. Womack countered that she should pick her own attorney, and quickly retained



John Mason, a heavyweight music-business lawyer.

"I remember Mark kind of taking a big swallow when I told him who it was," she remembers, grinning. "Later on, it hit me about how funny that was."

In her determination to assemble the best possible team she could, Womack next turned to finding a manager. Her first choice was Erv Woolsey, who made a name for himself by guiding George Strait to the kind of measured, long-term career Womack hoped for herself. But this time, her winning streak failed – Woolsey turned her down.

Undaunted, she waited until she recorded "Never Again, Again," and then asked Wright to play it for Woolsey. This time, the manager said yes. "That was a bigger deal to me than getting the record," she says. "I guess because I had to work harder for it. But I had it in my mind that Erv was the god of Nashville."

Woolsey has served her well ever since, never blinking when he learned Womack and Liddell had a child on the way before marriage, or complaining that the couple chose to wait a year after Anna Lise's birth to tie the knot. He's also encouraged Womack's desires to explore her musical boundaries, so that she might build a career "more like Willie Nelson than Faith Hill ... or you might say I'd rather be Ricky Skaggs than Garth Brooks," as she puts it.

That means placing more emphasis on a timeless style of music than on trends or theatrics. Her next album, says Wright, "is just all over the map, but when you hear her singing, that's the thread. That's the way it ought to be. I want her to be recognized not as a country singer or a pop singer, but just as a great artist."

This past December, she did a 17-day Christmas tour with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. She came up with the idea, she says, because, "I love that big horn section, that swinging kind of thing, and the era when that music was really popular. I just like being around good musicians."

The success of the anthemic "I Hope You Dance" allows her to do all kinds of projects that were once beyond her reach. While that now-signature tune isn't her personal favorite from her own repertoire – "Never Again, Again" wins that distinction – she nonetheless recognizes it as a blessing. "It's been amazing to me to hear all of the stories of how it's



Womack says she's built her career to be "more like Willie Nelson than Faith Hill."

affected people's lives," she says.

Womack's own story – that of destiny, belief, hard work and determined principles – is also worth remembering, even as she says she doesn't give advice because she doesn't believe there's a right way or wrong way to reach one's goals, particularly in the music business.

"I do think I'm an example of showing young people that you can do whatever you want to do, period, if you have enough money, time and manpower, and you're willing to use it," she says. "What can't be done, you know? You're the only one who knows what is in your heart."*



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The 2001
*Country
Music
Critics
Poll*

Compiled by
Geoffrey Himes

THE WINNERS CIRCLE

IN RE-CONNECTING TO ITS ROOTS IN BLUEGRASS, '80S COUNTRY-POP AND '60S FOLK, COUNTRY MUSIC FOUND NEW ENERGY AND EMOTION – AND A SURPRISING COMMERCIAL SPIKE

The most important country music act of 2001 was a band that never existed. That's the consensus of the nation's leading country-music journalists in the second annual *Country Music Magazine Critics Poll*. The overwhelming pick for Single of the Year is "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" by The Soggy Bottom Boys, an entirely fictional trio of 1930s prison escapees who provided the

center of the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Moreover, the soundtrack album featuring that single was voted the fourth-best Album of the Year. And four of the nine musicians who worked off-camera to record "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" – singer Dan Tyminski, Dobroist Jerry Douglas, banjoist Ron Block and bassist Barry Bales – are members of Alison Krauss & Union Station, which was voted Artist of the Year.

Though actors George Clooney, Tim Blake Nelson and John Turturro didn't actually sing – they lip-synced – in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, their star power synergized with an outstanding soundtrack (inset) to make for one of country music's most formidable entertainment packages of 2001.



Krauss' latest album, *New Favorite*, was voted seventh best of the year, part of a string-band sweep that saw five of the top seven album slots flavored with bluegrass. Joining *New Favorite* and *O Brother* in the top seven were Dolly Parton's *Little Sparrow* and Gillian Welch's *Time (The Revelator)*.

Topping them all was Patty Loveless' *Mountain Soul*, chosen as the year's best album, which also propelled Loveless to a victory as Female Vocalist of the Year and an additional finish in the year's Top 10 singles. And the Dixie Chicks – a trio with banjo and fiddle, don't forget – were voted Group of the Year and runner-up Artist of the Year, despite being inactive for most of 2001.

Bluegrass wasn't the year's only story, according to the critics. Contemporary country performers Brooks & Dunn and Rodney Crowell both made impressive comebacks from artistic and commercial slumps. Tim McGraw released the finest single of his career and headlined the summer's most successful tour. Toby Keith continued his ascension to country's front ranks, and Brad Paisley established that he was more than a flash in the pan.

George Jones once again defied logic and kept himself and his career alive, while Reba McEntire further broadened her success as a star of stage and screen by adding to her list of accomplishments new triumphs on Broadway (lead role in *Annie Get Your Gun*) and TV (starring in WB's *Reba*).

Meanwhile, four young women with appealing country voices and catchy songs – Tammy Cochran, Carolyn Dawn Johnson, Cyndi Thomson and Trick Pony's Heidi Newfield – made impressive debuts.

Even with no new music since 1999, the Dixie Chicks stayed in the headlines by suing their record label. In the end, their groundbreaking lawsuit may end up having more impact on the industry than any music made in 2001.

Still, in country music, bluegrass stands as the year's most unexpected surprise. By declaring 2001 the year of The Soggy Bottom Boys, the critics echoed sentiments of the record-buying public, which kept the *O Brother* soundtrack atop the country album charts for more than 20 weeks. Albums by Krauss and Parton also enjoyed considerable chart success, and all three CDs did so with almost no help from country radio.

Critics and radio programmers have long held different visions of country music. But for the first time in a long while, the journalists had Soundscan numbers to validate their positions.

But what does this electoral sweep by bluegrass and old-time music mean? Are critics demanding authenticity? Not when they're delivering their votes to a band led by a lip-syncing, beard-tugging, overall-wearing George Clooney. Are they giving in to comfortable nostalgia? Not when they're also voting for *Buddy & Julie Miller*, an album of soaring, jangling, Christian-mystic anthems that make the couple sound like a Nashville version of U2. And not when they're also voting for Shaver's *The Earth Rolls*

ALBUM OF THE YEAR



1. **Patty Loveless, *Mountain Soul*** (Epic)
2. **Buddy & Julie Miller, *Buddy & Julie Miller*** (Hightone)
3. **Rodney Crowell, *The Houston Kid*** (Sugar Hill)
4. **Various artists, *Soundtrack: O Brother, Where Art Thou?*** (Mercury)
5. **Dolly Parton, *Little Sparrow*** (Sugar Hill)
6. **Gillian Welch, *Time (The Revelator)*** (Acorn)
7. **Aison Krauss & Union Station, *New Favorite*** (Rounder)
8. **Shaver, *The Earth Rolls On*** (New West)
9. **Chris Knight, *A Pretty Good Guy*** (Dualtone)
10. **Lucinda Williams, *Essence*** (Lost Highway)
11. **The Deraillers, *Here Come The Deraillers*** (Lucky Dog)
12. **Charlie Robison, *Step Right Up*** (Lucky Dog)
13. **Various artists, *Music From And Inspired By The Motion Picture Songcatcher*** (Vanguard)
14. **George Jones, *The Rock: Stone Cold Country 2001*** (Bandit/ENA)
15. **Alejandro Escovedo, *A Man Under The Influence*** (Bloodshot)
— Rhonda Vincent
The Storm Still Rages (Rounder)
16. **Dwight Yoakam, *Tomorrow's Sounds Today*** (Reprise)
17. **Gary Allan, *Alright Guy*** (MCA)
18. **Trisha Yearwood, *Inside Out*** (MCA)
19. **Merle Haggard, *Roots, Volume 1*** (Anti-/Epitaph)
20. **Tammy Cochran, *Tammy Cochran*** (Epic)
21. **Lee Roy Parnell, *Tell The Truth*** (Vanguard)
22. **Brad Paisley, *Part II*** (Ansta)
23. **Jim Lauderdale, *The Other Sessions*** (Dualtone)
24. **Ralph Stanley, *Clinch Mountain Sweethearts*** (Rebel)
25. **Earl Scruggs, *Earl Scruggs & Friends*** (MCA)
26. **Kelly Hogan, *Because It Feels Good*** (Bloodshot)
27. **Cyndi Thomson, *My World*** (Capitol)
28. **Sara Evans, *Born To Fly*** (RCA)

A dash designates a tie for an equal number of votes cast for two or more different entries.

CRITICS POLL

CRITICS POLL

SINGLE OF THE YEAR

1. The Soggy Bottom Boys, "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" (Mercury)
2. Martina McBride, "When God-Fearin' Women Get The Blues" (RCA)
3. Lee Ann Womack, "Ashes By Now" (MCA)
4. Alan Jackson, "Where I Come From" (Arista)
5. Carolyn Dawn Johnson, "Complicated" (Arista)
6. David Ball, "Riding With Private Malone" (Dualtone)
7. Trisha Yearwood, "I Would've Loved You Anyway" (MCA)
8. Patty Loveless, "The Boys Are Back In Town" (Epic)
- Tim McGraw, "Angry All The Time" (Curb)
9. Sara Evans, "Born To Fly" (RCA)
10. Allison Krauss & Union Station, "Lucky One" (Rounder)
- Blake Shelton, "Austin" (Warner Bros.)
11. Tammy Cochran, "Angels In Waiting" (Epic)
12. Jessica Andrews, "Who I Am" (DreamWorks)
13. Trick Pony, "Pour Me" (Warner Bros.)
14. Brad Paisley, "Wrapped Around" (Arista)
- Cyndi Thomson, "What I Really Meant To Say" (Capitol)
15. Nickel Creek, "When You Come Back Down" (Sugar Hill)
- Lee Ann Womack, "Does My Ring Burn Your Finger" (MCA)
16. Mark McGuinn, "Mrs. Steven Rudy" (VFR)
- Keith Urban, "Where The Blacktop Ends" (Capitol)
17. Diamond Rio, "One More Day" (Arista)
- Janie O'Neal, "There Is No Arizona" (Mercury)
18. Teri Clark, "No Fear" (Mercury)
- Montgomery Gentry, "She Couldn't Change Me" (Columbia)
19. George Jones & Garth Brooks, "Bear Run" (Bandit/EVA)
- Darryl Worley, "Second Wind" (DreamWorks)
20. Trick Pony, "On A Night Like This" (Warner Bros.)
21. Charlie Robison, "I Want You Bad" (Lucky Dog)
- Dwight Yoakam & Buck Owens, "Alright, I'm Wrong" (Reprise)

A dash designates a tie for an equal number of votes cast for two or more different entries.

CLAYTON HARRIS

On, a disc haunted by death, family and heroin.

No, these critics and their favorite musicians are trying to create a new future for country music by recasting its past. Many of today's critical favorites borrow liberally from Celtic and mountain ballads, from blues and swing tunes, and from honky-tonk and country rock. They then transcend their influences by transforming them into personal stories about work, marriage, death and the modern world.

In a way, that's what the *O Brother* movie did, and why that film became such a touchstone for critics and audiences alike. If three prison escapees and an African-American drifter can team up to defeat a corrupt governor – and the KKK – with a jump-blues version of an old mountain lament, why can't today's crop of musical outlaws get a victory grip on country radio?

Bluegrass singers used to dream of being good enough to be country stars. These days it seems that country stars dream of being good enough to be bluegrass singers. In recent years, major-label acts such as Dolly Parton, Patty Loveless, Vince Gill, Steve Earle and Jim Lauderdale have all made acoustic, bluegrass-injected albums. What's next, *Shania Twain Sings The Hazel Dickens Songbook*?

These stars have turned to bluegrass not just out of nostalgia for real or imagined rural childhoods – though that's certainly part of it – but also because the string-band format gives them an excuse to restore subtlety to their singing, tradition to their arrangements and narrative to their lyrics. And, considering what befell our nation in September, it wouldn't be surprising if more artists – and more fans – turn to tradition and narrative for strength and comfort.

After all, when Dolly Parton wanted to get away from drums that are too loud, synthesizers that are too thick, arrangements that are too polished and lyrics that are too cute, what was her best escape route?

Bluegrass.

Parton's *Little Sparrow*, voted the fifth best album of the year, was her second consecutive all-acoustic album, and – coincidentally or not – her finest effort in any format for 27 years. Few of the songs were true bluegrass numbers, but the Appalachian atmosphere reawakened her songwriting genius. Once again singing about poor young women who fatefully place their

The man behind the sadness: Dan Tyminski's evocative vocals on "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow" vaulted it to Single of the Year in the Critics Poll.





FEMALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

1. Patty Loveless
2. Trisha Yearwood
3. Alison Krauss
4. Lucinda Williams



MALE VOCALIST OF THE YEAR

1. George Jones
2. Alan Jackson
3. Buddy Miller
- Ralph Stanley
- Dan Tyminski

A dash designates a tie for an equal number of votes cast for two or more different entries.



LIVE ACT OF THE YEAR

1. Robbie Fulks
2. Alison Krauss
- Del McCoury
- Allison Moorer

faith in romance, Parton described them with unflinching honesty and rare sympathy.

The critics were even more enthralled by Loveless' return to bluegrass on *Mountain Soul*, naming it Album of the Year and voting her Female Vocalist of the Year. Loveless has long been one of the most tasteful singers in the country format, even when working under considerable commercial constraints. One suspects that this bluegrass project was largely an excuse to throw off those limitations, to choose whatever songs she wanted and to sing

BLUEGRASS SINGERS USED TO DREAM OF BEING GOOD ENOUGH TO BE COUNTRY STARS. THESE DAYS IT SEEMS THAT COUNTRY STARS DREAM OF BEING GOOD ENOUGH TO BE BLUEGRASS SINGERS.

them with the kind of understatement upon which Music Row tends to frown. Indeed, her disc contained more contemporary Nashville numbers than traditional bluegrass songs. It just didn't sound like a contemporary Nashville album.

In like fashion, Alison Krauss filled her latest album, *New Favorite*, with recent songs by such writers as Wendy Waldman, Dan Fogelberg and Robert Lee Castleman. Forging a new kind of "chamber-grass" where confessional vocals are framed by rich harmonies, Krauss and her band created a winning album that earned them Artist of the Year honors. In addition, they finished second as Live Act of the Year and second as Group of the Year. Krauss came in third

in the category of Female Vocalist of the Year, and Tyminski ran third as Male Vocalist of the Year. *New Favorite* came in seventh for Album of the Year, and the album's initial single, "Lucky One," came in 10th for Single of the Year.

The title track of Krauss' new album was written by Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, the sole writers and performers on Welch's own album, *Time (The Revelator)*, which finished sixth as Album of the Year. Welch still relied on the sound of pre-bluegrass Appalachia, but she refused to be imprisoned by history. She sang about Elvis Presley and Steve Miller, and she allowed one song to ramble on for 14 impressionistic minutes. Like these other artists, she used old-time mountain music not as a purist straitjacket but as a catalyst for new freedoms.

If you wanted to hear the real thing, a number of invaluable old-time and bluegrass reissues made that easier. Ralph Stanley's classic early-'70s version of "Man Of Constant Sorrow" — an inspiration for The Soggy Bottom Boys — was re-released as the title track of a terrific Rebel Records anthology. Before he invented bluegrass, Bill Monroe sang with his brother Charlie, and a second volume of their joint recordings was reissued as *Vol. 2 Just A Song Of Old Kentucky*, which ranked 10th on the Reissue roster.

Clarence "Tom" Ashley, one of the standouts on Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music* and a mentor to Doc Watson, finally got a good collection of his own, *Greenback Dollar*, and it duly came in sixth among reissues. And Jimmy Martin, the hardest of the hard-bluegrass singers, describes himself, in typically modest fashion, as *The King Of Bluegrass* on an anthology voted fifth-best reissue.

If you want to hear a contemporary band playing

straight-ahead, uncompromised bluegrass, your best bet this year was from the IBMA Entertainer of the Year, Rhonda Vincent, who released *The Storm Still Rages*, which came in at No. 15 on the overall Album of the Year list.

Topping the Reissues list was a lovingly put-together Gram Parsons anthology, *Sacred Hearts & Fallen Angels*. Two Parsons acolytes – Rodney Crowell and Emmylou Harris – came in No. 2 and No. 3, respectively. Crowell's 1989 album *Diamonds & Dirt*, which originally yielded five No. 1 singles, was re-released with three bonus songs, and once again it proved that country-pop can be smart and sophisticated rather than shallow and formulaic. Harris' anthology, *The Warner/Reprise Years*, provides further evidence of the enduring strength of the music she created in the '70s and '80s. Which begs the question: If bluegrass can be mythologized into a utopian paradise that modern singers visit as if on a pilgrimage, why can't the same thing happen to the progressive country-pop of the '80s?

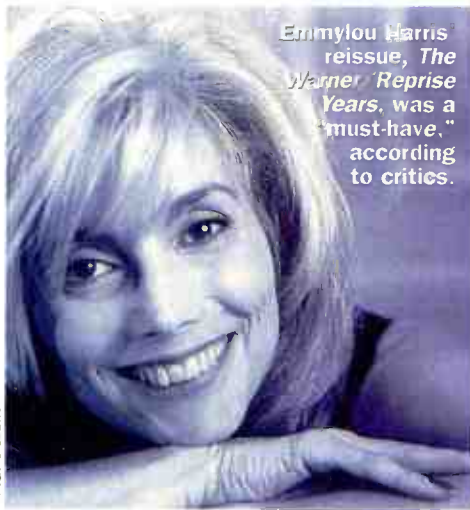
Crowell spent the '90s trying to duplicate the triumph of *Diamonds & Dirt* without success. It wasn't until this year that he came up with an equally powerful album, and he did it by abandoning the major labels for the independent Sugar Hill and by abandoning the vague generalities of Music Row songwriting for ruthless autobiography. His

new songs examined his rough-and-tumble childhood in Texas and his parents' less-than-perfect marriage with an honesty that made *The Houston Kid* the poll's third-best album.

Trisha Yearwood has long laid claim to that same prog-country tradition. She has matured into one of our finest singers, able to pick good material and to interpret it with intelligence and passion. You can hear that on this year's *Inside Out*, the No. 18 album. It included the hit "I Would've Loved You Anyway," voted the No. 7 single.

Lee Ann Womack has declared her allegiance to that tradition by recording "Ashes By Now," the No. 3 single, which was composed by Crowell and first recorded by Harris. She also released "Does My Ring Burn Your Finger," the No. 15 single, written by Buddy & Julie Miller – who also have connections to that fertile '80s period of country-pop. Martina McBride also fits in the same category, especially when she gets a song as good as Leslie Satcher's "When God-Fearin' Women Get The Blues," a track newly recorded for her *Greatest Hits* collection and here voted the year's second-best single.

The year's most impressive pop-country debuts also seem eager to follow in the footsteps of Harris, Yearwood, Womack and McBride. Most impressive was Carolyn



Emmylou Harris reissue, *The Warner/Reprise Years*, was a "must-have," according to critics.

PATRICK FORD/RETNA



ARTIST OF THE YEAR

1. Alison Krauss & Union Station
2. Dixie Chicks
3. Lucinda Williams



GROUP OR DUO OF THE YEAR

1. Dixie Chicks
2. Buddy & Julie Miller
3. Brooks & Dunn
- Alison Krauss & Union Station
4. Rhonda Vincent & The Rage

A dash designates a tie for an equal number of votes cast for two or more different entries.



SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

1. Julie Miller
2. Lucinda Williams
3. Jim Lauderdale
- Gillian Welch
4. Rodney Crowell
- Alan Jackson

REISSUES



The Gram Parsons Anthology put a respectful perspective on one of the seminal influences of country-rock.

1. Gram Parsons, *Sacred Hearts & Fallen Angels: The Gram Parsons Anthology* (Rhino)
2. Rodney Crowell, *Diamonds & Dirt* (Columbia/Legacy)
3. Emmylou Harris, *The Warner/Reprise Years* (Rhino)
4. Lyle Lovett, *Cowboy Man: Anthology, Volume 1* (Curb/MCA)
5. Jimmy Martin, *The King Of Bluegrass* (Audium)
6. Clarence "Tom" Ashley, *Greenback Dollar: The Music Of Clarence "Tom" Ashley, 1929-1933* (County)
7. Various artists, *Truck Driver's Boogie: Big Rig Hits, Vol. 1, 1939-1969* (Diesel Only/Audium)
8. Kris Kristofferson, *Kristofferson* (Legacy)
9. Buck Owens, *Young Buck: The Complete Pre-Capitol Recordings* (Audium)
10. The Monroe Brothers, *Vol. 2 Just A Song Of Old Kentucky* (Rounder)
11. Joe Maphis, *Fire On The Strings* (Legacy)
12. Ralph Stanley, *Man Of Constant Sorrow* (Rebel)
13. Johnny Bond, *Country & Western* (Bloodshot)
14. Milton Brown, *Western Swing Chronicles, Volume 1* (Original Jazz Library)
15. Charlie Rich, *Behind Closed Doors* (Epic/Legacy)
16. Connie Smith, *Born To Sing* (Bear Family)

Dawn Johnson, whose song "Complicated," the poll's No. 5 single, ignored the "keep it simple, stupid" philosophy of Music Row and proved that listeners will accept the tangles of real-life relationships.

Tammy Cochran, whose voice has the bruised innocence of a Parton or Loveless, impressed the critics with "Angels In Waiting," which came in No. 11 on the Singles list. Young Georgian transplant Cyndi Thomson scored with "What I Really Meant To Say," the No. 14 single, and newcomer trio Trick Pony - fronted by vocalist Heidi Newfield - placed two singles in the critics' Top 20, the No. 13 "Pour Me" and No. 20 "On A Night Like This."

These four women face an interesting dilemma. They have tasted enough commercial success to be tempted into cash-register-tested formulas. But their music contains a glimmer of individuality, an originality they can develop only by resisting those formulas. The decisions they make will do much to shape mainstream country in the coming years.

In addition to these new faces, several familiar names made unexpected comebacks. The indomitable George Jones bounced back once again, his flexible, wide-ranging voice sounding as effective as ever on *The Rock: Stone Cold Country 2001*, voted the 14th-best Album of the Year. More significantly, Jones was voted Male Vocalist of the Year, edging out last year's winner, Alan Jackson. Jackson had this year's fourth-ranked single, the jaunty "Where I Come From."

Haunted by mortality even more than Jones is Billy Joe Shaver, who has lost his mother, wife and son over the last

Bill Friskics-Warren's BEST SINGLES

1. Lee Ann Womack, "Does My Ring Burn Your Finger"
2. The Soggy Bottom Boys, "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow"
3. Lee Ann Womack, "Ashes By Now"
4. George Jones & Garth Brooks, "Beer Run"
5. Patty Loveless, "The Last Thing On My Mind"
6. Lolly Parton, "Shine"
7. Carolyn Dawn Johnson, "Complicated"
8. Trisha Yearwood, "I Would've Loved You Anyway"
9. Gene Watson, "Next To Nothin' "
10. Jimmy Cochran, "Angels In Waiting"

Bill Friskics-Warren is a Nashville-based freelancer whose writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *No Depression* and *The Journal Of Country Music*.



HOBSON/WALFRAM

CRITICS POLL

CRITICS POLL

Hazel Smith's
**BEST
CATEGORIES**

Male Vocalist:
Alan Jackson
Female Vocalist:
Trisha Yearwood
Group or Duo:
Dixie Chicks
Live Act:
Tim McGraw
Songwriter:
Jim Lauderdale
Overall Act: George Strait

Hazel Smith is Contributing
Editor of *Country Music*
magazine.



CONSIDERING WHAT BEFELL OUR NATION IN
SEPTEMBER, IT WOULDN'T BE SURPRISING IF
MORE ARTISTS TURN TO TRADITION AND
NARRATIVE FOR STRENGTH AND COMFORT.

Gary Graff's
**BEST
CATEGORIES**

Male Vocalist:
George Jones
Female Vocalist:
Patty Loveless
Group or Duo:
Buddy & Julie Miller
Live Act:
Brooks & Dunn
Songwriter:
Rodney Crowell
Overall Act:
Dolly Parton

Gary Graff is founding
editor of the
MusicHound Essential
Album Guide and writes
about music for *Reuters*,
The New York Times
Features Syndicate,
The Plain Dealer,
The Oakland Press and
other publications.



few years. Those deaths, both recent and then-impending, shaped the sessions for *The Earth Rolls On*, which came in eighth on the Album list. What comes through on his songs is an astonishing resilience, a determination to cling to life all the more fiercely in the face of death all around him.

David Ball, Chris Knight and Jim Lauderdale all proved in 2001 that there is life after major labels. Ball was dropped from Warner Bros. after one smash single and three albums, but he bounced back on tiny Dualtone Records with the year's No. 6 single, the touching story song "Riding With Private Malone."

And Knight, who was abandoned after one critically acclaimed album when Decca Records folded, has resurfaced with the hard-nosed *A Pretty Good Guy*, which came in ninth on the Album list. Lauderdale, the year's third-highest-ranking songwriter, was dropped by RCA and also wound up on Dualtone, where he released *The Other Sessions*, voted No. 23 on the Album list.

Of course, music doesn't just happen on recorded discs; some of the most exciting moments take place live on stages at state fairs, football stadiums, outdoor pavilions, smoky nightclubs, bluegrass festivals and dangerous dives.

The most successful tours of 2001 were led by Brooks & Dunn, Tim McGraw and George Strait. McGraw had an especially good year, releasing the best single of his career, "Angry All The Time," which came in at No. 8 on the Singles list. It was written by alt-country singer/songwriter Bruce Robison, whose brother Charlie released a breakthrough disc, *Step Right Up*, the No. 12 Album of the Year.

But for Live Act of the Year, the critics chose Robbie Fulks, that irreverent beanpole of the alt-country nightclub circuit. Fulks released two albums in 2001: the traditional-country *13 Hillbilly Giants* and the very untraditional country-punk project, *Couples In Trouble*.

Bluegrass, old-time music and progressive pop-country weren't the only older genres that musicians and critics turned to for inspiration. The Bakersfield sound



Geoffrey Himes' BEST ALBUMS

1. Alejandro Escovedo, *A Man Under The Influence* (Bloodshot)
2. Buddy & Julie Miller, *Buddy & Julie Miller* (Hightone)
3. Shaver, *The Earth Rolls On* (New West)
4. Dolly Parton, *Little Sparrow* (Sugar Hill)
5. Alison Krauss & Union Station, *New Favorite* (Rounder)
6. Trisha Yearwood, *Inside Out* (MCA)
7. Chris Knight, *A Pretty Good Guy* (Dualtone)
8. Rodney Crowell, *The Houston Kid* (Sugar Hill)
9. Gillian Welch, *Time (The Revelator)* (Aony)
10. Gary Allan, *Alright Guy* (MCA)

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

Michael McCall's BEST REISSUES

1. Bob Wills, *Boot Heel Drag: The MGM Years* (Mercury)
2. Ralph Stanley, *Man Of Constant Sorrow* (Rebel)
3. The Monroe Brothers, *Just A Song Of Old Kentucky* (Rounder)
4. Clarence "Tom" Ashley, *Greenback Dolla: The Music Of Clarence "Tom" Ashley 1929-1933* (County)
5. Connie Smith, *Born To Sing* (Bear Family)



Michael McCall is Associate Editor of *Country Music* magazine.

Bob Cannon's BEST SINGLES

1. David Ball, "Riding With Private Malone"
2. Martina McBride, "When God-Fearin' Women Get The Blues"
3. Alan Jackson, "When Somebody Loves You"
4. Dixie Chicks, "If I Fall You're Going Down With Me"
5. The Soggy Bottom Boys, "I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow"
6. Trick Pony, "Pour Me"
7. Mark McGuinn, "Mrs. Steven Rudy"
8. Carolyn Dawn Johnson, "Complicated"
9. Cyndi Thomson, "What I Really Meant To Say"
10. Pat Green, "Carry On"

Bob Cannon is a senior reporter for *Entertainment Weekly* who also writes for *Performing Songwriter*, *Country Weekly* and *The World Of Hibernia*.



THE CRITICS: Grant Alden, Peter Blackstock, John F. Butland, Bob Cannon, David Cantwell, Rick Cornell, Dan DeLuca, Kerry Dexter, Kerry Doole, Dan Durchholz, Dan Ferguson, A.J. Flick, Bill Friskics-Warren, Holly George-Warren, Gary Graff, Bob Gulla, Craig Havighurst, Geoffrey Himes, Marianne Horner, Jack Hurst, Larry Katz, Nick Krewen, John Lomax III, Michael McCall, Dave McGee, Don McLeese, Darryl Morden, Stuart Munro, Chris Neal, Bob Paxman, Rick Petreyck, Bobby Reed, David

Scarlett, Hazel Smith, David Sokol, Michael Streissguth, Jeremy Tepper, Jon Weisberger, Ellis Widener, Kent Wolgamott, Ron Wynn and Lisa Zhito. The voting critics represent a spectrum of publications, including *No Depression*, *The Oxford American*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Village Voice*, *Request*, *Pulse*, *Reuters*, *UPI*, *Revolver*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *The Boston Globe*, *Boston Herald*,

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, *The Plain Dealer*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *The Oakland Press*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Tucson Citizen*, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, *Lincoln Journal Star*, *Country Standard Time*, *Journal Of Traditional Country Music*, *Country Music Live*, *Country Weekly*, *Words & Music*, *Country Music Today*, *Bluegrass Unlimited*, *Bluegrass Now*, *Dirty Linen*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Stereophile*, *Performing Songwriter*, *CDNow*, *country.com* and *amazon.com*.

Jack Hurst's BEST ALBUMS

1. Various artists, *Soundtrack: O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Mercury)
2. Kate Campbell, *Wandering Strange* (Eminent)
3. Gary Allan, *Alright Guy* (MCA)
4. Patty Loveless, *Mountain Soul* (Epic)
5. Gail Davies & Friends, *Live & Unplugged At The Station Inn* (Valley)
6. Jamie O'Neal, *Shiver* (Mercury)
7. Carolyn Dawn Johnson, *Room With A View* (Arista)
8. Chris Knight, *A Pretty Good Guy* (Dualtone)
9. Cyndi Thomson, *My World* (Capitol)
10. Brooks & Dunn, *Steers & Stripes* (Arista)

Jack Hurst has written about country music for the *Chicago Tribune* since 1975.



Dan DeLuca's REISSUES

1. Various artists, *An Empty Glass: A Collection Of Drinkin' Songs* (Hightone)
2. Charlie Rich, *Behind Closed Doors* (Epic/Legacy)
3. Gram Parsons, *Sacred Hearts & Fallen Angels: The Gram Parsons Anthology* (Rhino)
4. Rodney Crowell, *Diamonds & Dirt* (Columbia/Legacy)
5. Johnny Bond, *Country & Western* (Bloodshot)

Dan DeLuca writes about music for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

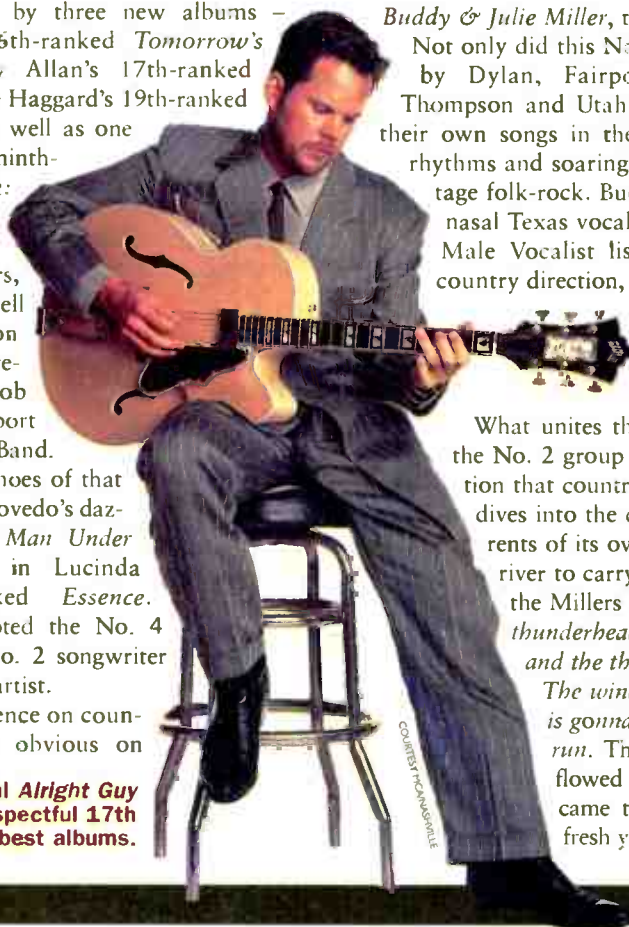


was well represented by three new albums – Dwight Yoakam's 16th-ranked *Tomorrow's Sounds Today*, Gary Allan's 17th-ranked *Alright Guy* and Merle Haggard's 19th-ranked *Roots, Volume 1* – as well as one reissue, Buck Owens' ninth-ranked *Young Buck: The Complete Pre-Capitol Recordings*.

To this writer's ears, however, the deepest well for musical inspiration in 2001 was the late-'60s folk-rock of Bob Dylan, the Byrds, Fairport Convention and The Band. You could hear the echoes of that music in Alejandro Escovedo's dazzling, 15th-ranked *A Man Under The Influence* and in Lucinda Williams' 10th-ranked *Essence*. Williams was also voted the No. 4 female vocalist, the No. 2 songwriter and the No. 3 overall artist.

The folk-rock influence on country music was most obvious on

Gary Allan's soulful *Alright Guy* came in at a respectful 17th among the year's best albums.



Buddy & Julie Miller, the No. 2 Album of the Year.

Not only did this Nashville couple remake songs by Dylan, Fairport Convention's Richard Thompson and Utah Phillips, but they wrapped their own songs in the jangly guitars, implacable rhythms and soaring anthemic harmonies of vintage folk-rock. Buddy's twangy guitar fills and nasal Texas vocals – he came in No. 3 on the Male Vocalist list – pulled the music in a country direction, while Julie's keening soprano and metaphoric writing – she was voted Songwriter of the Year – pulled it in a folk direction.

What unites the Millers – they were voted the No. 2 group as well – is a shared conviction that country music is at its best when it dives into the deepest, most dangerous currents of its own traditions and allows that river to carry it boldly into the future. As the Millers put it on one song, *When the thunderheads start beating like a drum / and the thunder cracks the sky in two / The wind is gonna blow and the rain is gonna come / and the river's gonna run*. This year, country music's river flowed at its best when its tributaries came together to present something fresh yet timeless. *

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by Linda Mason

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World Radio History

Helm continues to fuse country, rock and bluegrass with his new band, The Barn Burners.



Levon Helm puts The Band behind him to cook up some country blues

In upstate New York, Woodstock is still Music City. Oh, sure, Bob Dylan has moved away, nobody mentions that muddy festival anymore, and nowadays the town's best music is made in several high-tech recording studios.

by Bob Cannon

One of the coziest belongs to Levon Helm, drummer for The Band and singer of classics like "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" and "Up On Cripple Creek." Since the mid-'70s he's been making music at the converted barn he calls home.

"Welcome to the scene of the crime," says Helm chuckling, pushing open the door to the studio, which sits on his 18-acre spread. Throat cancer has reduced his once-hearty Arkansas twang to a hoarse whisper, but it hasn't dimmed his enthusiasm a lick.

With a huge grin, he proudly shows off his clubhouse, the four-story barn with stone walls on either end. "It's got a sound that can't be beat," boasts Helm, "'cause there's no flat surfaces."

BURNIN', AT THE BARN

Among the usual wires, sound baffles and instruments are personal touches like an assortment of flags (Old Glory, Confederate, Japan, Arkansas and "Don't Tread On Me") draped from a second-floor landing. But the eye drifts inexorably to a piece of history – a 10-by-15-foot painting of Big Pink, the legendary Woodstock house where Bob Dylan and The Band created some of their most unforgettable music.

"Looking back on it now, Bob was takin' us to school," says Helm, 61. "And I think that maybe we were doing something for him, too. But we were damn sure gettin' the best of the deal!"

"He was basically writing songs with us, and therefore showing us how. That whole *Basement Tapes* period accounted for about two and a half albums for us, and just about as much for Bob."

And what albums they were – Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline*, The Band's *Music From Big Pink* and their self-titled "brown album." The entire ensemble helped usher rock 'n' roll out of its giddy adolescence, get back to its American-country roots and establish itself as a mature and viable art form.

Highfalutin' talk, yes – but make no mistake, The Band *was* important.

So important that in January 1970 they made the cover of *Time* under the headline: THE NEW SOUND OF COUNTRY ROCK.

"'Country rock' was the name that finally stuck," says Helm. "We hated

country, blues, R&B and gospel, with lyrics that sounded like instant American folklore.

According to Helm, a deep knowledge of country music was at the core of their sound. Helm caught the bug



The Band, with Levon second from left, took rock back to its American roots.

it." Their anger was justified, because The Band was much more. Songs like "The Weight," "Across The Great Divide," "King Harvest (Has Surely Come)" and "This Wheel's On Fire" combined the essential elements of

from his family in Turkey Scratch, Ark., about 70 miles from Memphis.

"We had a couple of instruments in the home," he recalls. "Music got hold of me early, so I didn't want to do anything else." Then, with a

LEVON HELM

chuckle, he adds, "Musicians look kinda funny trying to do other jobs, y'know?"

But they look perfectly natural making music. "Back in those days, when you were a school kid, one of the things you'd want to learn was to ham bone," he says, slapping his legs in rhythm to demonstrate. "That was the entertainment! On those bus trips to and from school, you had to amuse yourself somehow."

Helm's amusement turned to passion at age 6, when he saw Bill Monroe in person. "The first time I heard him was probably over the radio," he remembers, "and that high lonesome sound gave me shivers like it did everybody else. In person it was so strong, especially when you were actually under the same roof as The Blue Grass Boys. I'll never forget it."

Later, rock 'n' roll changed everything for young Levon. "In '55, the hottest acts around the Memphis area were Elvis, Carl Perkins and Harold Jenkins And The Rock Housers," he says. "Those three bands were hot!"

"Conway Twitty, who was still Harold Jenkins at the time, was the rockinest, rollinest music maker that ever came out of Arkansas," he enthuses. "He had the purest voice of any entertainer. You listen to his songs, the vocal quality alone, and the range - gosh! He never lost it, and it only got stronger. You could feel that back then."

Even at a young age, Helm was sensing the connection between country and rock. "Bluegrass to me is like rock 'n' roll," he points out. "They were taking those standard songs and rockin' the hell out of 'em. And that's where the feel of that music comes from. It's high lonesome, and it don't give a damn! It's wonderful stuff. There's no rules."

"When Monroe dives into a solo, he's rockin'. You can call it bluegrass, country, or whatever, but what Bill Monroe was doin' was rockin' it up. That's why bluegrass took off so big."

"When The Band got started, our way of rehearsing was to take 'In The Pines' or any standard and do



WALTER WESSMAN/GLOBE PHOTOS

Though he's been a major musical figure for more than 30 years, Helm regularly hits the small-club scene. "I feel blessed that I can still play music and it's still as much fun as ever," he says.

the harmonies religiously. At the end, we'd switch around and let somebody else sing it. Then you take their harmony and do it again. That was one of the ways we would practice getting our voices to blend." Two of those chestnuts, Lefty Frizzell's "Long Black Veil" and The Stanley Brothers' "If I Lose," can be heard on the recently reissued *Big Pink*.

"I had a Martin mandolin that I'd use to play along with those standard tunes. Then, when we wanted to do something with a little more rock to it, or a little more blues, we would use those same acoustic instruments. So, it didn't seem odd to me when we would try to play 'Rag Mama Rag.'"

Cradling the mandolin he used to record that Band standard, Helm turns the talk to his new band, The Barn Burners, a group of thirtysomething blues players that features his daughter Amy on vocals.

"Playing with this young blood, I

haven't had this much fun since I was a kid," he smiles.

The Barn Burners hold court every Wednesday at The Joyous Lake, Woodstock's only live-music club. "Just that much music-making has kept our little band together," he says, "because playing live is where it's at with this crowd. They love it, and that's what you've gotta do if you're gonna be a player. You gotta go play."

For the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Famer, club work is anything but a step down. "You can go crazy with that attitude," he insists. "Nobody wants to have no success, but too much success can be as bad as no success at all. You've seen people not handle it well. It drives people crazy, and I really feel blessed that I can still play music and it's still as much fun as it ever was."

In Helm's eyes the music industry has become too much industry and not enough music. "For me, there's not enough group sounds," he sighs. "It's more of a producer's game. It has a lot to do with *his* dreams and *his* knowledge. It just gets away from the music and what it's supposed to sound like. You don't get points for having a band. Bands come up with band sounds; individuals can't. I believe in music by committee and in making decisions by committee. You make fewer mistakes, you sound better and you feel better."

"Everything sounds like an overdub now," he complains. "It's hard not to rush when you're overdubbing. The music's already happened and you weren't a part of it when it happened, and you still ain't. So chances are it'll be right on top of the beat, and it won't be relaxed. It can't swing when it's like that."

Meanwhile, the other members of The Barn Burners have arrived, ready to cut their version of Lowell Fulson's "Black Nights." Helm strolls over to his drum kit and warms up, laying down the kind of beat that once made *Rolling Stone* describe him as "the only drummer that can make you cry."

Helm waves off any such praise. "What we're trying to do," he says plainly, "is learn to play music. The process is a long way from being over." ★

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Blond Ambition

Former child performer Jamie O'Neal finally found her stardom in Music City

From the moment she hits the stage, Jamie O'Neal is a whirling dervish of long blond tresses. She has not yet opened her mouth, and already the Australian-born performer is lost in a world of her own making. The smile never leaves her face.

When the ACM Top New Female Vocalist of 2000 finally frees the voice from her locomotive 5-foot-6-inch frame, it engulfs everything in its path. Hurricane Jamie has arrived, and for the next 45 minutes unleashes a tour-de-force performance.

O'Neal's gold-selling debut album, *Shiver*, served as an impressive calling card. But to fully experience Jamie O'Neal, to truly *get* what she's about, there is only one venue – the concert stage.

By Nick Krewen



JAMIE O'NEAL

"I don't think playing onstage should be that serious," O'Neal says as she cuddles Griffin, her prized Maltese, backstage after a recent show in Buffalo, N.Y. "I like it to be a fun thing. You should be having a good time with your audience, and be there to get loose."

For O'Neal, getting loose used to be a matter of self-defense.

"I shake my groove thing because singing in the pubs in Australia you had to dodge the beer bottles," she laughs, throwing her head back. "It's either shake it or get off the stage!"

Showmanship comes easy to the 33-year-old, a natural by-product of a stint in Las Vegas and a lifetime of entertaining tough crowds. As the Sydney-born daughter of Jimmy and Julie Murphy, a singing duo who regularly played clubs and casinos, O'Neal learned to engage audiences early in her life.

When little Jamie was 2 years old, the Murphys migrated from Sydney to Hawaii. Later, after the birth of Jamie's sister Samantha, the Murphy family toured America, performing a variety of pop, country and rock tunes opening for everyone from Dolly Parton and the Oak Ridge Boys to Bill Cosby and Frankie Valli.

It was on one of these excursions that Jimmy Murphy noticed his daughter's musical aptitude. "We'd be driving along, and I'd hear Jamie singing along with George Benson at the back of the car," he recalls. "She'd be singing all his jazz guitar licks. She had a pretty amazing ear."

When Jamie was 8, she and 6-year-old Samantha joined their parents onstage at the Golden Nugget Casino in Las Vegas, where the Murphys enjoyed a two-year residency.

"It was fun before I knew it was a gig," O'Neal recalls. "But Vegas was strange for Samantha and me. We were bored. We were only allowed to sing and then we had to leave out the back door."

Looking back, O'Neal realizes that the strange home life of an entertainment family gave the two young sisters an odd perspective. "My sister and I always wanted to be maids," she laughs. "They would make the hotel room look so nice and pretty. We would say, 'Can you teach us how to make the beds, because we're going to be maids when we grow up.' And they would laugh and look at us and go, 'Right!'"

Taking their leave of Las Vegas, the Murphys headed east, settling in Kentucky and then Nashville to pursue country music. They recorded three country albums to sell at shows and appeared on *Pop! Goes The Country*, a syndicated late-'70s TV program hosted by Ralph Emery.

"Brenda Lee had once seen us on the Ralph Emery show," O'Neal's father proudly recalls. "She said, 'Aren't you Jimmy Murphy? I was going to call you and tell you how good I thought Jamie was. I thought she was better than I was as a child.' You know, once those kids came out, they were showstoppers."

During the Nashville years, the family pushed for record deals for their talented daughters. When they weren't pounding on Music Row doors, they toured by motor home, stuffing a four-piece band, a tutor and a couple of dogs into the cramped quarters.

"We were sheltered," O'Neal admits. "We were all living out of a suitcase, but I loved living with a bunch of people around me. It definitely prepared me for the life of being on the bus."

Unfortunately, her parents' relationship suffered under the strain. Jimmy and Julie Murphy divorced when O'Neal turned 13. Years later, the singer remains philosophical.

"I think things happen for a reason," she explains. "At the time of the divorce it was really hard, because it broke up the act as well as the family. It was all we'd ever known – the four of us together. It was a very big, hard adjustment." Back then, O'Neal refused to lay blame, instead rallying to unify her family. "You know how everyone has a role in their family? Mine is kind of like the fixer-upper. I always feel that for me, things tend to roll off my back more than other people in the family, that get affected by things more deeply. I'm kind of like that clown that everyone relies on to lighten the mood." Her father agrees. "Jamie really tries to walk that middle path of nonjudgment," he says. "She doesn't want to take sides."



After globe-trotting with her musical family, Jamie decided to make a solo stand in Nashville. "I really felt I had to prove myself," she says.

GEORGE HOLZMER/CORBIS RECORDS

Her family remains close, with half-sisters Melissa and Minnie – both of them also singers – and half-brother James from her father's remarriage figuring prominently in O'Neal's life.

The divorce also provided a career impetus. "I ended up going places because my parents got divorced," says O'Neal. "My dad ended up in California so I moved there for a while. I hadn't seen my mom in Australia, so I went back and lived there for a while. I just went with the flow of what was happening in our family at the time."

After attending Beverly Hills High School, O'Neal wrote her first song, heeding the advice of record executive Bobby Colomby. "He said, 'It's so important to put your own stamp on things and

have your own sound,'" she recalls. "I told him I don't really play an instrument. And he said, 'It doesn't matter. Take it to somebody who does play and work on it that way.'"

Shortly thereafter she joined her mother in Melbourne, temporarily dating future Academy Award-winning actor Russell Crowe. Her mother convinced her daughter to adopt the stage name O'Neal to differentiate herself from the family band, and Jamie eventually hooked up with '80s pop sensation Kylie Minogue, touring the world as a backing vocalist.

The experience stoked O'Neal's ambition. "For [Minogue's] first two songs you couldn't even hear yourself sing because of the screaming," O'Neal recalls. "That's the thing about being onstage that's so addictive – that acceptance, that love that you feel coming back from the audience. For me, it's on such a small scale right now.

A young Jamie (left) hams it up in the family band with mom Julie, dad Jimmy and sister Samantha.



COURTESY JAMIE O'NEAL

But watching her, I thought, 'I want *that!*' "

Eventually, Nashville beckoned. One of O'Neal's demo tapes reached producer and record executive Harold Shedd, and he flew the singer from Melbourne to Music City in 1996.

"Nashville was the place I wanted to start my career, on my own," she says. "I think the most talented songwriters live there,

and I really felt I had to prove myself. I just really wanted to impress these people so they'd keep working with me."

“
**I shake
my
groove
thing
because
singing
in the
pubs in
Australia
you had
to dodge
the beer
bottles.**

”

Within two years, O'Neal had signed to EMI Music Publishing as a writer and performer. She wrote songs and sang demos, including Faith Hill's eventual blockbuster "This Kiss." She eventually began singing harmony on recording sessions, backing up Chely Wright and Ronnie Milsap.

Then came the big break: EMI arranged an audition with Keith Stegall, the vice president of Mercury Nashville, who was so impressed that he signed O'Neal after hearing her sing only two songs. The professional connections also led to a lifelong one: O'Neal married engineer Rodney Good, who worked with her on her *Shiver* album, on August 26, 2000.

Since then, O'Neal has ridden an emotional roller coaster. The highs of her recent success have been tempered by personal trials. She recently lost her aunt and grandfather to cancer; and she ruptured a disc in her back two weeks before the start of last summer's *Girls' Night Out Tour*, where she shared the bill with Reba McEntire, Martina McBride, Sara Evans and Carolyn Dawn Johnson.

But Jamie O'Neal is the last to complain. She's motoring, full speed ahead, fueled by the realization of her lifelong dream.

"Everything I worked hard for is coming true," she says. "It's been fantastic. I never expected the fans to be so great, like writing letters and getting so excited when they meet me. It still kind of shocks me."*

THERE'S A PLACE

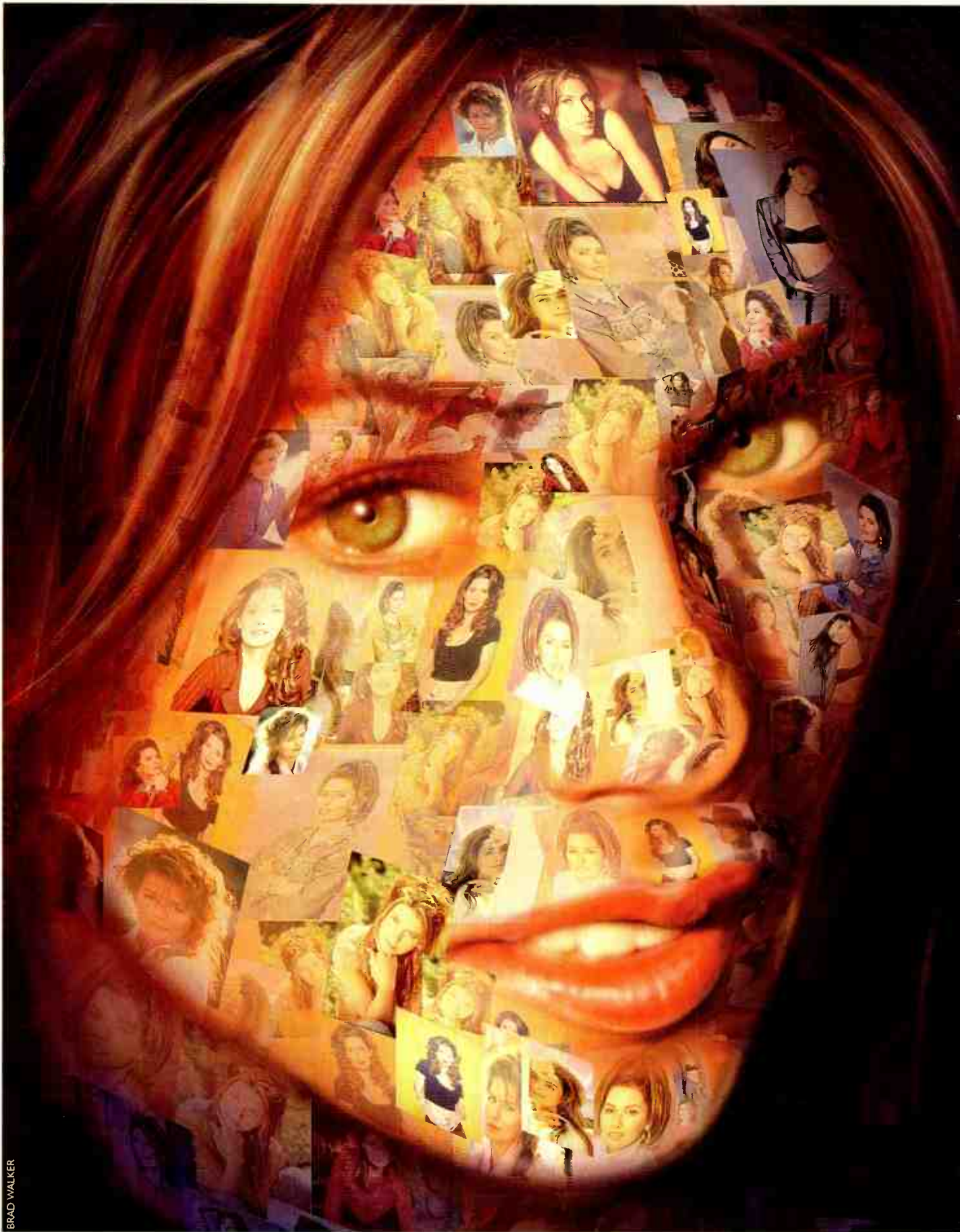
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BRAD WALKER

She's been away for three years now, blissfully hiding out with her husband, the supernaturally capable producer/songwriter Robert John "Mutt" Lange, in their 19th-century chateau in La Tour-de-Peilz Vaud, Switzerland. At one time they promised they'd release an album by ... well, by now. Then Shania got pregnant, and all plans were scrapped.

O SISTER, WHERE ART THOU?

We're sorry, Shania. Come back, we need you.

Well, the baby arrived last summer, yet still there's no word of new music. It can leave a Shania fan downright melancholy.

Of course, Shania knows melancholy. She and Lange pungently evoked that emotion on "Home Ain't Where His Heart Is (Anymore)," the opening tune on 1995's *The Woman In Me*, the record that started it all. Ah, the fluid, acoustic-toned, lovingly crafted sound of that song, in which a woman cries in her beer – except the tears are newly mascara-stained, and the beverage of choice is probably white wine.

A million country singers have sung a similar lyric, where a husband or wife longs for the one who has up and left. But Shania and Lange overhauled the honky-tonk weeper into something contemporary. She sounded wracked-up, but in a wholly modern way.

With that record, we made our initial Shania mistake: We underrated her and the sly way she performed that song. Shania stripped away the regional mannerisms and dialect that had made female country vocalists like Tammy Wynette so great. Shania didn't rely on such vocal quirks, just as she didn't don the floppy sun hats that Tammy used to wear.

After all, it was the '90s, not the '60s, and country music stars didn't look or sound like they once did. They sang differently, too – and Shania was the most

different of them all. Instead of vocal sobs and breaks, she presented streamlined phrases, finely oiled transitions and unapologetically poppish vocal maneuvers.

But where '90s female country stars like Trisha and Martina relied on pure power to light up their modern songs, Shania offered attitude, a vibe, a wink that could turn lightning-fast into a passionate embrace.

When Shania remembered kissing her bonehead boyfriend *from Arkansas to Rome*, good Lord, the vibe pulsed through her understated alto like nothing country music had ever heard.

And "Home Ain't Where His Heart Is (Anymore)" was just a sad ballad. When Shania and Lange decided to really mix things up on "(If You're Not In It For Love) I'm Outta Here!" people flipped. Shania and Lange moved contemporary country beyond lame pop retreats toward a new adventure completely of its own imagining.

In no time at all, Shania exploded into a modern country icon, Nashville's – and, significantly, VH1's – first down-home video babe. Shania's full-on embrace by Top 40 radio and VH1 spread her music throughout the pop world. She sold more than 30 million albums, appeared in cosmetic commercials and hosted her own network TV specials. Suddenly her music was everywhere – and everything.

Nashville tried desperately to Xerox her. You had strained approximations of the musical vibe, several hundred newly flaunted bellybuttons, and young women turning their attentions to contempo-sounding songs, or even just flat-out pop songs. But no would-be Shania inheritor ever actually got it right, not the way she and Lange did. That was because their objective was in fact the reverse: To copy no one. To be themselves.

That set up a tough gig: Who adapted her influence well? Well, Faith Hill and the Dixie Chicks, for two, neither of whose music sounds anything like Shania's. *Come On Over*, the couple's second record together and the last we've heard from them, illustrated this definitively; it's one of the deepest albums ever made in a pure-fun mode.

Come On Over encompassed it all: a break-out symphony of '60s-toned synth riffs in "Man! I Feel Like A Woman!" that's like a sonic declaration of independence; shockingly new hoedowns and fiddle extravaganzas like "I'm Holdin' On To Love (To Save My Life)" and "Love Gets Me Every Time"; a plain old great song, "You're Still The One," whose fragrant melodic allure proves exactly why people still crave plain old great songs; and the clever "That Don't Impress Me Much," so perfectly and naturally done that it's only after the ten-thousandth enjoyable radio listen that you realize the song updates country humility.

So Shania, as you're bouncing your baby in the Alps, don't forget about us, OK? You showed how a country singer can reinvent things from the ground up.

You said: Of course the old forms were sublime – so strong, in fact, that you can build on them, that country fans needn't be like classical music nuts, religiously dusting off the same old recordings of the same old Beethoven symphonies, dutifully trudging out to concerts that allow only imitations of same.

You said: Country can vibe all over the world. And you were dead right. The Switzerland thing, we understand; it's cool. And the baby thing – it's what life is all about. But come (back) on over, at least eventually. Vibe for us some more.

— James Hunter



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THE **Journal**

OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC

A black and white portrait of Keith Whitley, a man with curly hair and a beard, wearing a dark leather jacket. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and textured.

Keith Whitley

Reflections on a life that ended too soon

THE OSBORNE BROTHERS
Bluegrass Innovators

Whatever happened to the
HEE HAW CORNFIELD?

Editor: Robert K. Oermann

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Test your knowledge of a legendary country performer.
- J3 Country's Hall Of Fame**
Nothing symbolizes the simple humor of *Hee Haw* better than its cornfield, where everyone from Dolly Parton to Sammy Davis Jr. donned overalls, sprang up amid the stalks and shouted simple, down-home jokes. Here's the story behind the cornfield's rise to iconic fame.
- J4 Cover Story: Keith Whitley**
Keith Whitley had the talent and commitment to become a modern-day savior of traditional country music. Then he lost a battle with an old demon.
- J8 The Osborne Brothers**
Bobby and Sonny Osborne can rightly claim to belong among bluegrass music's most important and most enduring pioneers. But that doesn't mean they've always toed a traditional line.
- J11 This Date In Country Music**
Anniversaries, birthdays and other musical milestones.
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Freddie Hart was 44 years old when he wrote "Easy Loving," and it went on to salvage his career and become his signature hit. However, Hart's concern over a crucial, controversial word almost caused him to change the chorus of his 1971 smash.
- J14 Disc-overies**
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- J16 Collections**
An essential marketplace for buyers, sellers and traders, as well as a forum for readers to share their views.

CLARIFICATION: Research from Faron Young biographer Diane J. Dickman was used in our October/November 2000 Journal feature on the late "Singing Sheriff," but appropriate credit was inadvertently omitted. In the December/January 2002 Journal, credits were inadvertently omitted from the cover story on Hank Williams: *Snapshots From The Lost Highway*. Photos and song lyrics were used with permissions from Hank Williams Jr., Marty Stuart and Acuff-Rose Music.

We are happy to set the record straight.

— The Editor

WHO AM I?

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

CLUE #1 I made a living making folks laugh, but I also graduated from a fine finishing college in Nashville.

CLUE #2 My first professional stage experience was with the Wayne P. Sewell theatrical company in 1934.

CLUE #3 I co-starred with Elvis Presley at the concert to raise money for the National Park Service's USS Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

CLUE #4 My house was next door to the Tennessee Governor's Mansion.

CLUE #5 I invented "Uncle Nabob," "Brother" and "Hezzie" in my comedy routines after joining the cast of the Grand Ole Opry in 1940.

CLUE #6 My hometown is Centerville, Tenn., but my comedy characters hailed from Grinder's Switch.

CLUE #7 There's a cancer center named after me in Nashville.

CLUE #8 My real name is Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon.

CLUE #9 My flowered straw hat has a price tag of \$1.98.

CLUE #10 How-DEEEE!



★ Answers on page J16



PRECIOUS MEMORIES

FROM THE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

CORN OF PLENTY

Hee Haw cultivated its special brand of humor in a famed fabricated cornfield



Buck Owens and John Anderson were only two of the hundreds who "popped up" in the *Hee Haw* cornfield.

Hee Haw certainly depended on corn. A big part of the long-running series' appeal came from its unabashed celebration of simple, silly country humor. So why not include a literal cornfield as one of its props?

In 1969, *Hee Haw*'s production crew designed the famous set by creating a backdrop of a rural scene with fields, trees and farm equipment. Painting the backdrop at an angle created a sense of distance, while synthetic cornstalks, made from wooden dowels and green-painted burlap leaves, were placed in front to heighten the illusion.

Cast members and celebrity guests would kneel behind the stalks in the show's Nashville studio set until cued to stand and exchange some of the corniest jokes ever heard on television. The set became such a pop-culture icon that the producer, Sam Lovullo, titled his 1996 memoir *Life In The Kornfield: My 25 Years At Hee Haw*.

"Taping ... was a difficult, often chaotic process," Lovullo wrote in his book. "Bear in mind we didn't have the advantage of computerized technology. In those

days, everything was still done by hand."

In 1992, in an effort to update the show, the cornfield set was scrapped. The new sets looked more like a city street and a shopping mall. Many of the longtime regulars were replaced by a crew of young unknowns. Loyal viewers were outraged, and ratings plummeted. That summer, *Hee Haw* went out of production.

The following season, Roy Clark hosted *Hee Haw Silver*, a series of selected reruns of earlier shows that saluted the program's astounding quarter-century on the air.

In May 2001, the *Hee Haw* cornfield was placed on exhibit at the new Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in downtown Nashville. It is part of an exhibit that tells the history of country on TV.

For information or to contribute to the Hall of Fame, please contact the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, 222 Fifth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203; phone (615) 416-2001; or visit www.countrymusichalloffame.com.

No Stranger To The Rain

Keith Whitley's promising rise – and tragic fall

Handsome and charismatic on the outside, Whitley harbored a dark secret within.



It was a spring morning in May when the phone rang. On the other end of the line was Brenna Davenport-Leigh, a normally cheery publicist at RCA Records. Her voice was as still as a tomb.

by Robert K. Oermann



At the peak of his career in the late 1980s, Whitley hit No. 1 three straight times and his *Don't Close Your Eyes* album went gold.

"Keith's dead," she told me. My heart felt like a rock in my chest. Only eight years had passed since I'd first been thunderstruck by the voice of Keith Whitley, then the lead singer in J.D. Crowe's band.

We became friends after I was assigned to write liner notes for one of the group's albums. We had dinners together. I got to know his family. I saw him through a divorce, danced at his wedding and celebrated the birth of his son.

He had every reason in the world to live. Gifted, popular, handsome and jovial. Whitley had the world on a string.

But inside he harbored a dark demon.

When he first told me about his battle with alcoholism, I wrote a story and gave it this headline: **STARDOM SAVES KEITH WHITLEY FROM THE WILD SIDE OF LIFE.**

"I have no doubts in my mind that I would not be sittin' here today had it not been for 'Miami, My Amy' – that song saved

my life," he said in his soft Kentucky drawl.

Eight more hits followed, including three consecutive No. 1 smashes: "Don't Close Your Eyes" (*Billboard's* top country single of 1988), "When You Say Nothing At All" (his all-time biggest hit) and "I'm No Stranger To The Rain" (the CMA's Single of the Year in 1989).

But none of the hits saved him. His affliction killed him, instead.

"Every time I'd get close to something happening, I'd get drunk," he confessed. "I wanted a career worse than anything in the world. But I was scared to have it. I was really all twisted around.

"I'd heard from the time I was a little kid what a great singer I was. But I don't think I ever believed any of it. And everything that happened just caused me to lose confidence in myself."

As well as I knew him, I'd never seen him drink more than a beer or two. I'd certainly never seen him drunk.

"Actually, very few people knew that I had a drinking problem because I didn't drink when I worked," he

I have no doubts in my mind that I would not be sittin' here today had it not been for 'Miami, My Amy' – that song saved my life.

replied. I did my damage when I was off somewhere by myself."

Whitley was not a social drinker. He just drank. He drank alone, and in intense, ferocious binges.

The singer was born in Sandy Hook, Ky., on July 1, 1955. He grew up surrounded by mountain music and moonshine. As a toddler, he performed in local talent shows singing George Jones' gospel tune "I'm A Wandering Soul" and Marty Robbins' western saga "Big Iron." By age 6, he could accompany himself on guitar. By 8, he was performing on the radio in Charleston, W.Va.

"My older brother, Dwight, played five-string banjo, so I started playing with him and learning bluegrass songs when I was 12 or 13," he recalled.

When Keith and Dwight performed at a Kentucky fiddle contest in 1969, one of the other contestants was Ricky Skaggs. Like Whitley, Skaggs was 14 and a Stanley Brothers fanatic. The two bonded at once.

"The next week, I went up to Ricky's house and we started singing all the old Stanley Brothers songs together," Whitley said. "One night in a club in West Virginia we were onstage singing them, and Ralph Stanley was sitting at a front table watching us."

Whitley made happy headlines with his 1986 marriage to Lorrie Morgan. Three years later, his death was somber front-page news.



KEITH WHITLEY

Within a month, the two teens joined Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys, touring the bluegrass circuit from 1970 through 1972. Skaggs had the high,



As a teenager, Whitley (left) joined Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys along with another future phenom, Ricky Skaggs.

keeping a lonesome tenor voice. Whitley had the mournful, moaning, bent-note barroom style that has characterized such immortals as George Jones, Hank Williams and his idol, Lefty Frizzell. He imitated them in other ways, too – all of those honky-tonk heroes also battled substance abuse.

Even at age 15, Whitley alternated music making with alcohol binges. These bouts resulted in two Kentucky car crashes that nearly killed him.

Between January 1971 and September 1972, Skaggs and Whitley recorded eight albums with Stanley, as well as the 1971 duet album *Second Generation Bluegrass*. After Skaggs left the band, Whitley recorded five more LPs with the bluegrass legend, exiting the group in 1978.

"He was the most talented singer I ever worked with," says Ralph Stanley. "I was always proud that I had a little part in helping him get started."

But Whitley's true love was honky-tonk music, not bluegrass. He fused his hard country singing with bluegrass instrumentation in J.D. Crowe's band, The New South, from 1978 to 1982. The three albums he recorded with Crowe – *My Home Ain't In The Hall Of Fame*, *Live In Japan* and *Somewhere Between* – found Whitley coming into his own as a stylist.

"I thought so much of him," comments Crowe. "I loved him like a

father. Keith Whitley was the total package as a singer, an entertainer. In my estimation, he hadn't even started to reach his peak."

Crowe knew that Whitley's sudden binges were a problem. Nevertheless, Rounder Records, Crowe's label, funded a solo album for Whitley in 1982. Though the album was never released, he recorded a number of songs that became hits for other stars, including George Strait's "Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind," and Gene Watson's "Honky Tonk Crazy." Those tracks remained "in the can" until unearthed in 2000 for Rounder's posthumous *Sad Songs And Waltzes* collection.

In 1983 Whitley moved to Nashville, where producer Norro Wilson guided him to RCA Records. But the singer was dogged by bad luck during his early days at the label. Once again, songs he recorded went on to become hits for others. Randy Travis took "On The Other Hand" to the top of the charts, and George Strait scored a No. 1 with "Nobody In His Right Mind Would've Left Her."

Whitley's star finally began to rise with the 1985 hit "Miami, My Amy." He followed it with the successful

singles "Ten Feet Away," "Hard Livin'" and "Homecoming '63." The last song featured Lorrie Morgan in its video. They married on November 22, 1986, and became the parents of son Jesse on June 15, 1987.

"Lorrie came along, which is the best thing personally that's ever happened to me," he said. "I straightened up my life."

At least for a while. Whitley's sobriety straightened up his music, too. He gained immense new power as an artist when producer Garth Fundis realized that his finest vocals were done "live" with the musicians in the studio. The result was three consecutive No. 1 hits and the gold album *Don't Close Your Eyes*.

"He was just incredible," says Fundis. "He could do things with his voice that nobody else could do. It was thrilling."

Ten months later, Whitley was dead.

In roughly two hours on the morning of May 9, 1989, he drank enough to cause his lungs to stop breathing and his heart to stop beating. He was home when he died, alone.

Nonetheless, the hits kept coming: "I Wonder Do You Think Of Me," "It Ain't Nothin'," "I'm Over You," "Somebody's Doin' Me Right," the Earl Thomas Conley duet "Brotherly



Behind the board at a session for his *L.A. To Miami* album, with Emmylou Harris, Vern Gosdin and producer Blake Mevis

Pictured here in an RCA promotional photograph, Whitley had evolved from bluegrass prodigy to a talented country singer with superstar potential.



Love" and the Lorrie Morgan duet "Til A Tear Becomes A Rose" all became popular after his death. Two posthumous albums were assembled, *I Wonder Do You Think Of Me* and *Kentucky Bluebird*.

As a songwriter, he continued to have an impact as well. Whitley's "Hopelessly Yours" became a hit duet for Lee Greenwood and Suzy Bogguss in 1991. George Jones and John Conlee also recorded it. Trisha Yearwood and Hot Rize have both recorded his "You Don't Need To Move That Mountain." Kenny Chesney revived his "I Want My Rib Back." And Whitley's Christmas tune "There's A New Kid In Town" has been recorded by Kathy Mattea, the Oak Ridge Boys,

George Strait and Trisha Yearwood. Alan Jackson took the song a step further when he sang with Whitley's old vocal track of the tune for a posthumous duet.

Many young country singers later acknowledged his influence, including Tracy Lawrence, Garth Brooks, Mark Chesnutt and many lesser lights. Ken Mellons saluted him in "Honky Tonk Teachers." Lorrie Morgan honored his memory with "If You Came Back From Heaven." Daron Norwood wrote "Little Boy Lost" about him.

Tim McGraw says he owes it all to Whitley: "I remember hearing 'Miami, My Amy' when I was a junior in high school. I thought, 'Man, this is the way it is supposed to be

done. That is what I want to sing.' I don't think it gets any better than Keith Whitley. I had all his records, just loved his voice. He was a big, big influence. I moved to town the day Keith died."

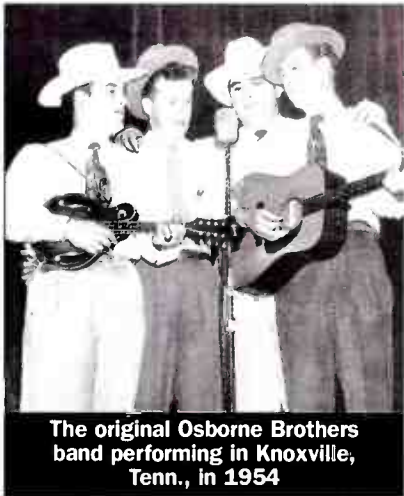
Many in the community felt strongly about him. Five years after his death, *Keith Whitley: A Tribute Album* appeared. It contained the Alison Krauss remake of "When You Say Nothing At All," the all-star salute "A Voice Still Rings True" and four previously unissued Whitley performances.

"Since I was a little kid, all I ever wanted to be was a country singer," Keith Whitley once said. "I have never done anything in my life but sing."

That was enough. ✱

BLAZING THROUGH THE GRASS

The Osborne Brothers ignore purists while expanding their musical horizons



The original Osborne Brothers band performing in Knoxville, Tenn., in 1954

Bluegrass has suddenly become important to the country music industry. The signs are everywhere: There's the explosive sales success of the multimillion-selling soundtrack of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; the surge in popularity of such bedrock bluegrass artists as Alison Krauss, Ricky Skaggs, Ralph Stanley and Rhonda Vincent; the back-to-the-roots sounds of recent collections by Patty Loveless, Dolly Parton and others; and even the comeback of the banjo, which can be heard on today's country radio hits.

By Jon Weisberger

But this isn't the first time bluegrass artists have found themselves in the country mainstream. When it comes to navigating the terrain where bluegrass and country meet, no one has been more enduringly successful than The Osborne Brothers.

Controversial from the start for their hybrid style, Bobby and Sonny Osborne nonetheless have remained among bluegrass music's most popular and influential musicians since beginning their professional partnership in 1953.

Both were born in Hyden, Ky. — Bobby in 1931, Sonny six years later. In 1937, their family moved to Dayton, Ohio, joining a flood of migrating Kentuckians who came to

the Miami River valley during World War II seeking employment. The young Osbornes initially found inspiration within the community's lively music scene and became determined to forge musical careers.

As the older of the two, Bobby was the first to work as a musician, gaining performing and recording experience as a mandolinist and guitarist in the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers and in the band of bluegrass titan Jimmy Martin. He briefly left music to join the Marines in 1951, eventually experiencing combat in Korea.

Meanwhile back home, 14-year-old Sonny got his start from Bobby's former boss, Jimmy Martin, in spec-

tacular fashion: Thanks to Martin's recommendation, Sonny landed a summer job playing banjo with Bill Monroe in 1952. "It was a scary, frightening thing," Sonny remembers.

By the following winter, the younger Osborne was crafting his own recordings, selling more than 60,000 copies of his "Sunny Mountain Chimes" instrumental, a song that introduced a novel harmonics technique to the banjo that created a ringing, or "chiming," effect on the strings.

Bobby left the Marines in 1953, and the brothers then became a musical team. After reuniting briefly with Martin in 1954, they found greater success two years later after joining

Through the years, Bobby and Sonny – pictured in 1973 and (inset) 1984 – blazed bluegrass trails with their broad choices of instrumentation and innovative harmonies.



forces with Red Allen, a powerful singer from Dayton. With Allen on board, The Osborne Brothers recorded a demo version of “Ruby, Are You Mad?,” a song Bobby had learned as a youngster. It earned them a contract with MGM Records.

The Osbornes re-recorded “Ruby” in Nashville for MGM, with Bobby’s high, biting tenor soaring over innovative twin banjos played by the brothers. The 1956 release quickly became one of The Osborne Brothers’ signature

numbers and gained them membership in Wheeling, W.Va.’s famed WWVA Jamboree. When Allen departed the group in 1958, the Osbornes remained with the Jamboree as stars of the live radio show.

With a full-time career finally in place, the brothers continued to refine their distinctive sound. Bobby’s fluid, syncopated mandolin solos were matched by Sonny’s ever-growing collection of unique banjo licks.

The Osborne Brothers also broke new

ground when they began to fill their recordings with judicious use of drums and pedal steel. Most important, they developed a new style of vocal harmonies that offered the perfect showcase for Bobby’s powerful vocals.

The high-lead trio sound they originated was a dramatic innovation – one that has had an immense impact in bluegrass and country music. Conventional vocal trios put a tenor harmony voice above the lead singer and a baritone below it. With the high-

Osborne Brothers

lead arrangement, the tenor dropped down an octave, so that both harmony parts were below the lead. The technique gave the Osbornes an instantly identifiable sound, and it also gave female country singers the idea that male voices – lower than their own – could be used to support their higher leads.

“Once More,” the first single by the brothers to feature the high-lead trio, was a hit, reaching No. 13 on the country charts in 1958.

Shortly afterward, the duo benefited from a growing interest in bluegrass among folk revivalists. Their appearance at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, on March 5, 1960, is cited as the first time a bluegrass group performed at a university. It was a breakthrough, for college campuses proved to be an important new venue for bluegrass musicians in the early '60s.

Still, The Osborne Brothers believed the mainstream country audience offered a more stable, reliable base for a career. In the summer of 1963, Sonny called Doyle Wilburn of The Wilburn Brothers for advice. “I told him we were ready to do almost anything, or quit,” he remembers.

Wilburn immediately started making things happen. The brothers signed with his booking, management and publishing companies and helped them score a contract with Decca Records in 1963. The following year, The Osborne Brothers became members of the Grand Ole Opry.

With their career revitalized, the brothers entered a period of sustained success and creativity. They recorded more than 150 songs with Decca, most of which still sound fresh and powerful today.

Their true forte was a modernized version of bluegrass that could compete with country’s electrified honky-tonk on the radio and on country concert tours. Purists may have been angered when Bobby and Sonny amplified

their instruments and presented a juiced-up sound on their recordings, such as 1968’s “Rocky Top.” But country audiences were enthralled. Their popularity within the industry was cemented when The Osborne Brothers won the CMA’s 1971 Vocal Group of the Year award.

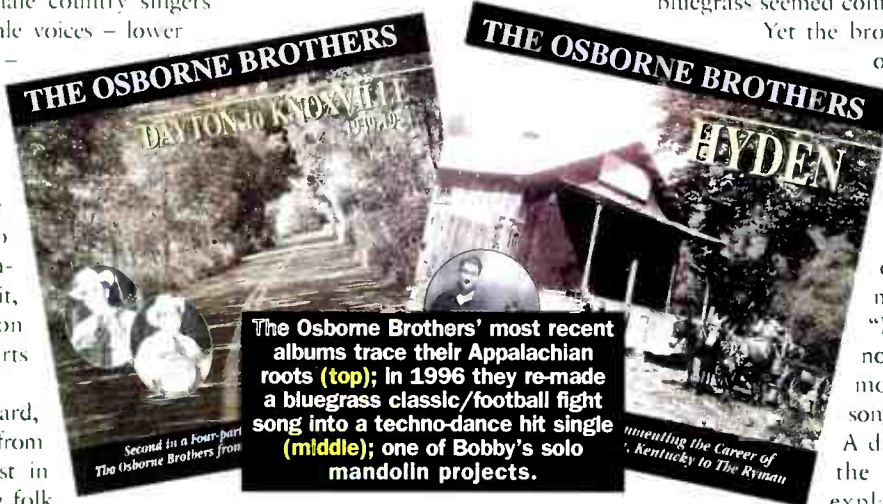
opposite direction – Bobby and Sonny abandoned electric instruments and orchestral arrangements, renewing their dedication to traditional bluegrass. By the 1990s, when inducted into the International Bluegrass Music Association’s Hall of Honor, their transformation into traditional bluegrass seemed complete.

Yet the brothers were still open to innovation. Young producer Scott Rouse approached them in 1995 with the idea of creating a new version of “Rocky Top,” by now one of the most recognized songs in the nation. A disco version of the song, Rouse explained, would

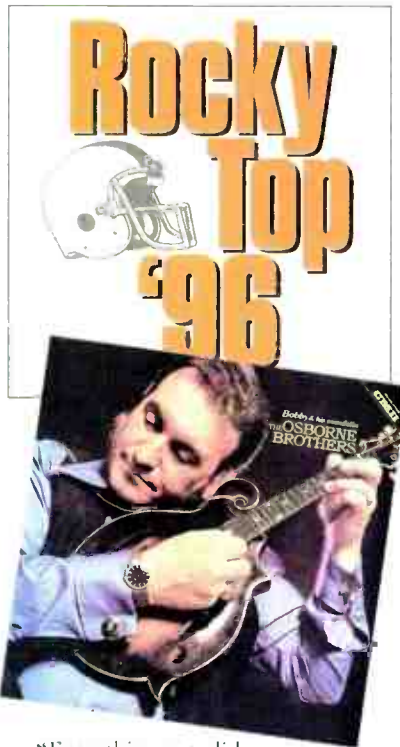
appeal to young audiences in urban dance clubs. The Osbornes cheerfully agreed, and the resulting “Rocky Top ‘96” CD single, including their original recording, began a long tenure on *Billboard*’s country singles sales chart. Because “Rocky Top” serves as the fight song for the University of Tennessee, sales of The Osborne Brothers’ energized version spikes upward each fall during football season.

In 1998, the brothers began work on a series of CDs that may well close their recording career. *From Hyden To The Ryman* is a four-part retrospective of their nearly 50-year career. Two volumes (*Hyden* and *Dayton To Knoxville*) are already out. They combine songs Bobby and Sonny recall from their early years with a few new ones from favorite songwriters. In addition, these discs feature historical rarities, including home recordings of their father and unreleased demos made with Jimmy Martin in the early 1950s. Later volumes will carry the story into the 1960s and beyond.

If bluegrass is once again finding success in the commercial country mainstream, it is in no small part because Bobby and Sonny Osborne worked so hard to keep a place for it there. ✱



The Osborne Brothers' most recent albums trace their Appalachian roots (top); in 1996 they re-made a bluegrass classic/football fight song into a techno-dance hit single (middle); one of Bobby's solo mandolin projects.



“Everything we did sold about 40,000 copies,” Sonny notes, which was a significant sum in those days. But when they couldn’t come to terms with MCA during negotiations, they left.

The duo’s departure from a major label coincided with broader changes in the country industry. As country music gained more pop influence, The Osborne Brothers moved in the

THIS DATE IN COUNTRY MUSIC

FEBRUARY

February 1

1937 Don Everly born
1939 Del McCoury born
1968 Lisa Marie Presley born to Elvis and Priscilla

February 2

1900 Emmett Miller, originator of "Lovesick Blues," born
1938 Rusty Kershaw born
1946 Howard Bellamy born

1957 Sonny James' teen classic "Young Love" becomes a No. 1 country hit

February 3

1958 Johnny Cash's "Ballad Of A Teenage Queen" hits No. 1



Buddy Holly

1959 Buddy Holly, The Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens die in a plane crash in Iowa

1964 Matraca Berg born
1971 Lynn Anderson's "Rose Garden" earns a gold record

February 4

1940 Jimmie Davis records "You Are My Sunshine"

1962 Clint Black born
1964 Tim Ryan born
1989 Jethro Burns of Homer & Jethro dies

February 5

1923 Claude King born
1941 Henson Cargill born
1963 Patsy Cline records "Sweet Dreams," exactly one month before her death

1971 Sara Evans born
1994 John Michael Montgomery's "I Swear" hits No. 1

February 6

1967 Anita Cochran born

1971 Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn's first duet, "After The Fire Is Gone," hits the charts

1971 Dolly Parton's "Joshua" becomes her first No. 1 hit

1976 Ronnie Milsap joins *Opry* cast

1980 George Jones records "He Stopped Loving Her Today"

February 7

1898 Dock Boggs born
1921 Wilma Lee Cooper born

1934 Donna Stoneman born

1962 Garth Brooks born

1981 John Conlee joins *Opry*

February 8

1948 Dan Seals born
1949 Merle Watson born
1960 Jim Reeves' "He'll Have To Go" hits No. 1

February 9

1914 Ernest Tubbs born
1947 Joe Ely born

1963 Travis Tritt born

1981 Bill Haley dies

February 10

1960 Lionel Cartwright born

1987 Randy Travis' *Storms Of Life* goes platinum

February 11

1918 Wesley Rose born
1935 Gene Vincent born

1967 Loretta Lynn's "Don't Come Home A Drinkin'" rises to No. 1

1986 Hall of Famer Art Satherley dies

February 12

1911 RCA's Steve Sholes born

1930 Red Allen born

1944 Moe Bandy born



Tennessee Ernie Ford

February 13

1919 Tennessee Ernie Ford born

1920 Boudleaux Bryant born

1927 Jim McReynolds of Jim & Jesse born

1971 Sammi Smith's version of "Help Me

Make It Through The Night" hits No. 1

February 14

1939 Razyzy Bailey born

1987 Teen banjo sensation Wendy Holcombe dies

1999 Rockabilly star Buddy Knox dies

February 15

1918 Hank Locklin born

1975 Jessi Colter's "I'm Not Lisa" debuts on the charts

1979 Dolly Parton wins her first Grammy for "Here You Come Again"



Dolly Parton

February 16

1914 Singing cowboy Jimmy Wakely born

1960 Doug Phelps of the Kentucky Headhunters born

1969 Tammy Wynette officially weds George Jones (They announced their marriage six months earlier, but didn't make it legal until this date.)

February 17

1931 *Opry* pioneer Uncle Jimmy Thompson dies

1936 Monroe Brothers' first recording session

1958 Don Gibson's "I Can't Stop Loving You" / "Oh Lonesome Me" hits the charts

1965 "The Tennessee Waltz" becomes Tennessee's state song

1969 Jon Randall born

1974 Bryan White born

1990 Eddie Rabbitt's "On Second Thought" becomes his 17th and final No. 1 hit

February 18

1914 Pee Wee King born

1952 Juice Newton born

1978 Hattie Louise

"Tootsie" Bess dies

February 19

1878 Thomas Edison patents the phonograph

1938 Roy Acuff joins the *Opry* cast

1957 Lorianne Crook born

1977 Emmylou Harris wins her first Grammy

1998 Grandpa Jones dies

February 20

1951 Kathy Baillie of Baillie & The Boys born



Elvis Presley

1955 Elvis joins a "WSM Grand Ole Opry" road show

1965 Buck Owens' "I've Got A Tiger By The Tail" hits No. 1

February 21

1927 Don Reno born

1953 Hank Williams' "Kaw-Liga" hits No. 1 and becomes the biggest country hit of the year

1958 Mary Chapin Carpenter born

1976 Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson's "Good Hearted Woman" reaches No. 1

1990 Lyle Lovett and K.D. Lang win country Grammys

February 22

1920 Del Wood born

1989 Bill Monroe wins the first bluegrass Grammy Award

February 23

1952 Pianist Del Wood debuts on the *Opry*

1957 Porter Wagoner joins the *Opry*

1983 "Always On My Mind" wins Song of the Year at the Grammys

1991 Former NFL star Mike Reid's solo debut single, "Walk On Faith," hits No. 1

2000 Vince Gill wins his 14th Grammy, tying him with Chet Atkins for the most won by a Nashville artist

February 24

1958 Sammy Kershaw born

1982 Dolly Parton wins two Grammys for "9 To 5"

1991 Webb Pierce dies

1994 Dinah Shore dies

February 25

1927 Ralph Stanley born

1932 Faron Young born

1956 Elvis Presley scores his first No. 1

country hit, "I Forgot to Remember to Forget"

1986 Rosanne Cash wins a Grammy for "I Don't Know Why You Don't Want Me," a song inspired by losing a previous Grammy

1998 Johnny Cash wins a Grammy for *Unchained*, an album ignored by country radio

February 26

1898 Fiddlin' Sid Harkreader born

1932 Johnny Cash born

1955 Webb Pierce's "In the Jailhouse Now" hits No. 1 and stays for 21 weeks, the biggest smash of the year and of Pierce's career

1955 The Louvin Brothers join the *Opry*

1997 LeAnn Rimes wins the Best New Artist Grammy

February 27

1936 Chuck Glaser of The Glaser Brothers born

February 28

1911 Hall of Famer Jim Denny born

1923 Audrey Williams born

1942 Joe South born

1976 Willie Nelson wins his first Grammy for "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain"

February 29

1986 Two years after a nearly crippling auto accident, Barbara Mandrell returns to the stage, performing at the Universal Amphitheatre in L.A.

1996 Shania Twain's blockbuster CD *The Woman In Me* wins a Grammy

1998 Glen Campbell and Bobbie Gentry rule the Grammy Awards, the former with "By The Time I Get To Phoenix" (two Grammys) and "Gentle On My Mind" (two Grammys) and the latter with "Ode To Billie Joe" (three Grammys)



Willie Nelson

Television host Ralph Emery once described Freddie Hart's "Easy Loving" as the first contemporary country song. It wasn't because Hart's song sounded so much more pop-influenced than traditional country songs; it was because Hart included the word "sexy" in the lyrics of an intimate love song.

"I wanted to write something every man would like to say and every woman would like to hear," Hart explains. "I wanted to put the 'sex' in it. But I got scared after a while, and I was going to take it out."

He came to be glad he didn't. Already a veteran at age 44 when he recorded the tune, "Easy Loving" became his signature song and by far the biggest hit in his career.

Hart wrote it after coming up with the idea of holding a long "Eeee ..." in a falsetto voice, then breaking his normal vocal tone to complete the word "easy." Originally, he penned the song around the line *easy broken teenage heart*. But Hart didn't like the sound of it, so he kept working until he came up with the phrase, *easy loving, so sexy looking*, which opens the song.

Hart wasn't trying to break new ground or stir up controversy. He was simply interested in keeping his career going. At that point, his career was already longer than most. Born Frederick Segrest in Lochapoka, Ala., he began performing in 1942 while serving with the Marines during World War II. He originally signed with Capitol in 1953, and was a regular on the Los Angeles-based country program *Town Hall Party*. Later he recorded for the Columbia and Kapp labels before re-joining with Capitol in 1970. But he never landed a Top 10 hit, and after a short, lackluster run at Capitol, the label dropped him.

At the time Hart left Capitol, "Easy Loving" had not been released. In an attempt to recoup some of its lost investment, Capitol put the song out in July 1971, but didn't plan to spend much money promoting it.

"Easy Loving"



Hart (here with his first name misspelled on his guitar strap) put sexy soul into his 1971 signature song.

Written by Freddie Hart



Accepting a 1972 BMI songwriting award for "Easy Loving" from publishing exec Frances Preston.

Nevertheless it caught on, likely because of its distinctive features. Most striking among them is Hart's falsetto opening note. "I wanted the falsetto to be real," Hart recalls.

"Easy Loving" shot to the top of the charts and stayed there for three weeks. Capitol Records quickly got Freddie Hart back on its roster.

"Easy Loving" won the CMA's Song of the Year award in 1971, then took the same honor again the following year – an unprecedented achievement at the time.

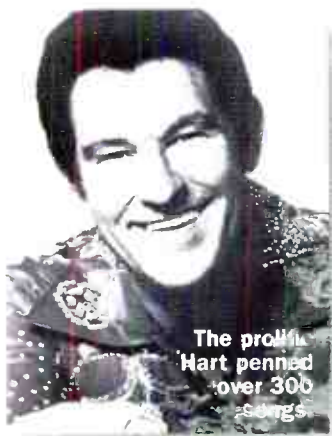
"Easy Loving" opened the floodgates of success for Hart as an artist and a songwriter. He wrote his next nine hits: "My Hang-Up Is You," "Bless Your Heart," "Got The All Overs For You (All Over Me)," "Trip To Heaven," "If You Can't Feel It (It Ain't There)," "Hang in There Girl," "The Want-To's," "The

Warm Side Of You" and "Why Lovers Turn To Strangers."

Hart wasn't the only artist to benefit from his own songwriting talents. He's had more than 300 of his songs recorded, including such big hits as Carl Smith's "Loose Talk" in 1954 and Porter Wagoner's "Skid Row Joe" in 1966. His "While The Feeling's Good" charted four times for four different acts between 1975 and 1989.

Capitol Records held on to Hart throughout the 1970s, and his singles consistently placed high in the charts. In the '80s he recorded for various labels, including Sunbird, El Dorado and Fifth St. His last chart appearance was in 1987. Today he lives in Burbank, Calif., and still performs occasionally.

— Walter Carter



The prolific Hart penned over 300 songs.



"Easy Loving"

By Freddie Hart

Easy loving,
so sexy looking
I know from the feeling,
that it comes
from the heart

Easy loving,
every day's
Thanksgiving

To count all my
blessings,
I wouldn't know
where to start

Every time I
look you over,
so real to life it seems
For upon your
pretty shoulders,
there's a pair of
angel wings

Easy loving,
seeing's believing
Life with you's
like living
in a beautiful dream

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COLLECTIONS

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

COMMENTS

Your magazine is a terrific publication. I especially enjoy the "Collections" section. I noticed you often reference the Ernest Tubb Record Shop as a source for hard-to-find CDs and cassettes. Feel free to mention our website at <http://etrecordshop.com> as an additional source for finding rare country, bluegrass and gospel music. Harry Mensch, Ernest Tubb Record Shops.

QUESTIONS

Could someone please tell me where I might purchase on cassette the two volumes celebrating the 75 years of the Grand Ole Opry. Mrs. G.A. Alexis, Near Miami, OK 74354

EDITOR'S NOTE: These MCA Records packages can be ordered by any record shop. For mail orders, try the Ernest Tubb Record Shop, P.O. Box 500, Nashville, TN 37202-0500, telephone 1-800-229-4288, or contact the website listed above.

Though I like a few young singers. I prefer the older, traditional ones. Where can I buy on cassette or CD *The Road Less Traveled* by Johnny Cash, *Young Buck: The Complete Pre-Capitol Recordings* by Buck Owens and the song "Revelation" by Bobby Braddock?

Larry Lau
1309 E. 37th St.
Des Moines, IA 50317

EDITOR'S NOTE: For mail orders, try the Ernest Tubb Record Shop, P.O. Box 500, Nashville, TN 37202-0500, telephone 1-800-229-4288, or contact the website listed above.

Help! I am looking for the artist who sang this song that contains the words, *The trails of yesterday are now the main highways/There is a*

shopping center where the drive-in used to be. Great magazine. Love it. Thank you. John Alfonso
6662 Kiowa Rd.
Westminster, CA 92683-2128

WANTED

I am looking for an LP by Hank Snow and the Jordanaires titled *These Things Shall Pass*. It was released circa 1954. Earl Conley
5976 Born Drive
Pensacola, FL 32504

Does anybody have copies of Dolly Parton's books, especially her 1994 autobiography *My Life And Other Unfinished Business* and another one called *Smoky Mountain Christmas*? If anybody has these for sale, please write me.

Rufus Kelly
146 Lizzie Lane
Yeaddiss, KY 41777

I'm looking for records by Norma Jean, Del Reeves, Del Wood, Jean Shepard, Charley Pride, Wanda Jackson, Kitty Wells or Connie Smith. Albert Arndt
111 East 20th St., Apt. 204
Spencer, IA 51301-2305

Does anyone have information on Norman Wade or tapes of this singer?

Helen Hull
6160 98th Road
Sebastian, FL 32958 5722

Wanted: A copy of the article on Texas Ruby/Curly Fox that appeared in the February 1993 edition of *The Journal*. Willing to pay any expenses incurred. Does the Academy for the Preservation of Old Time Country Music still exist?

R.J. Descoteaux
82 Glen Rd.,
Gorham, NH 03581-1322

EDITOR'S NOTE: When Country Music magazine underwent an ownership change in

1999, the Academy was phased out, but *The Journal* was continued. Unfortunately, we have no back issues from the magazine's earlier owners.

I am looking for a song by J.W. Thompson called "The One White Rose." Can you help me find it?
Thomas A. Burns
P.O. Box 101
Glenmora, LA 71433-0101

I'm trying to get information on Homer & Jethro. If anyone has anything to share or memorabilia for sale, please write.
Larry Ellison
409 4th St.
Jamestown, KS 66948

Trying to get a video of the August 11th *Grand Ole Opry* show, the last one on TNN. It featured Porter Wagoner and Buck Trent. Will pay a good price.
Bonnie Jones
405 Broadway, Apt. 501
Cincinnati, OH 45202

I have "Lonesome 7-7203" by Hawkshaw Hawkins on CD. Nevertheless, I'd like a faster tempo of this song, possibly done by Webb Pierce or Hank Locklin. I'll pay your price, within reason.
Joseph White
3747 Stuart Ave.
Groves, TX 77619

Wanted: Any CDs and cassettes by Dave Dudley, also an address where he might be reached.
J. Amaral
13615 Forest Park Circle
Penn Valley, CA 95946

I would like any C.W. McCall tapes (except *Greatest Hits*) and autographed photos. Also: Is there still a C.W. McCall fan club?
Arlin Hill
P.O. Box 8693
Newark, OH 43058

Any information or a book on the merchandise available on *The Dukes Of Hazzard*? Anything would be great.
Tim Roy
3262 Compass Dr.
Franklin, IN 46131-09809

FOR SALE

I have a large collection of country albums for sale: Marie Osmond, Tammy & George, Willie Nelson, Bill



Trivia answer: Minnie Pearl

Anderson, Loretta Lynn and many others.

Henrietta Rowley
5354 Sandstone
Climax, MI 49034

Selling my collection of *Country Music* magazines, 1977 to 1997. Not all years are complete.

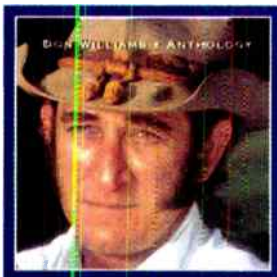
G.H. Allen
811 Hwy. 62 Spur
Berryville, AR 72616

I have a collection of Hank Williams' pre-1950 records.
John D. Farmer
1520 Ludington St., Apt. 106
Marinette, WI 54143-1325

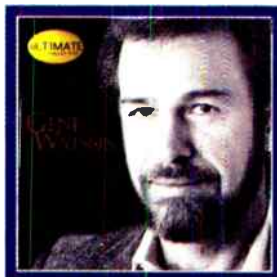
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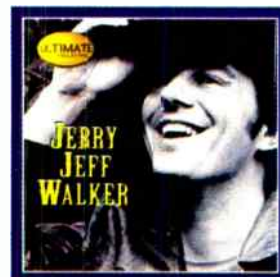
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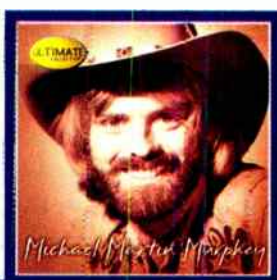
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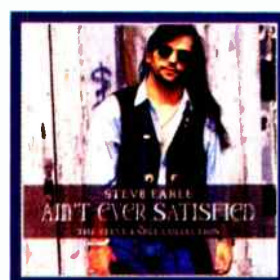
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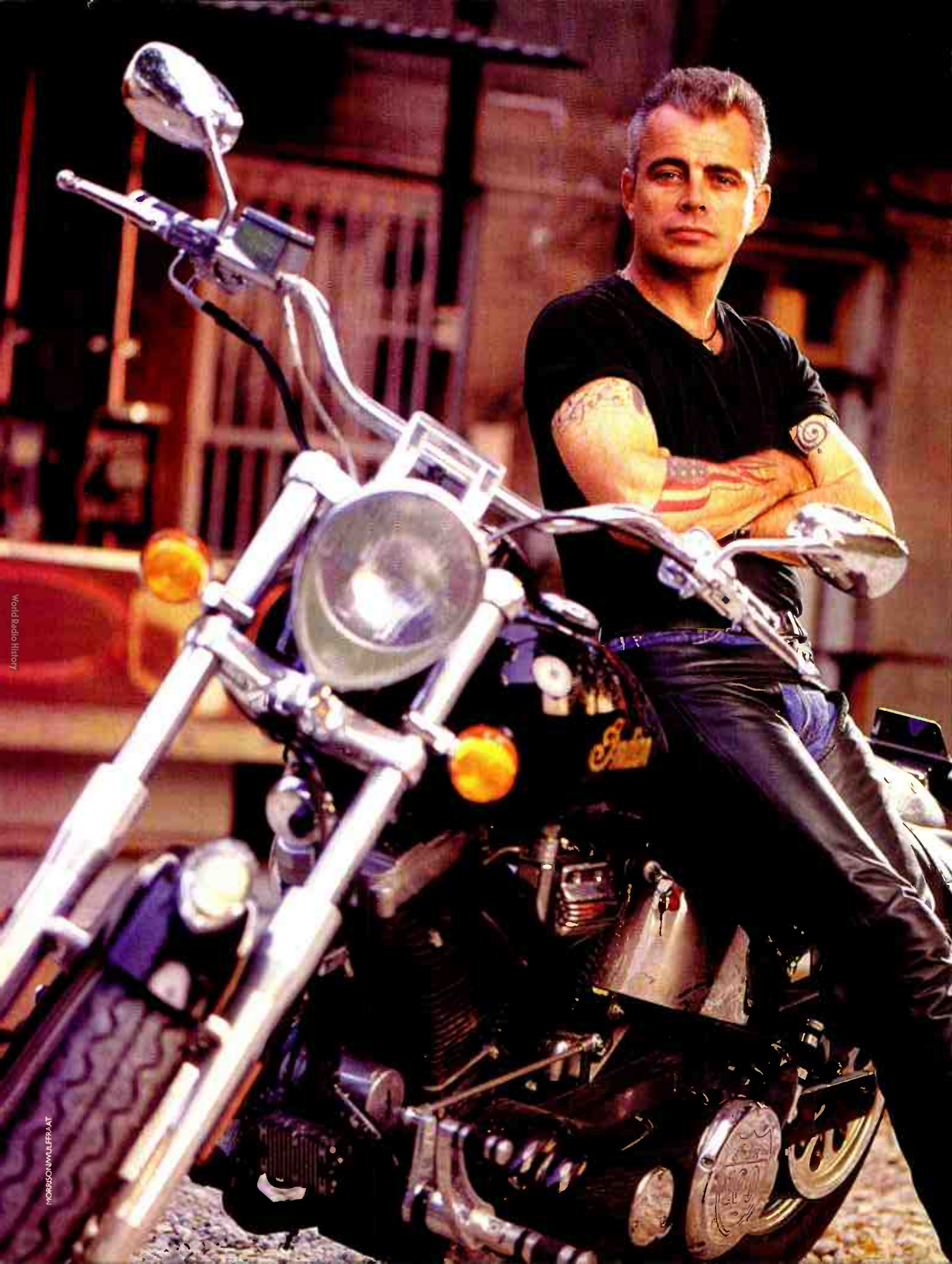
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Terms of Endearment

Dale Watson digs out of a hole of despair and devotes an album to a lost love

When it comes to classic country songs, you can count on a couple of things: They're true to life, and – perhaps accordingly – they're some of the saddest songs around.

By Holly George-Warren

Photographs by Morrison/Wulffraat

It's not surprising, then, that a hard-core honky-tonk artist like 38-year-old Dale Watson would turn to music to document a personal calamity he recently endured. Alabama-born, Texas-raised Watson's heart-rending new album, *Every Song I Write Is For You*, chronicles his undying love for a fiancée who died tragically in September 2000. Promising young attorney Teresa Lynn Herbert, Watson's fiancée, was en route from Austin to Houston to see the singer when she was killed in an auto accident.

The deep-voiced Watson remains shaken by the event that led to his own suicide attempt a few months after her passing.

"Tonight is the anniversary of Terri's death," Watson says quietly. To mark the occasion, the singer has returned to perform at the Houston club where he had been scheduled to appear the night of the accident. "Staying busy is the key – too much idle time lets your brain go crazy."

When he threw himself into songwriting and recording immediately

following her death, a softer, more romantic country sound emerged. Through the '90s, Watson had built his international reputation on muscular, hard-drivin' releases that consisted primarily of up-tempo drinkin' and cheatin' songs, characterized by Watson as "beer-joint music."

On the other hand, *Every Song I Write* is late-night, in-front-of-the-fire, red-wine-drinking music. Recalling the jazzier side of Watson's heroes Ray Price and Merle Haggard, the album features Watson's emotive baritone surrounded by lush strings and dramatic, piano-driven arrangements.

"Terri had always wanted me to write songs about her," Watson says. "There was one song I wrote that she did get to hear – 'Blue Eyes.' When the accident happened, that song was on my coffee table. Reading that lyric sheet made [the new songs] all start flowing right away. I was writing so much during those hard times."

The delicate, acoustic "Blue Eyes" appears on a tribute album, *Austin, Texas, Through The Eyes Of Terri Herbert*, which Watson organized

and produced. In addition to three Watson originals, the album also includes tracks by Kelly Willis, Reckless Kelly and several other of Herbert's favorite Austin artists, some of whom had received free legal advice from Herbert. (The CD is available through www.terriherbert.com.)

The songs Watson wrote that dark autumn of 2000 reflected the overwhelming bereavement he was experiencing.

"You go through the pit of 'would've, should've,'" says Watson of the inspiration behind the wistful shuffle "If I Knew Then What I Know Now" and the tender ballad "Our First Times And Our Last Times."

"Then you go through the angry-at-God phase, where you're shaking your fist, shouting: 'When there's so much evil around, how could you take that person?'" In the haunted "I'd Deal With The Devil," Watson sings he'd *do anything to get her back*.

While in mourning, Watson couldn't bring himself to play gigs, except for prior commitments to perform at two weddings. He didn't

Dale Watson

want to let down those happy couples, but the dates pained him terribly. While onstage at each, he wrote two of the album's loveliest songs, the honey-coated ballad "You're The Best Part Of Me" and the swing-style "Money Can't Buy Her Love."

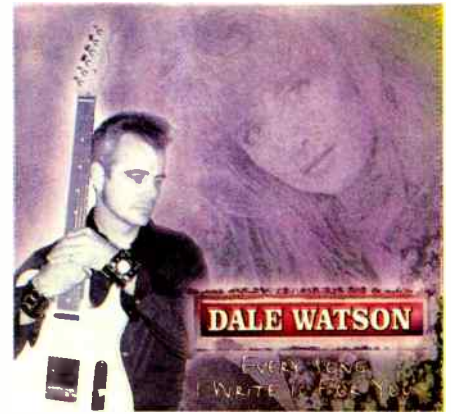
Sadly, after Watson's initial creative burst, he found he couldn't escape the chokehold that despair – and guilt over

stress disorder, Watson underwent innovative EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) therapy.

"Part of post-traumatic stress disorder is that you're stuck on day one [of the trauma]," according to Watson, "reliving all day long the minute I heard about the death. For months I was stuck with that feeling, and it was [exacerbated by] lack of sleep – during the REM period is when your subconscious copes with the day you've had."

EMDR therapy uses eye movements to help people process and release deeply rooted memories, images and emotions, particularly those that are disturbing. It is especially effective in healing those who have suffered recent trauma.

Watson relates that part of his therapy involved his answering on a scale of one to 10 the question, "Do you think you could have prevented Terri's death?" In the beginning, he rated his affirmative reply a 10; after therapy, it was a three.



"You can't live with a 10," he says. "I've learned you can live with a three."

Another important lesson Watson learned was that his heart-breaking experience could actually benefit others – if conveyed through music. Particularly, he wanted to stress the message of making every day count with your loved ones, rather than taking them for granted or bickering over trifles.

Just as importantly, he wanted to emphasize the restorative power of music and how it can comfort those left to carry on. As he states in the liner notes to *Every Song I Write*, "It's my hope that these songs relate to the heart of the listener, that they are not alone in their loss, and to teach an appreciation of the love we experienced."

At first, he put 10 new songs on a CD to sell at gigs. "Not for money," he says, "but for Terri. People started reacting to it, telling me how much the songs helped them too."

When a record deal came together, Watson requested the company issue a CD of the songs he had written for Terri. Those tracks, with four additional cuts, became the gorgeous *Every Song I Write Is For You*.

Meanwhile, Watson has found the strength to carry on. "I've saved the letters people have sent me," he relates, "telling me that listening to my album has helped them appreciate what they've got. And my story has circulated enough that other people have come up to me and said they were so close to where I've been – and that they appreciate the record because it took them over the hump."

Watson swallows hard. "That's the best part that's come out of this record. If I had to play a part in the fate of all this, I think this was what I was supposed to do – help others." *

"I was at the end of my rope, and I had decided I was going to end it all there."

Herbert's death – had on him. The last day of their intense four-month relationship played on like an endless loop in his mind: a beautiful, intimate morning followed by a lovers' spat, precipitated by difficulties between the newly divorced Watson and his ex-wife, who is the mother of his two young daughters. He took off in a huff to his gig in Houston, while Herbert stayed behind in Austin and fretted.

Later that night, as she drove the 120 or so miles of Texas highway to join him and make up, the fatal crash occurred.

"The pain is [dealing with] how short a time we had together," Watson reflects, "and how much someone in that short length of time could change your life." His emotions and pain snowballed until one ghastly night three days after Christmas, with a bottle of booze and a handful of pills, he checked into a local hotel.

"I was at the end of my rope," Watson relates, "and I had decided I was going to end it all there."

Fortunately, his road manager Donnie Knutson sensed something was wrong and searched until he found Watson, delirious but still conscious. After he was hospitalized and treated for the overdose, the real work began.

"I checked myself into the mental ward and got some help," says Watson.

Diagnosed with post-traumatic



By pouring his heart into songs about his fiancée, killed in an auto accident, Dale now understands music's healing powers.

DAVID REDFERN/RETNA

Melanie Shelley

Hair & Makeup Artist

Music City hair-and-makeup artist Melanie Shelley is a favorite of the Dixie Chicks, Jo Dee Messina, Chely Wright, Alan Jackson, Deana Carter, The Kinleys and others. Entertainment Weekly dubbed her and clothing stylist

Renee Fowler as the "1999 glam squad" on its prestigious "It List." With a day rate of up to \$2,500, she is the most expensive hairdresser in town. She also owns a tony Nashville salon, Trim Classic Barber & Legendary Beauty.

I've become famous for changing the look of artists. I'm always eager to suggest something new. Usually, they're either receptive right away or they're not. I find that if I have to convince an artist of something, then it isn't in their personality anyway.

"With musicians, I listen to the album so I can get a sense of where they are going. The interesting thing about musical artists is that they are so focused on their music that they don't have a strong style. Picking up a fashion magazine is not their first priority, so they need somebody right in the middle of the fashion stream to take what is going on, read the trends and see where they are in that stream.

"The record companies rely on me to be the voice of what is happening right now. They all have a different job to do. I'm the person they hire and pay good money to determine what is next and how we can influence fans and also ultimately create record sales.

"For instance, in the Dixie Chicks' first video, 'I Can Love You Better,' everybody had the same long blond haircut and Natalie had a long plain bob. I came in on 'There's Your Trouble,' and we went really rock 'n' roll with them. We started changing haircuts and soon they became known as the girls who *always* look different. We cut Natalie's hair shorter and out of that bob, so she had a long front and shorter back. Then we started flipping Martie's hair out way before anybody else was doing it.

"When it comes to fashion, I'm really a runway girl. I'm totally obsessed with what is on the runways, how they are doing it. All of my friends are still New York hairdressers who are doing all the collections and shows. I talk to them all the time about what is next.

"In order to influence the future of fashion, you have to know the history of fashion. If you have been seeing a lot of hair flipping out for two years, you have got to know that hair is going to go back to being sleek and all one length.

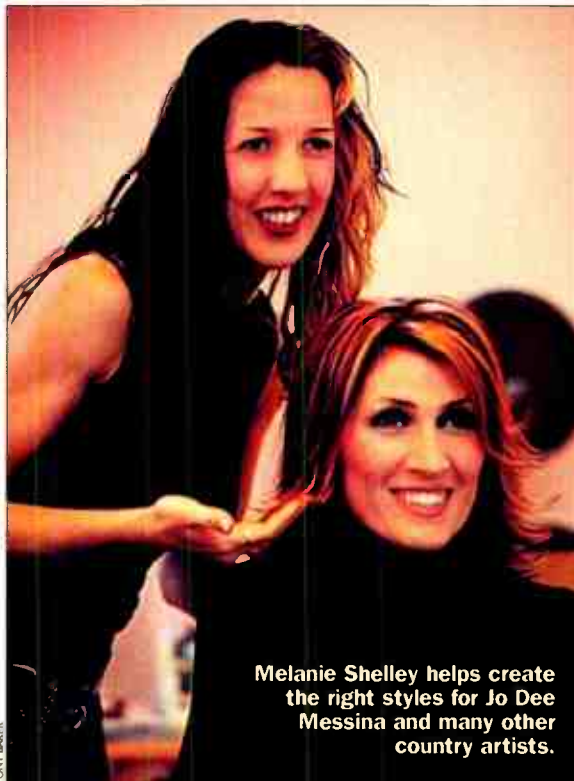
"For the past year, I've spent at least four days a week doing photo shoots and videos. I've traveled at least two weeks a month, every month. My hair kit weighs 75 pounds and my makeup kit is 55 pounds. Everything is on rollers and in special flight cases so I can check them on the airplane. I've never had them lost – knock on wood!

"You cannot have a down day with what I do. You can never have a bad day; you are the one who always has to be on, no matter how sick, tired or sad you feel. You have to give emotional support to the artist. Half of what I do has nothing to do with hair and makeup; it's all about making 100-percent sure that the artists feel incredible about themselves.

"I like working with guys because they appreciate what you do more than women do. Male artists know that if you weren't there, they wouldn't look that good. But a woman can do her own hair and makeup and look good. Also, the guys are suckers for the

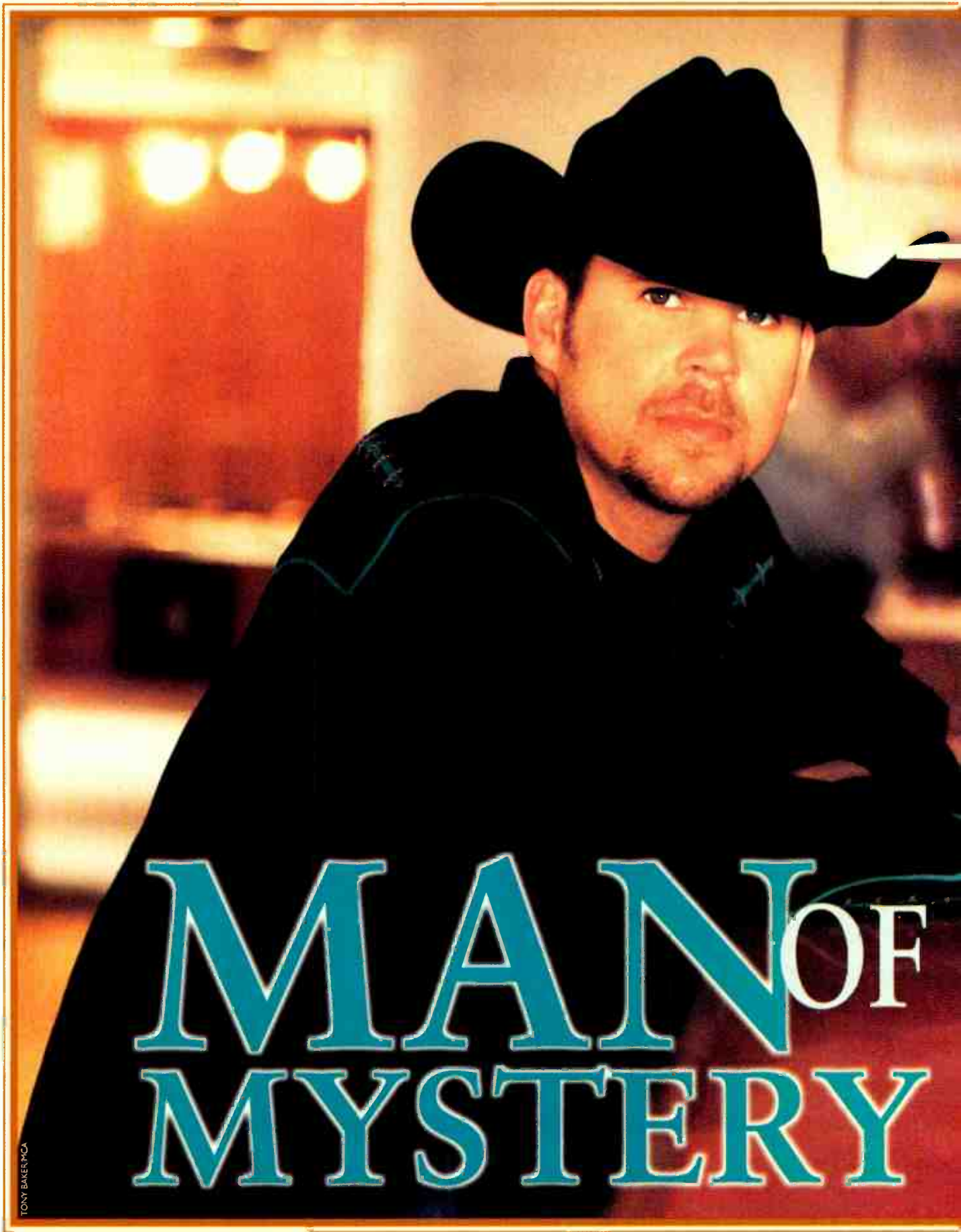
facial massages I do. I give them scalp massages and neck rubs and they feel really pampered. If they are having a hard time on the set, I know all the reflexology points on the neck and head.

"My biggest goal is to make people notice the artist and *not* notice their hair and makeup. The first thing they think is, 'That person looks cool; they're interesting.' With the Dixie Chicks, people think they're really cool girls first and notice their hair second."




Melanie Shelley helps create the right styles for Jo Dee Messina and many other country artists.

TONY BAKER



MAN OF MYSTERY

TONY BAKER/MCA



It's a sunny Nashville afternoon spiked with winter chill, and Gary Allan has spent the morning meeting with his record label about *Alright Guy*, his new album. Just back from lunch, he sits behind a conference table, more or less smiling. He seems neither particularly pleased nor unhappy about any discernable thing, just focused – and slightly unreadable.

by James Hunter

You know the demeanor: It's called California cool, and make no mistake, Gary Allan is a Californian.

"I've always played country music," he announces, oblivious to whether that crucial yet measured bit of personal history might provoke congratulation or disdain, "because my dad played country music, and my brother did. I played in their bands until I was about 16. I always played real hard-core, just real hard-core country. If I wasn't doing that, I was out watching punk bands like X, Agent Orange, Social Distortion."

He pauses for perhaps seven impossibly cool seconds. "I love the real aggressive punk," he says. "And today I still listen to Weezer and Jane's Addiction. I love real high-energy alternative music, or I love real hard-core country music."

Then Allan says something that, strictly speaking, he doesn't need to. "What's happening on radio right now," he offers, "I can't really handle."

No doubt he cannot. Allan didn't become one of the most closely monitored and incessantly talked-about young men in country music on the

basis of his debut album, 1996's *Used Heart For Sale*, or its 1998 follow-up, *It Would Be You*. No, the audience buzz and industry expectation began to surround Allan after he released his third album, 1999's gold-selling *Smoke Rings In The Dark*.

That music, with its exquisitely written title song about a guy who has seen his full-bodied romantic hopes turn into so much wispy tobacco residue, caused Allan's name to be mentioned alongside Brad Paisley's and Keith Urban's as a future country super-dude.

Yet Allan is notably different from Paisley, a West Virginian with a full-time crush on The Tradition; from Urban, an Australian into rocked-up guitars and hair; and from anyone else operating within the male country ranks.

Unlike Paisley, Allan didn't dream of styling himself into a modern version of Roy Acuff. Unlike Urban, he was more set on infusing country with kitchen-sink realism than leather-suit flash.

That fine, tasty world of virtuosic instrumentalism that blue-chip Nashville pickers frequently get lost in? Allan could do without it, thanks. The time-honored way many Southern country singers confuse the fervor of romantic balladry with the intensity of church hymns? The vigor and vim of Texas country? The standard-issue Wranglers and belt buckles? He could do without all that, too.

Allan, who grew up in La Mirada, Calif. – 130 miles from Bakersfield and just over 20 miles from Los Angeles – is in an altogether different place.

"I think the biggest difference is the way I learned to play music," Allan explains. "We were more about vibe. We made up in vibe for what we didn't

Born in the unlikely cross hairs of California punk rock and hard-core honky-tonk, Gary Allan is not like all the other young Music Row cowboys – even as his Nashville star continues to rise

GARY ALLAN

have in talent. I don't think I heard the term 'radio-friendly' until I got to Nashville. We wrote to play live, and to take people through a night of drinking. In my mind, I'm thinking of taking people through a night at a bar, providing the soundtrack to that, taking a few of those emotions and telling stories."

There's something else that makes him quintessentially Californian as well. "I surfed," Allan says. "In the car with all my buddies I surfed with, mornings before school, I listened to Black Flag and stuff like that. But if I drove, we were all listening to Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. I'd played in some punk-rock bands when I was younger – covers of Suicidal Tendencies. My dad would open up the garage and just shake his head.

"But listening to country at the same time, I always had a love for it. I think it's the honesty thing, the same reason kids who earlier dug hard-core stuff now go for folkier stuff: They might not like the radio as loud anymore, but they still want honest songs about life. And punk, like country, was blatantly that way."

On *Alright Guy*, Allan sings songs like "What I'd Say," in which a man imagines meeting up with a woman who doesn't wish to meet up with him, not anymore. In the chorus, he figures that if he did encounter her, he might exchange pleasantries; he might say, "You're lookin' well," or perhaps "Go to hell."

At the end of the album, another man "lost in trouble and strife" wonders what Willie Nelson – certainly no stranger to either of those situations – would do. It's that kind of album.

Allan calls his new album "a bar record." And as he defines himself more fully than ever, with arguably the strongest music of his career, he thinks it makes perfect sense.

"I've played bars five nights a week since I was 12," he says. "I always had, like, a bag of trick songs where if you get a crowd that's not responding

as you'd like, then you can sort of pull out different things and ask, 'What about this? What about that?' I've used the song 'Alright Guy' a ton since I've had a deal. These are songs that bring out an emotion. To me, that's what great bands do: They take you through emotions. They make you laugh, make you cry, piss you off."

For all his willingness to look like a Nashville guy, Allan remains a bit of a punk; somewhat darkly, he will mutter things about how many country records these days seem like "12 guys' opinion of what they think is going to work."

He's got his theories. "I guess country music's being driven into a politically correct format," he says, "and to me, country music's not supposed to be politically correct. To me, country

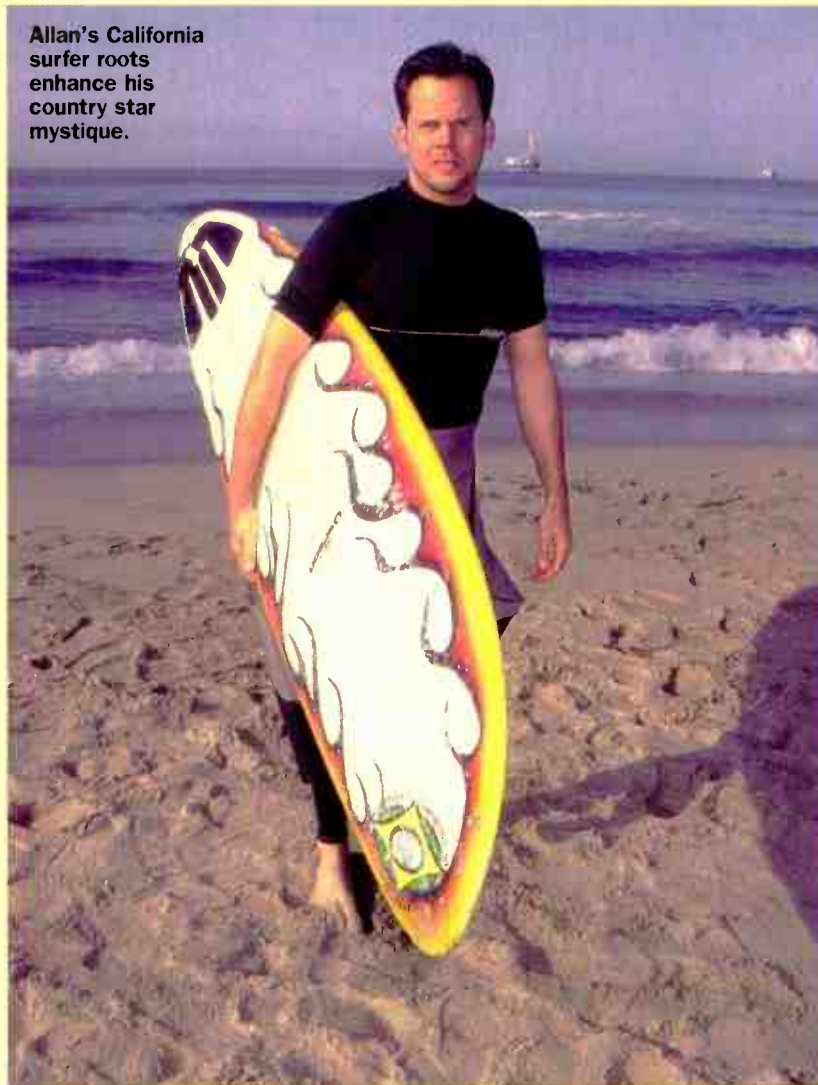
music was about life, about the good stories and the bad stories. I love to hear the bad stories, too. All my heroes – Merle Haggard and Buck Owens and Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson – they definitely weren't politically correct.

"When country music is really country music," Allan concludes, "it's got a lot of soul, and you can relate to it, because it's what happens Monday through Friday. And pop's kind of what happens Saturday and Sunday."

Allan's point with *Alright Guy* is simply, to his mind, logical: Saturday and Sunday are fine times, lively and romantic, sometimes downright sparkling. But any given week has five other days in it, too.

Later that evening, Gary Allan attends a party, a small gathering

Allan's California surfer roots enhance his country star mystique.



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His brooding, rough-edged image is not by design, Allan maintains.



TONY BAERINCA

GARY ALLAN

hosted by someone at his record company. It is a Monday night, and the party, although successful and quite elegant, is proving part of his theory accurate: No one behaves like it's a wild Saturday night affair. Allan, wearing a dark suede jacket, shakes hands with a journalist he's met with earlier that day, chats with others, but basically arrives, makes the scene and then leaves. At one point, he steps outside and gazes down into a swimming pool. In the cool evening air, the clear Nashville water looks cold and uninviting, un-Californian.

“To me, country music's not supposed to be politically correct.”

“Nashville feels too much like an office,” he says. “I think what really put a bad taste in my mouth was when I was going through that period a few years ago, where everybody was trying to redesign me. I almost felt like I had to put an image out there for them to grab onto. It was just weird. What it did was make me go totally all the way down to say ‘Hey, I ain't changin' nothing.’ I think my new record says ‘It's OK to be you, whatever that is.’ I think I'm a super-free-spirited person; I don't think I'm walking in anyone's footsteps, although I think I'm very much influenced by the greats. I think there's a piece of me that comes from them, but that I'm going my own way. To me, that's the California tradition in country music.”

He would love to see *Alright Guy* take him and his career to the next level, as the record guys would put it. But, Allan points out, “If all the labels closed, and I would be playing in some bar down the street from my house, and surfing, I'd be totally happy.” *

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Wooley wove his way into several successful careers – movie and TV cowboy, recording star, comedian. Though he suffers today from leukemia, he continues to stay active and write songs.



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Cowboys & Comedy

From *Rawhide* to “The Purple People Eater,” Sheb Wooley has enjoyed a wild ride

Sheb Wooley initially found success in Hollywood pop music, but his crazy path ultimately wound back to Nashville.

As an actor, Wooley appeared in several critically lauded films, including *High Noon*, *Giant* and *Hoosiers*. But his international reputation comes from his role as Pete Nolan in the TV series *Rawhide*, a popular western that ran on CBS from 1959 to 1966. Then there’s his recording career, marked by the 1958 pop novelty “The Purple People Eater.”

An Oklahoma native, Wooley began his music career in Nashville in the mid-1940s. He first hit the country charts in the early 1960s, recording both under his own name (“That’s My Pa” was a No. 1 hit in 1962) and as comic alter ego Ben Calder, an inebriated rube who wore a tattered hat, went on to star in *Hee Haw* and parodied a raft of bona fide country hits.

From his office outside Nashville where a collection of wild-eyed, purple, fluffy stuffed animals stare down from shelves, Wooley and his wife, Beverly, busily tend to their publishing and talent promotion companies. In an exclusive interview, he reflects on his long career and the trails ahead – with a keen awareness of his mortality.

Of the actors you worked with – from John Wayne to Errol Flynn to Gene Hackman – which might have made a good country singer?

I’d pick James Dean. He played guitar. I never heard him sing, but I betcha he could. You could get more out of him than you could all them others. He was a very sensitive little guy. Great kid.

The day before he got killed – he just had gotten that new sports car – I was walking across the lot at Warner Bros. and he said, “Get in. I’ll take you for a ride.” We whizzed around that lot. That’s the last time I saw him.

I had a singing

date in El Paso and I’m just standin’ in the wings, ready to go on. Some guy comes up and says, “That’s too bad what happened to James Dean wasn’t it?” I said, “Whadda you mean?” “He got killed in a car wreck.” And then the emcee said, “Here’s Sheb Wooley!” I go out on that stage. Whew! I said, “I gotta take a minute, folks. I just got word ...” It flat destroyed me.

How did “The Purple People Eater” come to you?

My friend Don Robertson, the songwriter, and I were partying together, and he tells me this joke: He said, “This little boy came home from school and says,



LES LEVRETT
Wooley pumps his fist in victory after winning the 1968 CMA Award for Comedian of the Year.

‘Daddy, what has one eye, one horn, flies and eats people?’ Dad says, ‘I don’t know.’ ‘A one-eyed, one-horned, flying people eater.’”

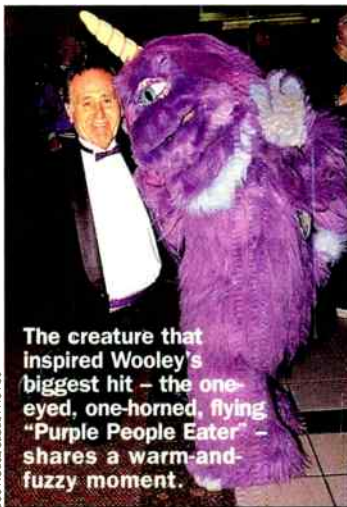
I said to Don, “There might be a song in there. You wanna write something on it?” He said, “No. You go ahead.” He’s a ballad writer. He said, “It’s not my style.” Well, I wrote it the next day. I’d write a verse, show it to my wife and she’d laugh. It worked out pretty good. Don had a song called “I Can’t Believe You’re Mine.” Well, I put that on the back of “Purple People Eater.” His first writer’s check was for \$23,000.

How was Ben Colder born?

It was an accident. There was a song that came along – I was recording for MGM Records – and my producer, Jim Vienneau, in Nashville held this song for weeks and weeks. I was on the West Coast doing the *Rawhide* series. He said, “You gotta come down and record this song because it’s a hit.” By the time I came down, Rex Allen had cut it and it was breaking wide open. It was a song called “Don’t Go Near The Indians.” Jim says, “You dummy. You missed a hit.” I said, “Don’t worry about it. I’ll do one called ‘Don’t Go Near The Eskimos.’” He said, “How does it go?” I said, *Ook-shoook-mooogie-mushy-doggy-ook-shoook-mooogie-ay/Son, don’t go near the Eskimos/Please do what I say.* Everybody laughed. That was the end of it, I thought.

Next day, he says, “I think that might be an idea. If Rex’s record sells a million, we can at least do a third of that with a parody.” I went back to California and forgot about it. He called me one day, “You got that song written yet?” I said, “What song?” He said, “That ook-shoook-mooogie Eskimo thing.” I said no. He said, “Well, you gotta get down here and record it.” I said, “Okay, I’ll write it on the plane on the way down.” Everybody was knocked down with it. We went in and recorded it, and it was pretty funny.

I had a Sheb Wooley release two weeks before that. He said, “We can’t kill your other release right now – we



BOB NOBLE/GLOBE PHOTOS

The creature that inspired Wooley’s biggest hit – the one-eyed, one-horned, flying “Purple People Eater” – shares a warm-and-fuzzy moment.

gotta come up with another name. Send me some names.” So I sent him Klondike, I. Ben Freezin, Ben Colder. The record came out as Ben Colder; nobody knew who it was.

Were you doing the parodies reluctantly?

Not really. I enjoyed it. I did Faron Young’s “Hello Walls.” I did it like a drunk. *Helllooo wallls ... I didn’t see you standin’ there.* Well, Ben started being a drunk. The next one was, “Almost Persuaded.” I took on this drunken personality. It gave me an excuse to drink. I drank in those days some.

What were the reactions of the artists and the writers whose songs you parodied?

Most of them just loved it. Most of them cut me in as half writer on my version.

One guy who objected was John Hartford. I got carried away during the war between the Israelis and the Palestinians back in the ’60s. I wrote a thing called “Gentile On My Mind.” We went ahead and cut it. John said, “Oh God, please, please, please don’t do that.” So we didn’t put it out.

You and Hank Williams were on MGM. Did you work much with Williams because of that association?

We did a few shows together like the *Louisiana Hayride* in Shreveport. We got to know each other there. Somebody booked us at a Shreveport fair, in a tent, Hank and Audrey Williams and Sheb Wooley. He was pretty sober, all that week. I don’t think he really got into the booze until a little later. Of course, he wasn’t hot then. And as the heat rises, it gets harder on a country boy. As the crowds get bigger, the ego grows up a little more. I know because I was one.

Did you get a bit too big for your britches?

Oh, I’m sure I did. I drank considerable. I felt bigger than life sometimes. Nobody is.

I’ve certainly gone through some changes. I don’t know if you’re aware that I have leukemia. It seems that when a person gets a deadly ailment like this, they start thinking about a bunch of things they might do different. My favorite channel right now is the Wisdom Channel. It’s built on spirituality, not so much religion, very little religion, as a matter of fact. Just spirituality.

I started writing some songs. Just yesterday, I wrote a song called “Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life.” That’s where it’s at. It’s in your thinking. *



Wooley (far left) gets ready for a dramatic showdown in the 1952 Oscar winner for Best Picture, *High Noon*.

PHOTOSET

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REVIEWS



reba
greatest hits
volume III
I'm A Survivor

REBA MCENTIRE GREATEST HITS VOL. III: I'M A SURVIVOR

(MCA)

★★★★

Someone I know once worked long-distance, from laid-back Denver offices, with an old guy popularly known as Boston's crankiest attorney. One weekend she was forced to ring him at home, whereupon he suddenly unveiled a completely dulcet manner. Shocked, she inquired, "Uh, what are you doing?" to which the erstwhile silver-haired demon replied, "Oh, listening to a little Reba McEntire." And then he kind of sighed.

I'm A Survivor is actually McEntire's fourth hits collection. The first, 1987's *The Best Of Reba McEntire*, covered her oddly smushy work of the early '80s with

producer Jerry Kennedy. The same year, MCA issued its first volume of her radio songs, *Greatest Hits*, then followed in 1993 with *Greatest Hits Volume Two*. Both those albums corralled the crackerjack releases she created after an all-important record company change and a shift in musical style.

After she cut her famous, formerly long red hair, she sashayed into more contemporary surroundings with producer Tony Brown. *Volume III* lines up her work with Brown, on which McEntire further consolidates her country superstardom. "I'm A Survivor," a frisky new boast, ties in conveniently with her new TV sitcom.

These are the songs that have continued to unite the Reba Nation, a loyal

place full of *Redbook* housewives, country radio fans and the New York theater critics McEntire handily tamed when she appeared on Broadway last season in *Annie Get Your Gun*. These are the songs that make cranky attorneys sigh.

As such, they're nearly all aces. The uber-diva ballad "Falling Out Of Love" and its slightly less dramatic cousin, "The Heart Won't Lie," are the most elegant; "Take It Back" and the weirdly unshakeable "Why Haven't I Heard From You" are the biggest, rockiest production numbers; and the new "Sweet Music Man," an Alison Krauss production that ends the collection on an atypically folkie note, wonderfully allows one to hear McEntire's rich, vibrating, skillfully controlled soprano.

By now, Reba McEntire is really something better than a survivor: She's a legend.

— James Hunter

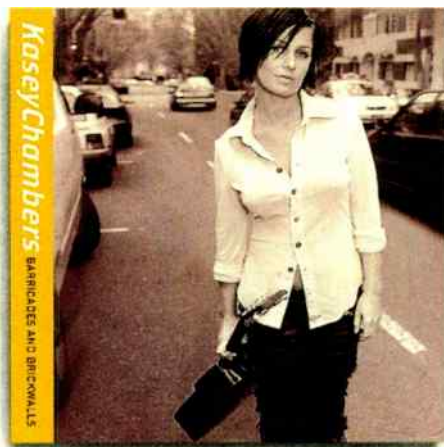
KASEY CHAMBERS

Barricades And Brickwalls

WARNER BROS.

★★★★

After growing up in the wilds of the Australian outback, pierced-and-tattooed Kasey Chambers may seem like the last singer who would play it safe. But on her second album, *Barricades And*



Brickwalls, she doesn't rock any stylistic boats, nor does she push her scratchy, smoky voice deeper into the rockier territory fans might have expected.

Instead, she toes an agreeable line that showcases her nimble hillbilly hiccup against gentle, pastel-hued backdrops. There's nothing on *Barricades* that's remotely as rough as her debut album, *The*

Country Music rates all recordings as follows:

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

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

Captain, and parts of her live shows.

The 25-year-old does get slightly rambunctious on a couple of cuts: "Still Feelin' Blue" pits her against an exuberant fiddler, and "If I Were You" swaggers into an Eagles-edged mix, with Chambers riding the rustic chords like a rodeo pro. And her duet on "I Still Pray" with fellow Aussie cult figure Paul Kelly swings low into chariot-deep gospel.

Her silky approach fares best on the autobiographical (and gently strummed) "Nullarbor," her reminiscence of growing up hunting foxes on Australia's vast, desolate Nullarbor Plain: *When the fire burns out here, it's brighter than the city lights/And warmer than a heart of gold/And dingoes howl just to break the silence/ And the sun comes up just to break the cold.* It's a heartfelt moment, and the truth of it – the sheer magnitude of such an experience – channels out of the arrangement like a baby kangaroo hopping free of its mother's pouch.

The rest of the album features good, solid, Nashville-folk singalongs – similar to the light fare heard on most contemporary country stations in the late afternoon. There's nothing too fancy, nothing too fiery. For a renegade like Chambers, that's a surprise. Still, there's plenty on *Barricades* to warrant interest in what she does next.

— Tom Lanham

MIKE WALKER

Mike Walker

DREAMWORKS

★★

With his white T-shirt, leather jacket, tattoos and high-rising pompadour, you'd think Mike Walker just stepped out of Sam Phillips' Sun Studios after a session of classic rockabilly.

But on his self-titled debut, that's not at all what you get from this gifted Tennessean with a maximum-potential baritone. In fact, it's not until the eighth track, "I Want A Little More," that you get something close to what you'd expect – a rough-and-tumble gem with some stinging Telecaster guitar and a galloping, honky-tonk feel.

What you do get, however, is a surfeit of big pop choruses and pseudo-country hooks on songs like the Roy Orbison/Rodney Crowell-penned "What Kind Of Love" and the mediocre ballad "Stones In The Road."



With a gentle strum and banal beat, "This Is That" has a '70s Glen Campbell feel, only not as lyrical. "If There's A Chance To Say I Love You" has the cheesy impact of a bad Neil Diamond ballad, and even a crying pedal steel guitar and Walker's sexy-deep vocals can't save the acoustic guitar and piano plea "Honey Love Me That Way."

There's just not enough subtlety in Walker's approach to light a fire of excitement – which is why this tough-looking, big-sounding guy should have tried to hit us over the head more often with songs like his cover of the rockin' "Rub It In," or the searing closer, Dan Penn's randy "Memphis Women And Chicken." Even the more clichéd honky-tonkers, "Honey Do" and "Who's Your Daddy," succeed better than the wishy-washy pop stuff.

Anyone who hears Walker sing will know he's capable of belting out a dynamite tune. But there's too much musical maneuvering for such a rugged, big-voiced dude. He'd be better served by healthy helpings of muscle-car country and honky-tonk crunch.

— Bob Gulla

KELLY HOGAN

Because It Feel Good

BLOODSHOT

★★★

Let your mind wander back about 35 years ago, to a recording studio noted for churning out reverb-drenched country, pop and rhythm and blues. The room was illuminated only by the warm glow of the tube amps, the musicians overworked, underpaid and hungry for recognition, and brimming over with soulful fire. The producer was

after a confluence of country grit, pop polish and Delta blues melancholy, hoping that good taste would triumph over commercial considerations.

Now freeze that scene – and imagine it remaining frozen in time until Kelly Hogan somehow steps through the looking glass to lay down a batch of vocals that turn space and time inside out, catapulting the studio into the 21st century.

That's not how *Because It Feel Good* got made, but the album certainly sounds like it. The sparse, reverb-heavy production supplied by Hogan and David Barbe is haunted by the Memphis echoes of Sun, Stax, Specter and Hi, and it sounds as smoky as a midnight cocktail lounge on the wrong side of town. The opener, a cover of The Statler Brothers' "I'll Go To My Grave Loving You," is as sparse and bleak as the song of a foghorn. So is



the closer, a despondent, Motown-flavored reading of Charlie Rich's "Stay."

Amy Pike and Alec Feldman of the band Greasetrap contribute "Speedfreak Lullaby," while Hogan co-wrote the album's only relatively up-tempo track, "No, Bobby Don't," a perfect tribute to girl-group soul, full of rage and heartache.

Throughout, the backing band remains understated, with the dramatic guitar work of Andy Hopkins serving as a perfect complement to Hogan's wrenching vocals. The torchy vibe is perfect throughout, but a handful of more originals in the spirit of "No, Bobby Don't" would have freshened up the album slightly and made it seem less like a blast from the past.

— J. Poet



EILLEEN SHANIA TWAIN
The Complete Limelight Sessions

LIMELIGHT

★ There's something categorically unfair about these before-they-were-famous recordings that inevitably pop up after an artist has sold a few million records. Turning lost demos from "the early years" into a meaningful package rarely works; the result usually has little value beyond a novelty factor.

In the case of Eilleen Shania Twain – which uses her given first name instead of her adopted stage name – this rings especially true. Because she was neither a powerhouse vocalist like Trisha Yearwood nor an eloquent songwriter like Mary Chapin Carpenter, Twain's rise to fame was rooted in less tangible factors: timing, shifting audience tastes, sexy videos that showed off her jaw-dropping physical beauty and that famous belly button. The benefits of hearing vintage Shania from her days as a Patty Smyth wannabe are dubious, at best.

In fact, this isn't the first time Shania has been subjected to an early years-style sock in the gut. Much of *The Complete Limelight Sessions* – 17 tracks Twain recorded for Canadian producer Harry Hinde in 1989 – was released in a 1999 collection of bootleg recordings called *Beginnings*. As a collection of 1980s power pop, it sounds as cheesy today as it did a decade ago.

Most of these songs are Twain's own compositions and show her knack for infectious pop hooks and sassy girl-power themes – traits that would later blossom, in collaboration with producer/husband Robert John "Mutt" Lange, into a country-pop colossus. There's a hint of the Shania to

come, for instance, in "Wild And Wicked," which presages "(If You're Not In It For Love) I'm Outta Here."

But the overwhelming fact is, the Eilleen of 1989 is not the Shania of today. Eilleen took a left turn out of Ontario and headed south, and by the time she emerged as Shania, Nashville's reigning goddess, Eilleen was long gone. Why bring up the dead now?

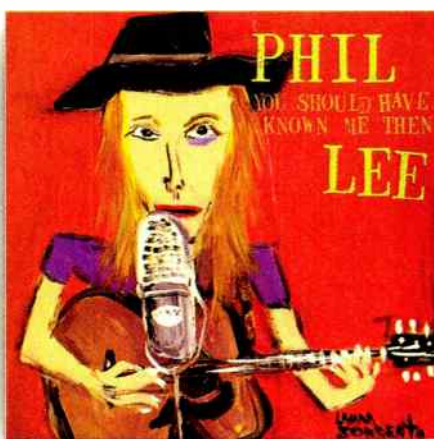
— Lisa Zhito

PHIL LEE
You Should Have Known Me Then

SHANACHIE

★★★★

Chances are, any guy who waits until age 49 to put out his first album has something to say. So it is with Phil Lee, the roots-country rock 'n' roller whose 2000 debut, *The Mighty King*



Of Love, drew endorsements from Lucinda Williams and the rest of Nashville's musical rebels.

Now comes *You Should Have Known Me Then*, the North Carolina native's anticipated follow-up, and it's a diversely entertaining record that makes no concessions to mainstream country. Irreverent, ragged and beautiful in its simplicity, the album offers an unflinching look at life's lovable rascals and not-so-beautiful losers.

Take, for example, the memorable ballad "Just Some Girl," about an anonymous suicide victim, *someone no one would kiss*. Or in a lighter vein, "Carl's Got Louise," a funny tale of sexual jealousy set to boogie-bar blues.

Best known as a good-time rocker with Jerry Lee Lewis and Roy Orbison inflections, Lee can also deliver a dead-ringer for a Carter Family tune, such as "Faces In The Window," which is as much about the uncovering

of character as it is about the social issue at hand.

But aside from such story songs, Lee proves unforgettable with his straightforward accounts of aching hearts and dashed dreams, especially "Any Harder Than It Is," as fine a soul ballad as anyone has ever written.

By turns Dylanesque and reminiscent of Jimmy La Fave, Lee sings in a cornhusk of a voice that nearly shakes with emotion. Count producer Richard Bennett and guests Allison Moorer and members of Wilco for helping out with this remarkable little gem.

But it really all comes down to Lee, a former truck driver who's packed half a century of roadhouse rambling into a most intoxicating honk-and-rock brew.

— Alanna Nash

GENE WATSON
From The Heart

RMG

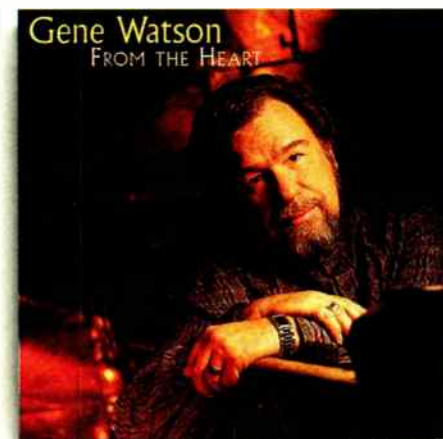
★★★

There's been a lot of debate about whether hoops superstar Michael Jordan could make a successful NBA comeback at the ripe age of 38. No doubt such an age bias left Jordan all the more motivated to prove his naysayers wrong.

Gene Watson must know the feeling. Between 1975 and 1988, Watson landed 21 Top 10 hits on the *Billboard* country charts, the most famous being his 1979 classic "Farewell Party," a harrowing, croon-to-a-scream suicide note.

Unfortunately, in the Young Country-dominated '90s, Watson was put out to pasture by radio programmers who never realized that he remained among the finest country singers ever to step behind a microphone.

From The Heart isn't likely to reverse this disappointing trend, but that's not



Watson's fault. Now 58 and a recent cancer survivor, he delivers the album's first single, "Next To Nothin'," with all the wit, grace and authority of a master at his peak, investing his swinging, soaring tenor with a quality that's every bit as self-deprecating as it is self-pitying.

Occasionally, *From The Heart* wastes Watson's gorgeous voice on some truly silly love songs. For instance, "The Man An' Me And You" actually posits that employees' paychecks are an expression of their bosses' gratitude – a rather unsophisticated understanding of worker-employer financial relationships, to put it mildly.

On the other hand, when Watson gets the songs he deserves, there are few other singers who can touch him. When he lays into the haunting melodies of classic ballads such as "Take Me As I Am Or Let Me Go" or "I Never Go Around Mirrors," it's like passing the ball to Michael Jordan with 10 seconds left and the game on the line. You just know the outcome's going to be dramatic.

— David Cantwell

DANNI LEIGH Divide And Conquer

AUDIUM

★★

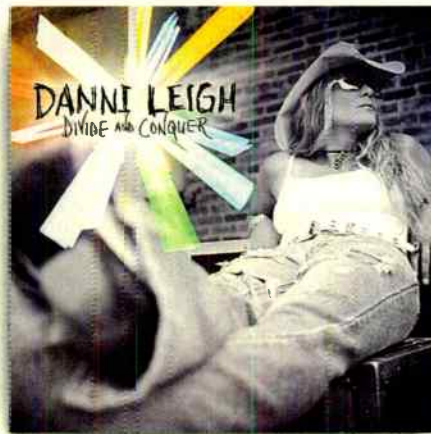
Some people have all the luck. And then there's Danni Leigh.

Leigh is one of those artists who can't seem to catch a break, despite all the obvious pluses weighing in her favor. She's got a classic country smoke-and-whiskey voice, she writes believable songs about love and loss, and she owns the attributes so necessary to make it in the music business today – a signature style coupled with a model's face and figure.

You'd think labels would be tripping over themselves to sign her. Instead, Leigh finds herself on her third label in as many years, and no radio hits to show for her trouble. Whether *Divide And Conquer* will yield those hits is dubious.

Leigh's previous efforts, *29 Nights* and *A Shot Of Whiskey & A Prayer*, may have been underappreciated commercially, but they launched her as a gutsy singer with heaps of attitude and a dose of heart.

Divide And Conquer, by contrast, turns the 'tude down considerably. Virtually all of the songs are imbued with the same mid-tempo glow,



leaving Leigh little room to show any of her signature sass.

Certainly less can be more, and there's a palpable feeling of swinging saloon doors, dusty roads and lonely train tracks here. The acoustic "A Far Cry From Here" is hauntingly beautiful, while the upbeat "Sometimes" is a catchy toe-tapper. But on songs like the melodically ambivalent "Yesterday," Leigh has to try too hard to find her footing.

Danni Leigh has enormous talent. Will the third time be the charm? Maybe not, but don't count her out. As this scrapper keeps showing us, she's not going down without a fight.

— L. Z.

DALLAS WAYNE Here I Am In Dallas

HIGHTONE


★★★★

With such unforgettable phrases as *I'm bouncin' beer cans off the juke-box/I'm a poster boy for detox*, Dallas Wayne leaves no room for mistaking his allegiance – he's a honky-tonker tried and true.

This Missouri-based singer and songwriter loves his tradition, and chances are that if you enjoy Faron, Merle, Buck and George, you'll find something to your liking on this fine follow-up to last year's heralded *Big Thinkin'*.

Named after a 1975 Faron Young hit that Wayne reworks with ambling authority, *Here I Am In Dallas* ranges from obscure covers to solid originals, all gussied up in classic wailin' pedal steel, ringing guitar and the occasional fiddle.

As for the subject matter? Drinking. Heartbreak. Partying. More heartbreak. More drinking. And Wayne's booming baritone delivers it all with conviction,



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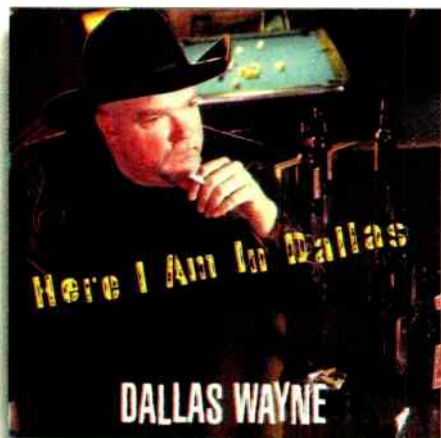
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from the great authentic swing of “If These Walls Could Cry” to the boastfully good-natured “I’m Gonna Break Some Promises Tonight.” And when he slows it down, as in the mournful “Happy Hour” or the sad sack “Not A Dry Eye In The House,” you can hear the Jones in his heart, sighing in melancholy and hoping for better times.

Although he would surely love some mainstream radio airplay, one gets the sense that Wayne made *Here I Am In Dallas* for the right reason: love. It’s another worthy tribute from someone who, with a 10-album catalog, deserves wider recognition.

— Nick Krewen

HANK LOCKLIN
Generations In Song

COLDWATER

★★★★

So many classic artists release lo-fi albums encumbered by rickety vocals and cheap production. There’s little reason to believe Hank Locklin would break the mold; after all, the 83-year-old reached the top of his game ages ago, when “Please Help Me I’m Falling” conquered the charts in 1960.

However, 40 years later, it’s apparent that Locklin’s still got game.

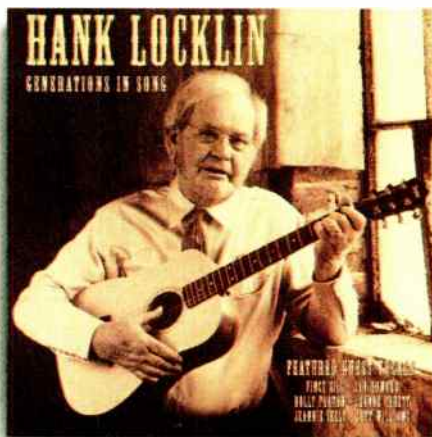
Generations In Song finds the *Grand Ole Opry* star in robust voice amid rich production. The album corrals top-tier session instrumentalists – Harold Bradley, Pig Robbins, Buddy Harman – and boasts a spicy supporting cast, including Dolly Parton, Vince Gill, Jan Howard, Jett Williams, Jeanne Pruett and Jeannie Seely.

Locklin ambles sweetly with Parton on his 1958 hit “Send Me The Pillow You Dream On” and with Howard on

the ballad “Anna.” By himself, he peels through covers of his “Flyin’ South” and “We’re Gonna Go Fishing,” his still-warm timbre and unabashedly country tone remaining a cozy embrace, 40 years after producer Chet Atkins helped accentuate the two qualities.

When Locklin and Vince Gill turn to “Danny Boy,” the elder statesman and his protégé get on in song like two wistful Irish ex-patriots. But the performance sputters when Locklin soars to his higher register, an unsuccessful flight that ironically fails not because of age: Locklin’s fragile upper range has been rattling ears since the early ’60s.

In the long run, *Generations In Song* may be memorable for the contributions of Locklin’s son Hank Adam Locklin, who writes, produces and sings. He’s perhaps a hitmaker in waiting: Listen to winsome performances on Cy Coben’s “Hot Pepper Doll” and the self-penned “Precious Love.”



And what does the album say about the elder Locklin? That there’s still reason to look for new recordings and still reason to visit the *Opry* on nights when he’s in the spotlight.

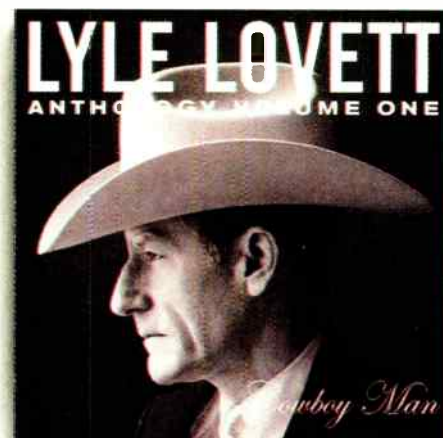
— Michael Streissguth

LYLE LOVETT
Anthology Volume One:
Cowboy Man

CURB/MCA

★★★★

In a classic couplet from this collection of non-hits, Lyle Lovett sings, *If I were the man you wanted/I would not be the man that I am*. Substitute “artist” for “man” and “country music” for



“you,” and you’ll have a good idea why Lovett’s official fling with Nashville was a brief do-si-do.

This 15-song anthology from his three Nashville albums of the ’80s represents Lovett at his most conventionally country, with songs of cowboys, rodeos and love gone askew punctuated by fiddles and steel guitars.

In his native Texas, the bluesy swing and maverick spirit that inform Lovett’s music have been integral to roadhouse country from Bob Wills through Willie Nelson. Yet radio remains the national gatekeeper for mainstream country, and after 1986’s “Cowboy Man” gave the newcomer a Top 10 breakthrough, the airwaves grew resistant to an artist whose alarmingly high hair and deadpan ironies rendered him a shifty character.

These performances recall a time when country seemed open to creative possibility, when material as subversive as “God Will” or as surrealistic as “If I Had A Boat” showed how far the categorical strictures could stretch. However, the windows of opportunity that had opened in the late ’80s slammed shut with the ascendance of Garth and Shania.

The good news is that the anthology contains two new recordings – the engagingly droll “The Truck Song” and the tossed-off “San Antonio Girl” – that sound seamless against his timeless music from 15 years ago. The bad news is that the collection otherwise represents another stopgap for the once prolific Lovett, who has only issued two CDs of new material in the decade since 1992’s *Joshua Judges Ruth*.

— Don McLeese



BUDDY & JULIE MILLER
 Buddy & Julie Miller
 HIGHTONE
 ★★★★★

With Buddy and Julie Miller's first joint release since cranking out five remarkable, separate solo albums, it's easy to see why they've been affectionately dubbed the George and Tammy of alt-country. Truth be told, their eponymous record is chock-full of the superb songwriting, top-notch playing, heart-rending lyrics and emotionally complementary harmonizing that made their solo records so compelling.

The Millers get things off to a roaring start with a pulsating Celtic/country send-up of Richard Thompson's "Keep Your Distance," with Buddy heightening the tune's intensity near the end with some soaring guitar work. Julie's "You Make My Heart Beat Too Fast" is a thumping, "Wild Thing"-like rocker in which she tells the object of her affection *I'm psychedelic with emotion and I can't come down* in a sensual, whispery, woman-child vocal delivery, with Buddy offering some downright menacing harmony.

A truly captivating track is Julie's "Rachel," based on the diary of Rachel Joy Scott, one of the 13 student-victims of the 1999 Columbine High School shootings. The blending of Buddy's chiming electric bouzouki with the couple's warm, soaring harmonies helps make the song an affirmation of eternal life. Equally moving is "Holding Up The Sky," another Julie-penned tune in which both she and her husband profess their never-ending love in this world and in the hereafter.

Recorded in their Nashville-based home studio, called Dogtown, *Buddy & Julie Miller* is a vocal and songwriting masterpiece that leaves one hoping that the Millers will be able to find time

between their hectic duties as performers, writers and producers to issue a follow-up in the near future.

— Rick Petreycik

DWIGHT YOAKAM
South Of Heaven, West Of Hell
 REPRISE

★★★★
 Subtitled *Songs From And Inspired By The Motion Picture*, Dwight Yoakam's 15th album documents his versatile approach to classic country while painting an aural picture of his first outing as a film director.

Yoakam, who's received critical acclaim as an actor, also stars in and co-wrote the movie *South Of Heaven, West Of Hell*. To give a feel for the Western and its characters, snippets of dialogue and incidental music are segued between the album's 11 songs. In some cases, these asides add to the album's atmosphere; in other cases, they bog down the musical momentum.

Ranging from spirituals to honky-tonk rave-ups to simmering R&B-gone-country, *South Of Heaven's* eclectic repertoire demonstrates Yoakam's range as a country singer and writer, as well as longtime guitarist/producer Pete Anderson's superb

Elvis Fans "All Shook Up" Over Postal Encore!

Rare Collectible Opportunity Incites Collector Frenzy

Memphis, TN – Elvis fans and collectors are "all shook up" over the latest issue of Limited Edition Official Postage Stamps honoring "the King of Rock 'n' Roll." The mint condition 9 stamp set commemorates Elvis' 1968 television special which fans now refer to as the "comeback special." Some collectors are calling this a rare collectible opportunity for admirers of this American icon.

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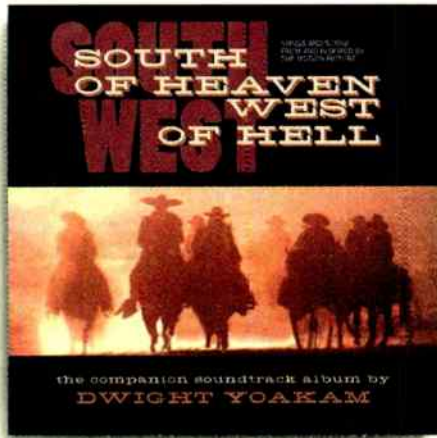
"This is a sensational way for anyone to establish a link with one of the most enduring pop icons of the 20th century," added Hubbard.

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handling of a spectrum of sounds. Just as filmmaking is a collaborative effort, so is Yoakam's soundtrack. He enlists torchy belter Bekka Bramlett as a duet partner on several songs, and he co-wrote tunes with ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and Rolling Stone Mick Jagger.

South Of Heaven is bookended by two very different versions of the track Yoakam has deemed the movie's theme song: "Words" opens the album as a piano-driven mood-piece, with Yoakam's brief lyrics describing why *words are not my friends*. On the song's CD-closing reprise, Lee Thornberg's muted trumpet replaces Yoakam's vocals, turning it into a Chet Baker-esque instrumental vamp. Though a beautiful closeout, you can't help missing Yoakam's sinewy and emotive voice, the velvety thread that runs throughout this compelling soundtrack.

— Holly George-Warren

MERLE HAGGARD

Roots, Volume 1

ANTI/EPITAPH

★★★★

Besides being one of the great artists of the latter half of the 20th century, Haggard has also been one of country music's most influential revivalists.

His *Best Damn Fiddle Player In The World*, a 1970 tribute to Bob Wills, helped introduce the magic of '40s Western swing to a new generation of artists – not the least of them being George Strait. Heartfelt tributes to Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and Lefty Frizzell similarly renewed the currency of these artists' musical legacies.

On *Roots, Volume 1*, Haggard again draws inspiration from traditional bar-room country – specifically the music of late-'50s honky-tonk king Frizzell. That's not a big surprise: Frizzell has

always been one of Haggard's own most indelible influences as a vocalist.

Recorded in Haggard's Northern California living room using studio equipment from the '50s, the project came about when the singer discovered that Frizzell's one-time guitarist, Norm Stephens, lived only 20 miles away. He immediately enlisted Stephens as a recording partner and began work on this album.

Roots is mostly comprised of faithful remakes of familiar Frizzell hits, including "Always Late," "If You've Got The Money" and "I Want To Be With You Always," and lesser-known gems like "Look What Thoughts Will Do" and "My Baby's Just Like Money." Haggard rounds things out with three fair-to-middlin' originals and a couple of retro-style covers of Hank Williams and Hank Thompson.

If you're looking for the ragged and



rowdy spirit of Willie Nelson's signature version of "If You've Got The Money (I've Got The Time)," don't look here. Instead, this is a soulful, subdued and resolutely retro collection where Haggard suspends his own formidable musical persona and slips comfortably into the role of quintessential Frizzell imitator.

— Bob Allen

DAVID BALL

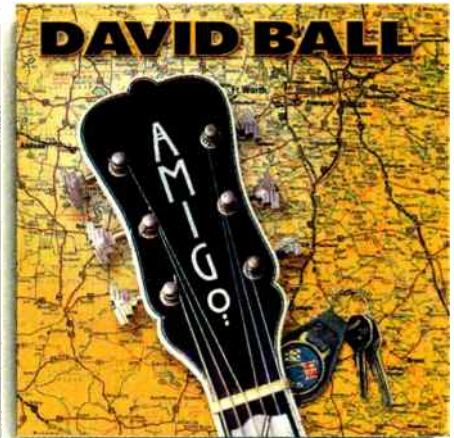
Amigo

DUALTONE

★★★★

Until lately, country fans knew David Ball almost exclusively through "Thinkin' Problem," his 1994 hit. But his splendid new album, *Amigo*, proves his heart belongs more to Texas dance-halls than to country radio.

Two years after leaving Warner Bros. Records, Ball has signed with an inde-



pendent label and rebounded with his best record and his biggest hit in years. "Riding With Private Malone," actually recorded before America's renewal of patriotism after Sept. 11, is a spooky-cool ghost song that evokes chills even without the emotional component of military and national pride.

Ball's light tenor perfectly suits story songs, and his relaxed tone carries an old-fashioned ease that never grows heavy on the ears. With *Amigo*, he bolsters his honky-tonk foundation with snappy Western swing, cowboy songs, amiable Tex-Mex and old-time, rootsy country. Of his new songs, "Loser Friendly" reprises the honky-tonk wordplay that made "Thinkin' Problem" so grabby; "Swing Baby" draws on the jazzy Lone Star sound that Lyle Lovett loves; and "Texas Echo" is a camp-fire-and-cactus tune Gene Autry would have killed for. And at least a third of *Amigo* has an ingratiating Spanish lilt, including the lost-love paean "She Always Talked About Mexico," replete with baja trumpet.

Not only will *Amigo* get you on your feet, but it's also a superb example of the simmering stew of cultural flavors that make up the best country fare. In a time when contemporary producers and programmers emphasize beat and sex appeal, *Amigo* instead offers timeless, ageless music, performed with artistry and grace.

— A. N.

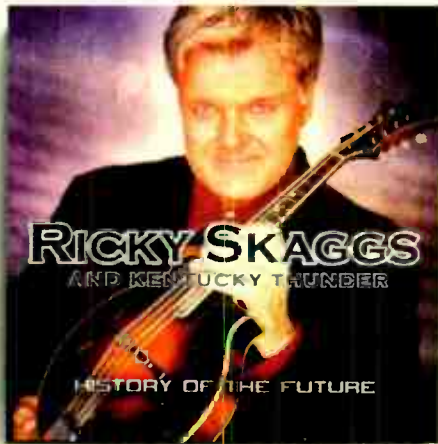
RICKY SKAGGS AND KENTUCKY THUNDER

History Of The Future

SKAGGS FAMILY/HOLLYWOOD

★★★★★

Ricky Skaggs' name rarely rises amid the media attention given to the surprise success of the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* soundtrack. But it should.



Back in 1997, Skaggs anticipated American audiences' embrace of organic, mountain-grown acoustic music. Since then, the one-time CMA Entertainer of the Year has devoted himself to his first love, bluegrass music, releasing a series of outstanding albums that have instilled excitement throughout the acoustic-music world.

Fortunately, Skaggs sees *O Brother* as the breakthrough it is, and he sounds newly inspired on his latest album – which is every bit as good as his previous highwater marks, 1997's *Bluegrass Rules!* and 1999's *Ancient Tones*.

Skaggs' band, Kentucky Thunder, already is renowned among bluegrass fans for the ferocious velocity of its playing. *History Of The Future* kicks that reputation up a notch, with warp-speed remakes of "Shady Grove" and "Rollin' In My Sweet Baby's Arms," proving this eight-piece band is as eye-poppingly precise as it is fast.

But *Kentucky Thunder* is more than instrumental flash: Skaggs has always been a moralist, and he presents several powerful tunes about family, sin and redemption that illustrate the good vs. evil struggle without preaching. "Your Selfish Heart" is a stunning heart-tugger about the damage a philanderer can exact on a household. Similarly, the memorable "Too Far Down To Fall" finds a demoralized man acknowledging that the woman who's doing him wrong can't break his heart – that's already been done by someone he loved more. Both songs spotlight Skaggs' remarkably expressive voice.

Twenty years after Skaggs first instilled a bluegrass flavor into the country countdown, the veteran continues to make shockingly strong records. As high as he's set the bar for himself, he

nonetheless continues to create records that delight and surprise.

— Michael McCall

JEFF CARSON

Real Life

CURB

★★

Four years have passed since country fans have heard anything from Jeff Carson. After hitting his stride in the mid-'90s with three Top 10 tunes – "Not On Your Love," "The Car" and "Holdin' Onto Somethin'" – the Tulsa native's career wallowed while Curb Records waited for the right song to come along.

The title cut of *Real Life* is that song. A moving ballad with a life-affirming twist at its climax, it has the makings of a career milestone. Carson sings it superbly, his smooth tenor offering tender understatement, while producer Justin Niebank resists the urge to saturate the arrangement with full-blown pomposity.

Unfortunately, these strengths aren't sustained throughout the album. Carson is a sensitive singer who eschews ornamentation or showmanship. If anything, his sound is so indiscriminate that it all but melts into the song itself. He's a good singer, but not a readily identifiable one.

However, he has an ear for good songs – including the previously released "Shine On," a mid-tempo number with an inspirational message and a catchy melody. The remaining songs fall into the realm of the pleasantly predictable: The hopeful ode "Until We Fall Back In Love Again" has an appealing chorus; "Divine Intervention" is a light country rocker riddled with humorous clichés; and



"Scars And All" is a passable paean to unconditional love.

However, *Real Life* stumbles most in its sequencing. It's understandable to open the record with the hit single, but four slow serenades in a row invite narcolepsy.

So here's some real-life advice artists should keep in mind: Pay attention to the pacing. Snoring is not a complimentary reaction.

— N. K.



JOE DIFFIE

In Another World

MONUMENT

★★★

Good ol' Joe Diffie has been up, down and all around during his decade-long, eight-album recording career. He's been fat, he's been thin; he's been a hard-core honky-tonker, a novelty singer, even an occasional romantic balladeer.

On his latest release – his first for Monument – the Oklahoma-born singer has once again trimmed his girth and revved up his sound. But his best efforts here are occasionally blunted by co-producers Don Cook and Lonnie Wilson's inventive but overly busy arrangements.

The title tune to *In Another World* is a case in point. It's a powerful heart-break ballad burdened with sappy production and Diffie's overly mannered and melodramatic singing. There are a couple of other tracks, like the syrupy "If I Lost Her," that suffer similar fates.

But Diffie finds his footing on "My Give A Damn's Busted," a mean-spirited and immensely clever send-off to a nutty girlfriend who's driven her ex past the point of caring. There's similarly inspired and witty tomfoolery on "Stoned On Her Love," a loopy romp featuring a weird, psychobilly arrangement.

But the most powerful moments on *In Another World* come when Diffie, Cook and Wilson lighten up on the production overkill and let the singer's finely nuanced emotions rule the mix. It's Diffie's voice that brings depth to the exquisitely soulful and despairing "Hollow Deep As Mine," the churning, edgy "Live To Love Another Day" and a pair of earnestly sad songs called "This Pretender" and "Like A River Dreams Of Rain." These deeply felt and supremely moving performances compensate for Diffie's occasional lapses into excess.

— B. A.

BOOZOO CHAVIS

Down Home On Dog Hill

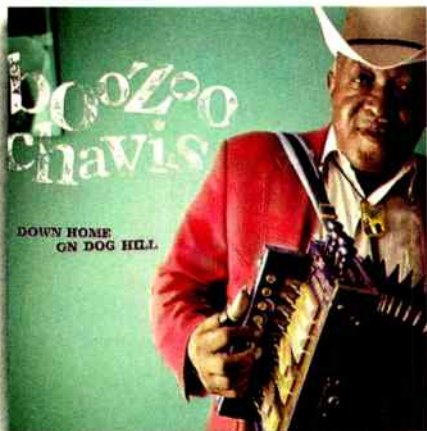
ROUNDER

★★★★

A pioneer of the Louisiana-based zydeco sound, Boozoo Chavis wasn't as well known as his peer Clifton Chenier. But Chavis' spirited, rustic music was just as loved and just as influential as that of his better-known compatriot.

Down Home On Dog Hill – a reference to Chavis' home near Lake Charles, La. – was his last studio recording before he passed away in May 2001. While Chavis' earlier recordings may be more lively around the edges, the Scott Billington-produced *Down Home* features Chavis as he always was – a forceful, rough-voiced frontman whose accordion playing was as percussive as it was melodic.

Joining Chavis on the album is slide guitarist Sonny Landreth, whose résumé also includes playing with Chenier and John Hiatt; he's a welcome addition whose superlative playing adds a tasty instrumental flavor to Chavis' band, The Magic



Sounds. The pure, instinctive funk lines spun out by bassist Classic Ballou Jr. are such a pleasure to follow that they could practically be a record unto themselves.

With a few notable exceptions, the tunes cover Chavis' usual gamut: Cajun vamps like the opener "Tell Me What You Want," a touch of his trademark randiness in "Keep Your Dress Tail Down" and old faves like "Sugar Bee" and "Johnnie Billy Goat." But it's a cover of Paul Cebar's "I'm Still Blinkin'" that resonates most resoundingly. When Chavis sings, *I got a Chevy, he had a Lincoln, he's all done, but I'm still blinkin'*, it has the ring of a man who, with no apologies to Sinatra, did it his way – and won.

— Robert Baird

CHARLIE DANIELS BAND

The Live Record

AUDIUM/BLUE HAT

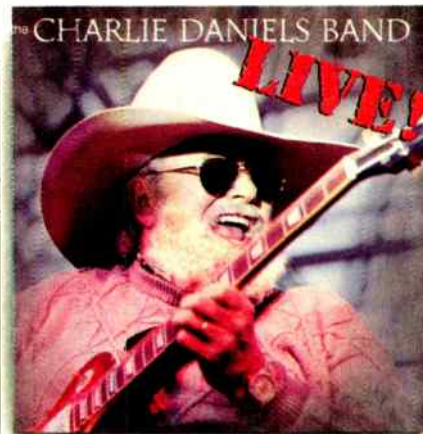
★★★★

Thirty-eight albums, 14 million records and a couple million miles on the road, the Charlie Daniels Band at long last delivers the first live album in the band's 30-year history. It's a cause for celebration.

The Live Record – recorded in 2000 during shows in Florida, North Carolina and Virginia – features the fiddle fire, blistering guitar chops and good-ol'-boy energy that has made the CDB an enduring voice of Southern rock. Though a few cuts reveal an aging voice, the 65-year-old Daniels' fingers are as nimble and his bow hand as fluid as ever. For fans who also aren't as young as we used to be, this is almost as good as being there.

The two-time Grammy winner dynamically delivers the compelling blend of rock, blues, jazz, bluegrass and country he refuses to categorize as anything but "CDB music." He gives us longtime faves "The South's Gonna Do It (Again)" and "Long Haired Country Boy," as well as "Wooley Swamp" and "The Devil Went Down To Georgia," which put him on the pop-culture map by marrying Southern music and folklore.

Daniels also tips his 10-gallon to several Southern rock compatriots who've passed, including Marshall Tucker's Toy Caldwell ("Take The



Highway") and Duane Allman ("In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed"), reminding us of CDB's mesmerizing jazz proficiency.

An outspoken political conservative, Daniels includes the timely "In America," as well as 1989's controversial "Simple Man," for which he took considerable heat from some for its promotion of vigilante retribution for criminals (and which elevated him to ideological hero with others).

Regardless of how one feels about Daniels' politics, *The Live Record* is at once a raucous and familiar trip down memory lane, and a reminder of the musical and philosophical honesty of this simple man.

— Charlene Blevins

ROBBIE FULKS

Couples In Trouble

BOONDOGGLE

★★★★

13 Hillbilly Giants

BLOODSHOT

★★★★

For more than five years, Robbie Fulks has plied his trade as the merry prankster of alt-county. Through four previous releases, his rubbery tenor, expert guitar picking and well-crafted, dark-humored compositions shone forth, all the while demonstrating that Fulks was *not* wearing his heart on his sleeve.

On his new *Couples In Trouble*, only a couple of songs sound anything like country, but the collection has all the heart and soul of classic Hank Williams. Fulks' concurrent release, *13 Hillbilly Giants*, showcases the songs of unsung country heroes, with his prankster mask firmly back in place.

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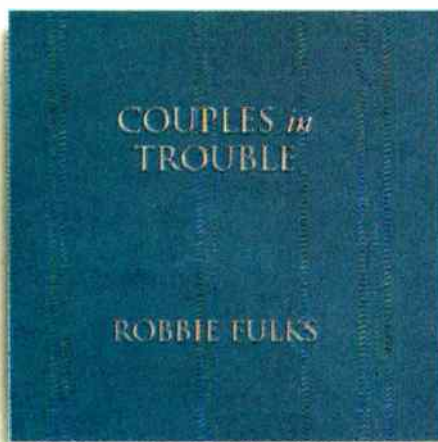


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Couples In Trouble is a concept album of sorts, with each track resembling a short story in which characters inhabit a sorrowful world and whose relationships add to the turmoil. Diverse musical styles abound, but throughout, Fulks' emotionally charged vocals ring with intensity and conviction.

From the old-timey pastiche of "In Bristol Town One Bright Day," to the orchestrally sweeping "Anything For Love" and the folky, Celtic-tinged "Banks Of The Marianne," betrayal and death go hand in hand with lust and love. Fulks and his ace crew of musicians sound equally at home on the straight-ahead rocker "Dancing On The Ashes," the haunting Western elegy "She Needs You Now" and the devastating, violin-and-piano-fueled reverie, "My Tormentor."

Offering a humorous antidote to *Couples In Trouble* is *13 Hillbilly Giants*, where the Chicago-based, Southern-raised Fulks goes back to basics, employing guitar, upright bass, fiddle and drums on such rib-tickers as Jimmie Logsdon's hysterical



"I Want To Be Mama'd" and The Carlises' lascivious "Knot Hole." Fulks demonstrates his flatpicking prowess on bluegrass wildman Jimmy Arnold's instrumental "Southern Comfort" and Jimmy Murphy's mountain favorite "We Live A Long Time To Get Old."

Other highlights include Fulks' sendup of Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner's spoken-word tearjerker "Jeannie's Afraid Of The Dark" and Whisperin' Bill Anderson's alkie weeper "Cocktails." It's all in good fun, and as Fulks writes in the liner notes, these covers will hopefully send listeners back to the increasingly obscure originals. This album also demonstrates the connection between the work of some of Fulks' dramatic (and off-the-wall) country predecessors and his own edgy *oeuvre*.

— H. G.-W.

PAT GREEN

Three Days

REPUBLIC/UNIVERSAL

★★★★

Texas dancehall phenom Pat Green has described himself as whimsical and positive, and his music reflects that mindset. His inherent optimism, however, has drawn Green harsh criticism from singer/songwriters and music reviewers who think only the dark side of life is worth writing or singing about and anything on the positive side of the spectrum must be lightweight.

That is, quite simply, hogwash.

How refreshing it is to discover music that lifts your spirits and makes you want to dance. How welcome to get an aural break from the droning, pseudo-literate Flannery O'Connor or William Faulkner wannabes who have less talent than ego. How uplifting in this time of national strife to bathe your weary psyche in fun music with a hopeful message.

At least a couple hundred thousand people agree, too – that's how many independent albums Green sold before being snatched up by Universal in New York.

On *Three Days*, Green's major-label debut and seventh release, he defines what he's about with the first cut and single, "Carry On." Its upbeat melody and message urges listeners to take a break when we're feeling down, and then take control. In "Who's To Say,"



Green promotes non-judgmentalism. Even the folk-wisdom-filled "Count Your Blessings," written by Bill Erickson, is an amusing ditty for those who see the glass as half full.

But there's more than sunshine here.

On "Three Days," Green deftly approaches the constraints and passions of a traveling man who has limited time at home, and evokes bittersweet wanderlust with mentor Willie Nelson on "Threadbare Gypsy Soul."

Produced by Lloyd Maines, *Three Days* balances soulful "college country" and acoustic-hearted Texas music. Call it alternative country for optimists or baseball-hat country rock if either of those labels suit you. I just call it inspiring.

— C. B.

TRACY LAWRENCE

Tracy Lawrence

ATLANTIC

★★★

You rarely see a successful singer release a self-titled album late in his career. But Tracy Lawrence waited until his ninth CD to use his name as the title, which actually seems like a smart move – why blow all the commercial cachet of an established star's name on an introductory album?

However, Lawrence should have bestowed his hallowed name on a more deserving collection.

Musically, *Tracy Lawrence* is an above-average, impressively produced effort. Lyrically, however, it offers pleasant, rarely stirring fare marred by a few jarring exceptions.

The album opens auspiciously with "Crawlin' Again," a humorous lament, about guys who return to habits of babyhood, that employs the pedabro and fiddle of eminent players Sonny



Garrish and Aubrey Haynie. Later on, the outstanding banjo player Alison Brown joins with Haynie's fiddle on the exhilarating "God's Green Earth." Other highlights include "Life Don't Have To Be So Hard," a serious ballad about family values reminiscent of Don Williams, and "It's Got You All Over It," a delicious country-swing gem.

But trouble appears elsewhere. "It's Hard To Be An Outlaw" doesn't make much sense romantically, coupling the hook of the title with the line *when you're not wanted anymore*. And "She Loved The Devil Out Of Me" wastes Brown's artful banjo on artless sacrilege. "What A Memory" is trivially maudlin, delivering the news that mama has died, but at least he got a good guitar out of it. And the forgettable closing song, "I Won All The Battles," includes the predictable rejoinder ... *but I just lost the war*.

Unfortunately for Lawrence, his battles here aren't all victories, either.

— Jack Hurst

RAUL MALO
Today

HIGHER OCTAVE
★★★★

Few Nashville acts devoted themselves to pushing the envelope as hard as The Mavericks. With the band now on hiatus, their adventurism lives on with the first solo album by vocalist Raul Malo.

On *Today*, Malo indulges his musical heritage: American rock 'n' roll, lounge music and especially the rhythmically charged Cuban music he heard growing up in South Florida as the child of parents who'd fled Cuba in the 1960s. It's a side of his talents he recently explored on "Dance The Night Away," the salsa-

influenced opening track on The Mavs' 1998 album *Trampoline*, and on his contributions to the second Los Super Seven project, *Canto*.

With his smooth, strong voice – always The Mavericks' ace card – it's no exaggeration to think that Malo likely could pull off nearly any song or style he wished, and here he doesn't disappoint. Few in popular music today possess his expressive range. On his solo album, he capably and often singularly nails everything from exuberant big-band shouters like "I Said I Love You" to tender crooning in "Let's Not Say Goodbye."

Several tunes, such as the languorous "Are We Almost There?," would not have been out of place on a Mavericks record. On the other hand, four of the tunes, including the sprightly "No Me Preguntas Tanto," are sung in Spanish. And for a total change-up – gee, a



Maverick throwing a wild pitch? – rockified country bad girl Shelby Lynne joins him for a duet on the punchy, horn-accented "It Takes Two To Tango."

Released on a small California label, this is a solid solo debut that those with adventurous tastes will appreciate.

— R. B.

BRUCE ROBISON
Country Sunshine

BOARS NEST
★★★★

Like Willie Nelson three decades ago, Bruce Robison got more attention in Nashville once he left the city behind.

Robison ditched Music City after releasing two albums on Sony's Lucky Dog Records – and since then, his songs have hit artistic paydirt. They include the shattering drama of Tim McGraw's "Angry All The Time" and



the Dixie Chicks' "Travelin' Soldier," and also the cheeky humor of Gary Allan's "What Would Willie Do."

But Robison's strengths shine brightest on *Country Sunshine*, his first album since departing Sony Music and returning to Austin. Freed from chasing a radio hit, Robison delivers his gifts in spare, flattering arrangements strong on melody and accented with everything from fiddle to clarinet to banjo. Robison's previous albums – *Wrapped* and *Long Way Home From Anywhere* – are gems; *Country Sunshine* is better, partly because it all sounds so perfectly natural.

Robison's not against the occasional laugh-out-loud jape, as when suggesting troubled souls turn to Willie Nelson for guidance in "What Would Willie Do." But the Texan's most potent work is bold in a different way. "Blame It On Me" and "Anyone But Me" direct smart wordplay into statements of aching self-assessment, while "Valentine" offers a more sweetly beneficent view of his relationships. On a lighter note, "Devil May Care" swings with a vaudevillian sense of fiendish fun.

However, words comprise only part of Robison's gifts; the way he combines his insightful lyrics and his clever melodic knack make him sound like an Austin version of the late British songwriter Harry Nilsson, who also melded emotion and wit in stylishly subtle ways.

So what *would* Willie do? Just what Robison is now doing: Acknowledge that Nashville understands his songs but not his performance strengths, then retreat to Texas to make stunning albums the world can't help but notice.

— M. M.



TIM O'BRIEN
Two Journeys

(Howdy Skies) ★★★★★

A one-man cultural exchange program, bluegrass veteran O'Brien intensifies his exploration of Celtic music on *Two Journeys*. He first brought American and Celtic musicians together on 1999's *Crossing*, but where that album underscored the ties between bluegrass and its Anglo-Saxon predecessor, *Two Journeys* concentrates solely on Celtic traditions. Simply put, it's the most stunningly powerful collection of O'Brien's acclaimed career. The West Virginia native brings together an outstanding cross-continental ensemble that includes Cajun accordionist Dirk Powell, Celtic fiddle legend Kevin Burke, and Karan Casey and John Williams of the Irish band Solas. They play beautifully evocative arrangements of dramatic old folk songs, perfectly tempered instrumentals and touching O'Brien originals. It's both mournful and life-affirming.

JONI HARMS
After All

(RealWest) ★★★

Harms, the current Academy of Western Artists female vocalist of the year, presents a sentimental love letter about how special it is to hitch up with a good cowboy and settle into a simple, worshipful existence. *After All*, her eighth album, focuses on how life's fullness comes from small

pleasures like sipping coffee as the sun comes up, waltzing to the sound of twin fiddles and putting on church clothes for Sunday morning. The Oregon ranch owner and former Miss Northwest Rodeo saddles up a whole barn full of sweet valentines, from the opening "Weakness For Cowboys" through odes about loving a rough-handed silent rancher and the self-explanatory "Cowboy Wedding." Throughout, the stripped-down, steel-and-fiddle production fits Harms' unpretentious style and message. *After All* is not her



best record – that honor would go to 1998's *Cowgirl Dream* – but it likely will corral more fans.

MAURA O'CONNELL
Walls & Windows
(Sugar Hill) ★★★★★

If the world better appreciated superb singers who aim for hard honesty rather than easy hooks, O'Connell would reign as a modern music star. Born in Ireland's County Clare, and a Nashvillian since 1987, she loves songs as much as she loves to sing. Rather than showing off her powerful pipes or expansive range, she concentrates on subtly conveying the emotion of the lyrics. For *Walls & Windows*, she works with Nashville producer Ray Kennedy, who sometimes gives O'Connell a beefier sound but at other times opts for the atmospheric lushness that worked well on previous

albums. As usual, O'Connell's rich, warm voice illuminates joyous celebrations of love (Kim Richey's "Every River," Van Morrison's "Crazy



Love"), complex relationship songs (Patty Griffin's "I Wonder") and odes to the wistful wonder of life (Jonell Mosser's "Blessing," John Prine's "Sleepy Eyed Boy.") Whatever the song, O'Connell opens a window to the light it offers.

TOM ADAMS
Adams County Banjo
(Rounder) ★★★★★

If Earl Scruggs had been as full of creative fire in the last decade as he had been in the '40s and '50s, he would probably sound something like Adams. A veteran picker himself, Adams is deeply rooted in the Scruggs sound – not only can he play with dazzling speed and a rich tone, but he also has the spirited bounce that set Scruggs apart from his contemporaries. But Adams is more than a traditionalist. His second album of instrumentals illustrates how he can incorporate newgrass and Celtic sounds without losing

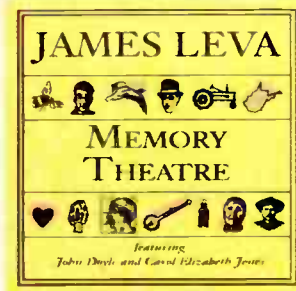


his distinctiveness. *Adams County Banjo* concentrates on small ensemble pairings, working in trio and quartet settings with Alison Krauss, Sam Bush, Stuart Duncan and other bluegrass and Celtic specialists. Featuring traditional tunes like "John Henry" and "Worried Man Blues" as well as a heap of originals, *Adams County Banjo* is worth visiting.

JAMES LEVA
Memory Theatre

(Copper Creek) ★★★★★

Usually heard with wife Carol Elizabeth Jones in the folk duo Jones & Leva, fiddler Leva predictably uses his solo album to spotlight his instrumental ability and plaintive voice. What isn't predictable is the newfound strengths *Memory Theatre* unleashes: Leva's solo album



weaves dark-toned fiddle pieces with traditional and original compositions, creating a thoughtful, deeply moving collection. He makes good use of his wife's tenderly expressive harmonies on occasion, but the most important collaborator here is John Doyle, an Irish acoustic guitarist. Doyle's inventive, rhythmic string work adds brisk energy and a strong Celtic flavor, which help keep the album from sinking under its own ambitious weight. Any fan of Appalachian-based folk music would enjoy taking in Leva's cinematic linking of the past and present.

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Patriot

Charlie Daniels fires away on politics, lawn mowers, Southern rock and the fate of a guy with green teeth

Charlie Daniels is nothing if not a patriot. "This is the greatest country in the world, and you wanna know why?" he asks. "It's because we stick together."

Mind you, the veteran Southern rocker made these remarks shortly before the tragic events of Sept. 11. For further proof that his red, white and blue runs deep, check out the Charlie

Daniels Band's new album, *The Live Record*, which features such CDB staples such as "In America" and "Still In Saigon."

Remarkably, it's his first full-fledged concert recording. "Why in a 30-year career we had never done a live album I couldn't tell you," he says. "But like the Bible says, everything has a season."

Have you ever thought of running for office? I guess everybody says, 'If I was the president, I'd do this or that,' but I think politics in general has got to be one of the most frustrating jobs you could have. The reason being is that we can't seem to get enough like-minded people together at one time to get anything done. If a number of like-minded people do get together to do something, it gets so watered down by the time it becomes a bill, it looks more like a Sears, Roebuck catalog!

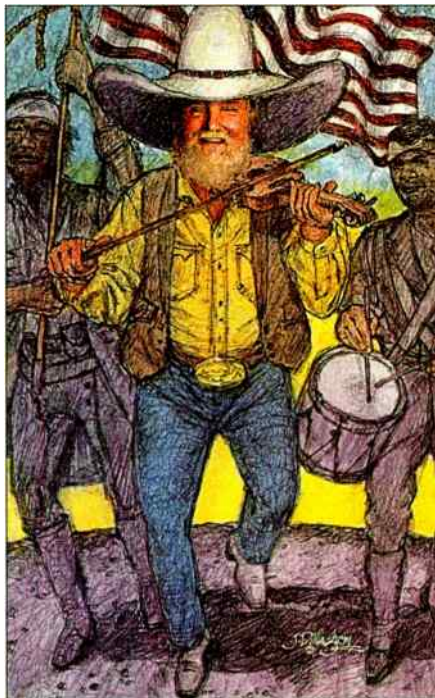
You're such a no-nonsense guy, you'd be good at getting folks to agree on stuff. Isn't that the essence of politics? The only way I could get politicians to agree is to go upside their heads! Listen, politicians do things they know are detrimental to the country because it's good for their party. In my opinion, when one party does something to the other party just to make them look bad, and it ends up affecting the country in the process, to me they are traitors and should be treated as such.

Is "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" the first rap song? Well, you must be thinking like Arsenio Hall, because he told me that one time. But I don't agree. There's an old form of music called talking blues that has been around forever. And that's what rap is basically. That song really is just a form of talking blues.

What's the greatest invention of the last hundred years? The internal combustion engine. If you didn't have that, you wouldn't have cars, airplanes, lawn mowers or lots of other things that make life easier.

Do you foresee a return to the glory days of Southern rock? I do, because when things get so far out, there has to be a return to the basics. But you know, Southern rock

has never been a genre of music to me. Let's dissect a few things folks know as Southern rock. Allman Brothers are a blues band. The Marshall Tucker Band has country leanings. And Lynyrd Skynyrd is as rock 'n' roll as they can be. And my band is in the middle somewhere.



What advice would you give to an aspiring fiddle player? Be doggone sure that's what you want to do for a living. And decide to accomplish your goals even if you have to work twice as hard as anybody else. Be honest with yourself with the amount of talent that you have. And if you feel good about that, move someplace where there is a music business.

Tiger Woods: Man or machine? I have the utmost admiration for Tiger Woods. Here is a man who has worked extremely hard, and dedicated himself to being what he wanted. He is a prime example of what can be accomplished if you take your God-given talent and you work on it and perfect it. Tiger Woods is no machine; he doesn't rely on luck whatsoever. He has gotten where he is because of hard work. I think he's the greatest golfer who ever came along.

What recipe are you known for? Bananas Foster. I watched a guy make this dessert in New Orleans once, and decided I wanted to learn how to make it, so I did. I can't boil water, but I can make Bananas Foster.

It's been nearly 30 years since "Uneasy Rider" first hit. Whatever happened to "ol' Green Teeth"? Oh, he's probably stumbling around some Mississippi bar. I never really talked much about him after that song. But that character was actually a guy I knew one time who obviously didn't practice much dental hygiene.

BY KATH HANSEN

ILLUSTRATION BY JERRY DILLINGHAM

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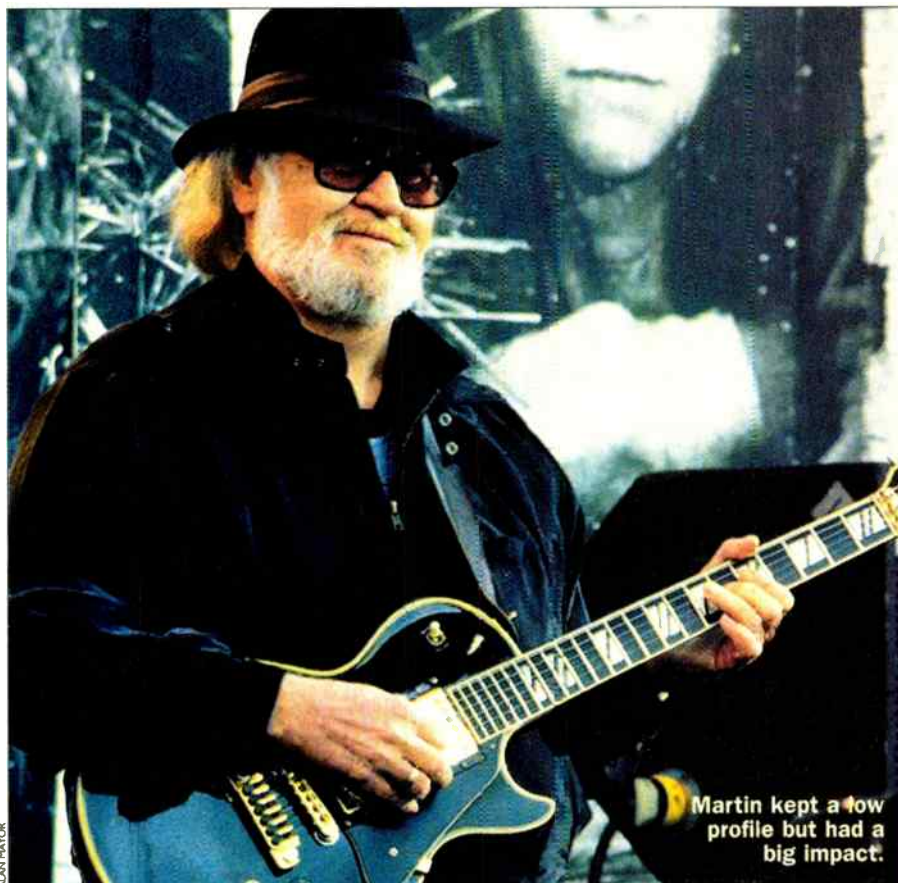
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OFF THE CHARTS

THE COUNTRY BUZZ OUTSIDE THE MUSIC BIZ

Remembering A Master Guitarist

Nashville studio ace Grady Martin dies at age 72



Martin kept a low profile but had a big impact.

Country fans may not know Grady Martin's name, but they know his guitar work. Among the unsung heroes of Nashville music history, Martin has performed on thousands of country music hits, including standards by Country Music Hall of Famers Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Kitty Wells, Loretta Lynn, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Ray Price, Brenda Lee, Little Jimmy Dickens and scores of others.

Martin, 72, died of a heart attack on Dec. 3. He was revered for his versatility, his innovation, his tastefulness and his superior tone. The breadth of his abilities and the forcefulness of his musical presence can be detected in two classic guitar parts: the nylon-string acoustic work that

gives Marty Robbins' "El Paso" its Spanish flavor, and the reverberating electric riff that gives Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman" its virile swagger.

He was born in Chapel Hill, Tenn., on Jan. 17, 1929. He died nearby in Lewisburg, where he grew up and spent his last years in quiet retirement.

As a youngster, Martin first learned to play the fiddle, the instrument of his childhood idol, Roy Acuff. He landed his first musical job at 15 in the house band of a Nashville radio station, and in 1946 he was hired as a fiddler and guitarist by Opry stars the Bailes Brothers.

Martin's first recording session occurred that same year, when he backed the duo Curly Fox and Texas Ruby. The

Chicago session also featured guitarist Jabbo Arrington, and the two developed a twin-guitar sound that would become a popular country music trend.

In 1949, Jimmy Dickens hired Martin and Arrington for his Country Boys band. When Arrington left, Martin continued the twin-guitar style with steel guitarist Thumbs Carlille. It can be heard on such jumping Dickens hits as "Country Boy" and "Hillbilly Fever."

In 1950, at age 21, Martin's reputation was solidified when he played guitar on Red Foley's swinging "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy." He became Foley's bandleader, cutting a striking figure on the *Ozark Jubilee* with his famous double-neck electric guitar.

Martin soon became a key member of Nashville's legendary "A-team," a coterie of first-call musicians who backed nearly every Nashville star in the studio. Through the 1960s, Martin ranked with Chet Atkins and Harold Bradley as the most prominent, most-recorded studio guitarist in Nashville.

By the 1970s, Martin voiced his displeasure with Nashville recording trends and slowed his work load. In 1979, he joined Willie Nelson's road band, Family, providing the role model for the character played by actor Slim Pickens in Nelson's semi-autobiographical film *Honeysuckle Rose*. He left Nelson's band in 1994 for health reasons.

Martin was the first recipient of the Nashville Music Association's Master Award in 1983, and he was the third musician to be given a Chetty Award, in April 2000 during the annual Chet Atkins Musicians Days festival.

"Grady has a touch on the guitar that you really don't hear from any other guitar player," Nelson told *country.com* during the concert celebrating Martin's Chetty Award.

That tone – sweet, full and immensely musical – will live on as Martin's legacy.

— Michael McCall

Book Beat

Hank Williams: Snapshots From The Lost Highway
By Colin Escott and Kira Florita (Da Capo Press, \$35)

More has been written about Hank Williams than any other country artist, yet his image remains mythic – a skinny, slightly slumped young man in a flashy cowboy suit, sometimes grinning and often posing properly like a ghost who briefly passed in front of history's camera. Many biographers have diligently uncovered the human details of Hank's life – including Escott, in 1994's *Hank Williams: The Biography*. But this latest biography redefines the way we look at the star, literally.

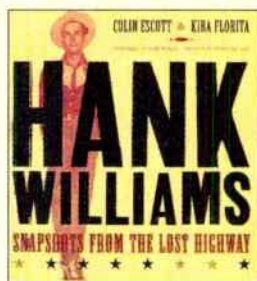
Snapshots From The Lost Highway is packed with the visual remnants of Williams' short life: birth certificate, penciled song lyrics, stained letters, creased snapshots from dime-store booths and hundreds of private photographs. Assembled by Escott and Florita while compiling a box set of Williams' complete works, the photo collection is like rummaging through

mementos tucked away in someone's family Bible. You can't get much more personal than this.

There's Williams as a toddler with razor-cut hair, teenage Hank laughing under a wide cowboy hat, drunk Hank staring incoherently into the camera and (finally) the 29-year-old star lying in his casket. What happened along the way comes into focus through reminiscences from friends and family, coupled with documents that feel like they've spilled out of a dresser drawer.

We see Hank's lyrics scribbled on ruled notebook paper. Turn the page and there's a two-page, typewritten plea from Fred Rose telling Hank, "We think drowning our sorrows will make us forget our troubles, but this has never worked." Receipts tell of spending sprees (\$114.75 to Klein Jewelers), while royalty statements from his publisher, Acuff-Rose, show the money flowing in. In the end, there's the telegraph instructing Hank's sister, Irene, "Come at once. Hank is dead."

The photos from the final years are particularly telling. Staring at a black-and-white shot of the funeral crowd – with ex-wife Audrey, mother Lillie and young bride Billie Jean sitting just heartbeats from



each other – you can almost hear the cat fights begin for who will control Williams' possessions, his legacy and (most important) his money. In fact, the book contains many photos of Williams' women, including girlfriend Bobbie Jett, mother of Hank's daughter Jett

Williams, who is also quoted.

Much of the memorabilia is from the private collection of Marty Stuart, who purchased it from Williams' sister, Irene, shortly before she died. Stuart also contributed a touching foreword to the book, along with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Rick Bragg.

The question that remains is, "Why Hank?" The early photos could be from anybody's scrapbook who grew up in that rural time and place – a school pal, a war buddy, the guy next to you in the bar. Something inside Hiram "Hank" Williams was different. With little education or opportunity, he touched the spirit of people in a way that lasts to this day. *Snapshots* shows that his extraordinary gift largely came out of ordinary experiences and emotions. Maybe that's the answer.

— Miriam Pace Longino

AMERICAN ROAD

Route 66 is celebrated with a second roots-music collection

In nostalgia's rear-view mirror, Route 66 looks like winged T-birds, neon diners and rock 'n' roll kicks. But the famed highway has always been a road of open spaces and rolling hills – and a lifeline for a thousand small, mostly rural communities along the way.

Route 66 also was a road map to the barnstorming blues, Western swing and country musicians of the '40s and '50s. So it's appropriate that the pre-interstate roadway is now being toasted in a tribute album packed with American roots-music performers.

More Songs Of Route 66, brainchild of Asleep At The Wheel drummer David Sanger, follows his surprisingly successful *Songs Of Route 66*, which inaugurated Sanger's homegrown label Lazy SOB in 1998. "The first record

sold so well," Sanger explains, "that it made it possible to make a second."

The collection ranges from country to blues to rock 'n' roll, going from Marcia Ball's horn-pumping opener to Cindy Cashdollar's pedal-steel swing, to Dale Watson's honky-tonk and the Le Roi Brothers' floor-it surf country. Song choices cover a similar range, moving from obscure covers like "Hoppin' In Joplin" to fresh originals like Watson's "Tucumcari, Here I Come" and a vintage cut like "Sweet Home Chicago."

In other words, the homage has the same interconnected, subtly changing variety as the route itself.

"I was interested in finding a Chicago song that really sounds like Chicago," Sanger surmises, "and an Oklahoma song and Texas song that really sounds like those places."

Over the years, Sanger has become a Route 66 devotee, obsessed enough with the minutiae of the highway to study its history and exchange

e-mails on Route 66 chat groups.

His first musical tour of the highway came in the mid-'70s, as a teen behind the wheel of the Etcetera Rock Revival Band's van, though at the time Sanger wasn't even aware of the road's most famous song. After joining Asleep At The Wheel in 1986, he got closer to the route's byways and waysides, the Coral Court Motel and Cadillac Ranch, and all the winding, mule-train curves through the New Mexico and Arizona mountains.

For Sanger and his compilation, the American story Route 66 tells still resonates today. "Route 66 can be a tourist trap," he admits. "Some of it is really cool; some of it is lame. But in 1992 we did a tour for the 66th anniversary of Route 66. I took a new van on the road rather than riding the bus. I was a history major in college, and so that tour was perfect. It had a theme, and we followed all the old road maps and guide books to the highway. We lived that piece of American history, and we contributed to it at the same time."

— Roy Kasten



Book Beat

How The West Was Worn

By Holly George-Warren and Michelle Freedman
(Abrams, \$45)

Fads come and go, but nothing endures like that uniquely American contribution to fashion known as Western style.

As much a part of the American psyche as it is a fashion statement, few other images are so thoroughly connected to our most cherished icons. It's a style we associate with frontiersmen like Daniel Boone, the Wild West shows of Buffalo Bill Cody, nearly a century of celluloid cowboys and decades of rhinestone country stars – even a pop trendsetter like Madonna has co-opted the look, sporting a cowboy hat and Western shirt on the cover of a recent album.

How The West Was Worn presents a beautiful and fascinatingly detailed look at the art and history of Western style. Published in conjunction with a major exhibition at Los Angeles' Autry

Young girls loved this Annie Oakley dress, thanks to actress Gail Davis, pictured on the vest and skirt, who portrayed the sharpshooter in a 1950s TV show.



Museum of Western Heritage, this is a coffee-table book in the strictest sense – thick, oversized and packed with glossy pictures featured in all their Technicolor splendor.

But there's plenty of substance to go along with the style. Authors Holly George-Warren and Michelle Freedman (the former was the longtime editor of *Rolling Stone* Press, the latter is a fashion designer) have been painstaking in their research.

They follow Western clothing from its beginnings in the early 19th century and go on to illustrate how hunters, trappers, prospectors and various mythic and historic characters of the old West affected our sense of style – and how the clothing has indelibly etched the images of these pioneers onto the collective American subconscious.

Moreover, the authors show how functional work clothes morphed into the glittering, glorious creations of famed costumers Nudie and Manuel. It's a fascinating journey, and the authors do a good job of connecting the dots.

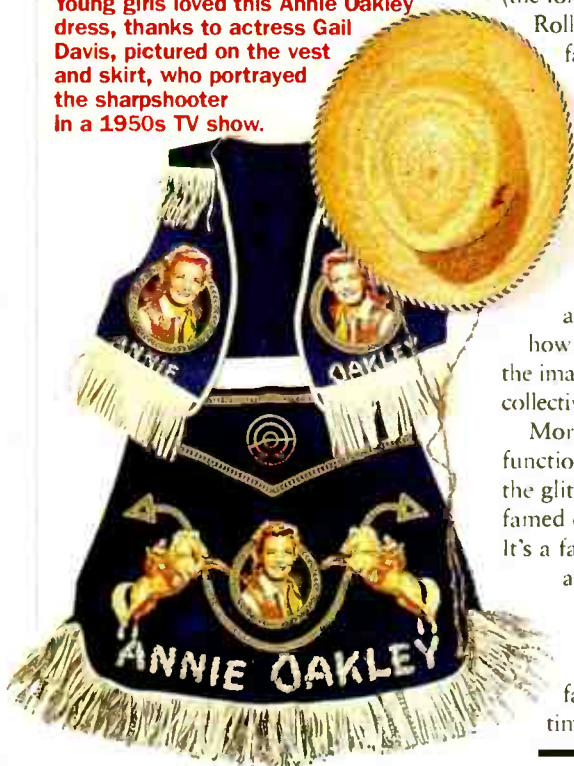
You don't have to be a clotheshound or even a country fan to appreciate this trip through time – though history buffs and

How The West Was Worn explores how Western style can turn into high fashion, as illustrated by these intricately designed, upscale cowgirl outfits.

social observers will no doubt want to pay close attention. For instance, it's a kick to learn that Roy Rogers so loved his German shepherd, Buller, that Nudie featured the pooch on a lime-green shirt. And who knew that a 1950s-era *Grand Ole Opry* frowned on the Western dress one so often associates with country music today – so much so that Texas singer Goldie Hill quit wearing her trademark Western shirts after moving to Nashville? Or that Patsy Cline's fringed short-shorts and bare midriff scandalized the country establishment, decades before Shania Twain ever bared her bellybutton?

In fact, looking through these gorgeous illustrations and photographs, one is left with a lingering sense of loss. As modern-day country-style icons like Faith Hill, the Dixie Chicks and Shania Twain look to New York and European designers for their images, one can't help but wonder about the future of Western style. To paraphrase Music Row's oft-asked question: Who's gonna design their shoes?

— Lisa Zhitto



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FAREWELL TO A CHAMP

Beloved guitarist Champ Hood dies at age 49

Champ Hood's personality mirrored his guitar style — upbeat, sweet-toned and sophisticated, yet subtle and tender at its core. For three decades, Hood was an Austin mainstay, and his jazzy guitar and loose-limbed fiddle style could be heard behind many of the city's most beloved, highest-profile performers. When he died Nov. 3 of cancer at age 49, it dimmed a light in the city known as "The Live Music Capital of the World."

Hood first drew attention as a member of Uncle Walt's Band, an acclaimed trio formed in South Carolina that became a central player in the legendary Austin music scene of the 1970s. You can hear Hood's fiddle and what Lyle Lovett described as his "freewheeling, Django Reinhardt-like acoustic lead

guitar" on albums by Lovett, Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Toni Price, among others.

But despite his long résumé, Hood will always be best remembered for the music he made with Walter Hyatt and David Ball in Uncle Walt's Band.

Ball, the only surviving member of the trio, remembers when he first heard Hyatt and Hood in 1970 in his hometown of Spartanburg, S.C. "They were the best guitarists I'd ever seen," recalls Ball, who was still a high-school student at the time. "And they had the best songs I had ever heard. And I still feel that way. Champ was playing like Doc Watson back then, when no one else

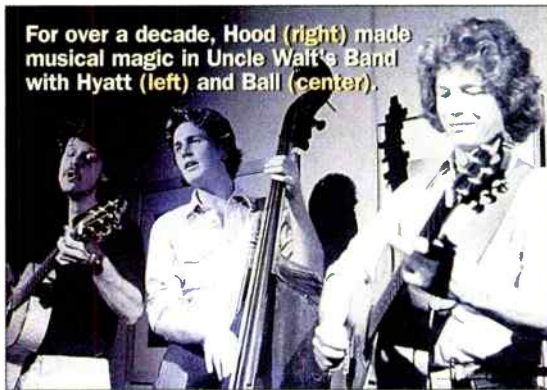
was, and I was always anxious to hear Walter's latest song. Those guys had it."

Formed in 1971, Uncle Walt's Band blended folk and jazz textures into a distinctive brand of progressive acoustic music that combined complex harmonies and swinging rhythms. The trio moved to Austin in 1973, where they left a long legacy before splitting up in 1983.

Hyatt and Ball forged solo careers, both eventually moving to Nashville. Hyatt recorded two solo albums before he was killed in a 1996 ValuJet crash in the Florida Everglades. Ball became a country star, scoring his first hit with "Thinkin' Problem" in 1994 and recently back on the charts with "Riding With Private Malone."

Hood chose to stay in Austin, where his accomplished vocal range and command of a variety of musical styles made him a consummate backing musician and earned him membership in the Texas Music Hall of Fame.

At the time of his death, Hood had been finishing a tribute album for Hyatt that included contributions from Ball, Lovett, Price and Shawn Colvin.



For over a decade, Hood (right) made musical magic in Uncle Walt's Band with Hyatt (left) and Ball (center).

STEVEN L. CLARK

Webb Site

Gail Davies organizes all-star tribute to Webb Pierce

Webb Pierce is too often remembered as the hillbilly star who owned the guitar-shaped swimming pool and the silver-dollar-lined Cadillac. He was much more than that, of course, as a new CD, *Caught In The Webb: A Tribute To The Legendary Webb Pierce*, loudly trumpets.



Gail Davies

Pierce doesn't receive the same level of attention as contemporaries Hank Williams and Lefty Frizzell, but he should. In the 1950s, Pierce scored a remarkable 40 Top 10

country hits, including the classics "Back Street Affair," "There Stands The Glass" and "Honky Tonk Song."

Veteran singer/songwriter Gail Davies, who produced the tribute album, is particularly passionate about Pierce finally getting his due. Davies' father played on the *Louisiana Hayride* when Pierce was a regular on the pro-

gram, and one of her most vivid childhood memories is watching her parents dance around the living room to Pierce's records. Bringing it full circle, Davies' first hit, in 1978, was a cover of Pierce's 1960 hit "No Love Have I."

"I mentioned on a radio show about Webb that I'd love to do a tribute album," Davies recalls. "The next morning I got an e-mail from Pierce's daughter, saying that she and her mother had been listening — and they wanted to know if I was serious."

She was. Davies quickly recruited 21 singers, as well a session's worth of Nashville studio musicians, to cut the album over two days.

"Everyone I asked said 'Oh my God, I'd love to.' People just jumped in and wanted to be involved," she says.

Indeed, *Caught In The Webb* paints a family portrait of today's country music. The tribute's wide-ranging cast includes traditional mainstays George Jones, Charley Pride, Emmylou Harris and Billy Walker, famed singer/songwriters Willie Nelson and Guy Clark, and bluegrass great Del McCoury. It also features contemporary hit-makers Pam Tillis and Dwight Yoakam, plus tradition-savvy younger

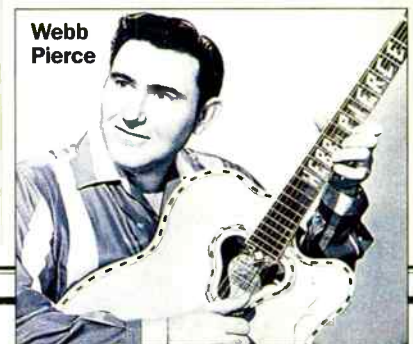
acts like BR549, Mandy Barnett, Allison Moorer and Robbie Fulks.

Pierce died of cancer in 1991, and all proceeds from the project are slated for the Minnie Pearl Cancer Foundation and The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

"This record would be good to hear on radio," says neo-honky-tonk singer Dale Watson, who joined forces with The Jordanaires on the disc for a version of "In The Jailhouse Now." "I would love it if I could turn on the radio and hear Pam Tillis and then George Jones and then BR549."

Davies wanted the lineup to cover a wide scope. "I wanted everyone to see the vast influence Webb has had on all kinds of country music," she explains.

— David Cantwell



Webb Pierce

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Star Math

Mathematicians claim they can explain just about anything with the right formula. With that in mind, we came up with our own figures to determine the makeup of these stars. Does it all add up? You make the call.







Farrah Fawcett The Crocodile Hunter Emmylou Harris Barbara Mandrell Jamie O'Neal






Jimi Hendrix Jimmy Stewart Buck Owens Brad Paisley

Freedom Song 'Independence Day' finds new meaning after September attacks

Gretchen Peters' "Independence Day," about an abused wife who fights back, became a signature hit for Martina McBride and CMA's Song of the Year in 1995.

But after Sept. 11, the song gained new meaning because of its defiant chorus:

*Let freedom ring
Let the white dove sing
Let the whole world know
That today is a day of reckoning
Let the weak be strong
Let the right be wrong
Roll the stone away
Let the guilty pay
It's independence day.*

"When Martina sang 'Independence Day' at a post-Sept. 11 benefit concert on CMT," says Peters, who recently signed a seven-figure publishing deal

with Sony/ATV Tree, "it immediately dawned on me that the lyrics had a whole new meaning in the light of what had happened. A lot of people have asked me, 'What do you think about your song being transformed into something totally different?' It's kind of an odd feeling. The chorus was meant to be taken in a metaphorical sense, but all of a sudden it has become very literal.

"That night, when Martina sang, *Let the whole world know that today is a day of reckoning*, it obviously struck a deep chord with people who were there; you could feel it in the crowd. I have somewhat mixed feelings about it. I never intended it to be a manual for revenge, but obviously that phrase meant a lot more to people after having been attacked.



Gretchen Peters

"There is a point in which you feel like your song, in a sense, doesn't belong to you anymore. It belongs to the world and the world does with it what it does. I never dreamed that it would be sung under these circumstances. Who would?"

— Beverly Keel

Amazing Unflavored Apple Cider Vinegar Capsules Actually "Eat" Body Fat.

The Fastest All-Natural Diet Known For Rapid Weight Loss Without A Prescription!

Did you know that apple cider vinegar was once used as a miracle weight-loss product that also eliminates toxins? Thanks to its fat-eliminating virtues, it is actually believed to be the most natural fat eater of all time. This recently rediscovered mysterious liquid weight-loss substance is now available as weight-loss capsules with incredible life changing results.

A Simple Yet Brilliant Idea

The secret to eliminating fat deposits is to "open up the door" of the fat cells and allow them to drain their fat contents. The fat is then redirected to the muscles through the bloodstream. Once it reaches the muscles, the fat can then be burned off as calories. The result: you lose weight in the fastest and most natural way possible.

A Miracle Weight Loss Product

The all-natural ingredients in these new apple cider vinegar capsules can also play an important role in stopping the development of new fat cells. They actually reverse the weight gaining process by causing existing fat cells to open up and drain off ugly body fat. The drained fat is then transported to the muscles where it can be burned off. This makes it possible to virtually eliminate fat deposits on the stomach, butt and thighs in a very brief period of time.



Frequently Asked Questions:

How Do the Apple Cider Vinegar Capsules Work?

The capsules work like an "anti-fat police force". The ingredients contained in the apple cider vinegar capsules transmit orders to the fat cells to drain and send fat to the muscles through the blood-

stream. This redirected fat can then be eliminated by the muscles as they burn calories.

Why Am I Losing Weight?

The apple cider vinegar capsules help to release the fat deposits which have accumulated on the stomach, hips, legs and butt. They can also prevent new fat from penetrating the cells by redirecting it to the muscles where it

is burned off, thereby eliminating fat deposits.

Do Apple Cider Vinegar Capsules Pose A Health Hazard?

Absolutely not. In fact, it's quite the opposite. The natural ingredients in the capsules do not solve your fat problems chemically. They solve it biologically. And there are no side effects. You can even eat as much as you like and still lose weight! When properly distributed, an intake of 4,000 calories a day can actually help you to lose weight instead of gain it. Because the capsules gently eliminate the toxins and excess weight, each day you'll feel better, more energized and lose weight.

How Many Apple Cider Vinegar Capsules Should I Take?

If you wish to lose weight quickly, we suggest taking one capsule before each meal.

Why Does The Apple Cider Vinegar Come In Capsules?

Drinking liquid apple cider vinegar every day can be a real challenge for many people. But the unflavored



A FEW WORDS FROM OUR CLIENTS:

I wanted to lose about 18 lbs. quickly. I was able to do it in only 20 days! These capsules are the best weight-loss product I have ever tried.
A.G. Switzerland

I tried the capsules and continued to eat as I usually do. I lost 22 lbs. in 13 days. Thank you very much.
C.F. Italy



I had read up quite a bit on apple cider vinegar therapies. But I didn't think I would be able to drink vinegar because of its unpleasant taste. With these capsules the problem is gone because they are completely unflavored. Thanks to this express diet, I quickly lost 31 lbs.
Y.T. Switzerland

I wanted to tell you that I lost 20 lbs. without changing any of my eating habits. These apple cider vinegar capsules are real fat fighters. I can once again wear my size 8 clothes. Thank you. I highly recommend this product.
I.O. Brazil

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COURTESY COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

The Cowboy Way

Gene Autry inspired a generation of country singers with his sweet Western sound and romantic screen image. But he also greatly influenced the fashion of future performers by popularizing a stylish Western look, replete with embroidered shirts, fancy cowboy boots and

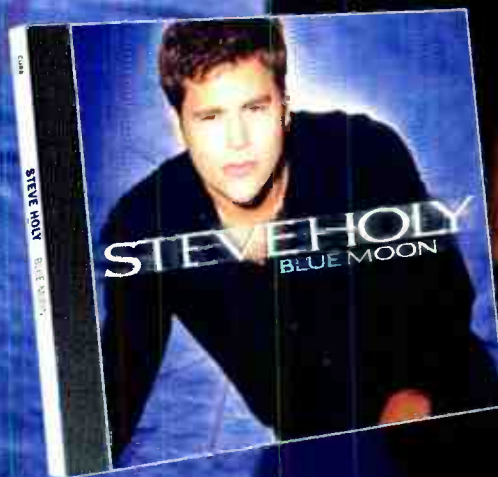
crisply shaped hats. From Hank Williams to Dwight Yoakam and countless country singers in between and after, Autry's sense of fashion – as highlighted in this 1940s photo of him amid a portion of his extensive wardrobe collection – has resonated through the ages.

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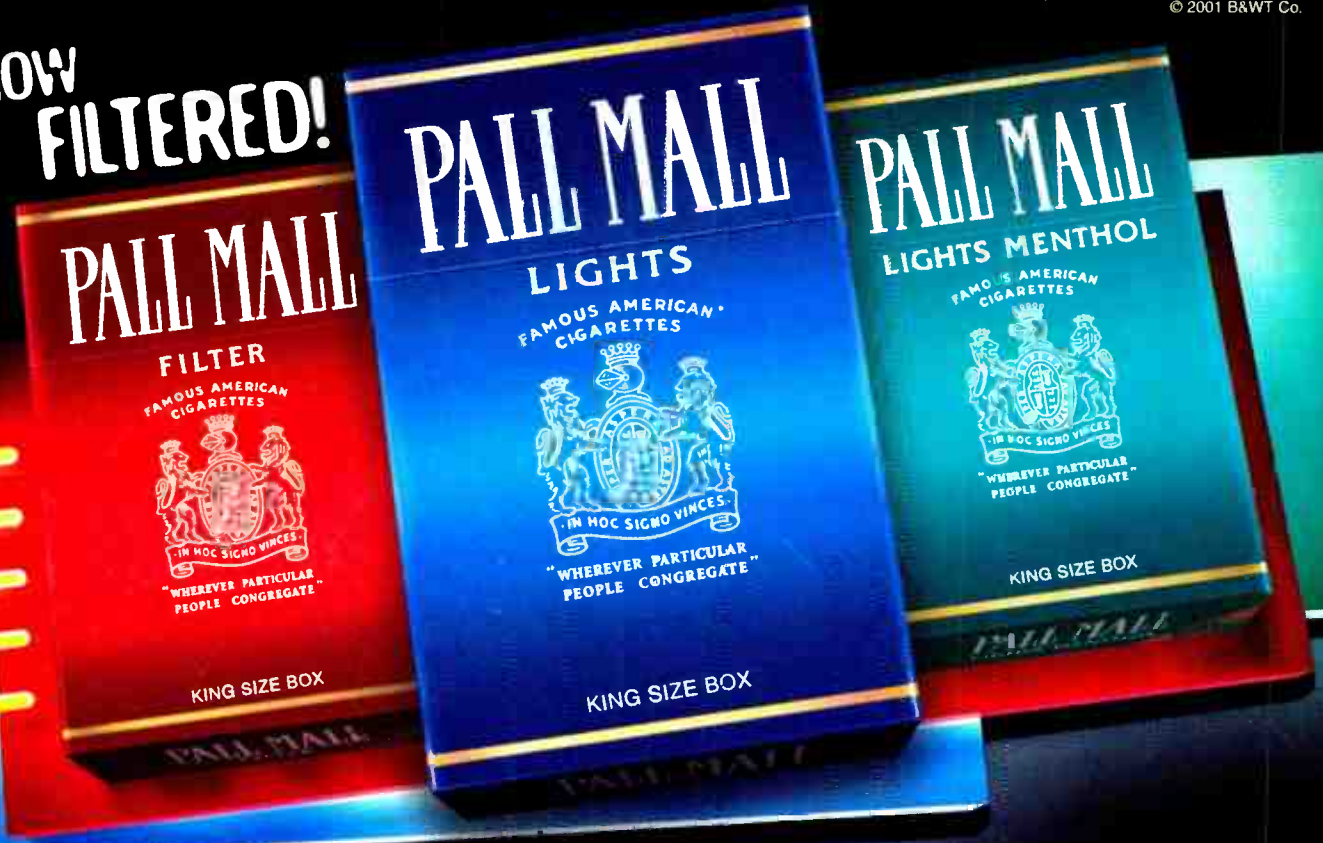
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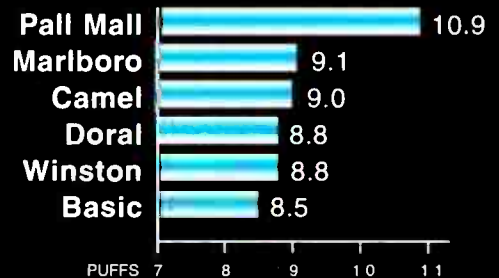


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