

Musical Instrument Special: Nashville's Superpickers

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE COUNTRY PUBLICATION

JUNE, 1979 - \$1.25

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THE OAK RIDGE EXPLOSION

On The Road With
The Oaks

TOM T. HALL
Interviews A
Country Legend

LYNN
ANDERSON
Outspoken
Outlaw

PLUS:
A Few Words
From

CRASH
CRABDOCK

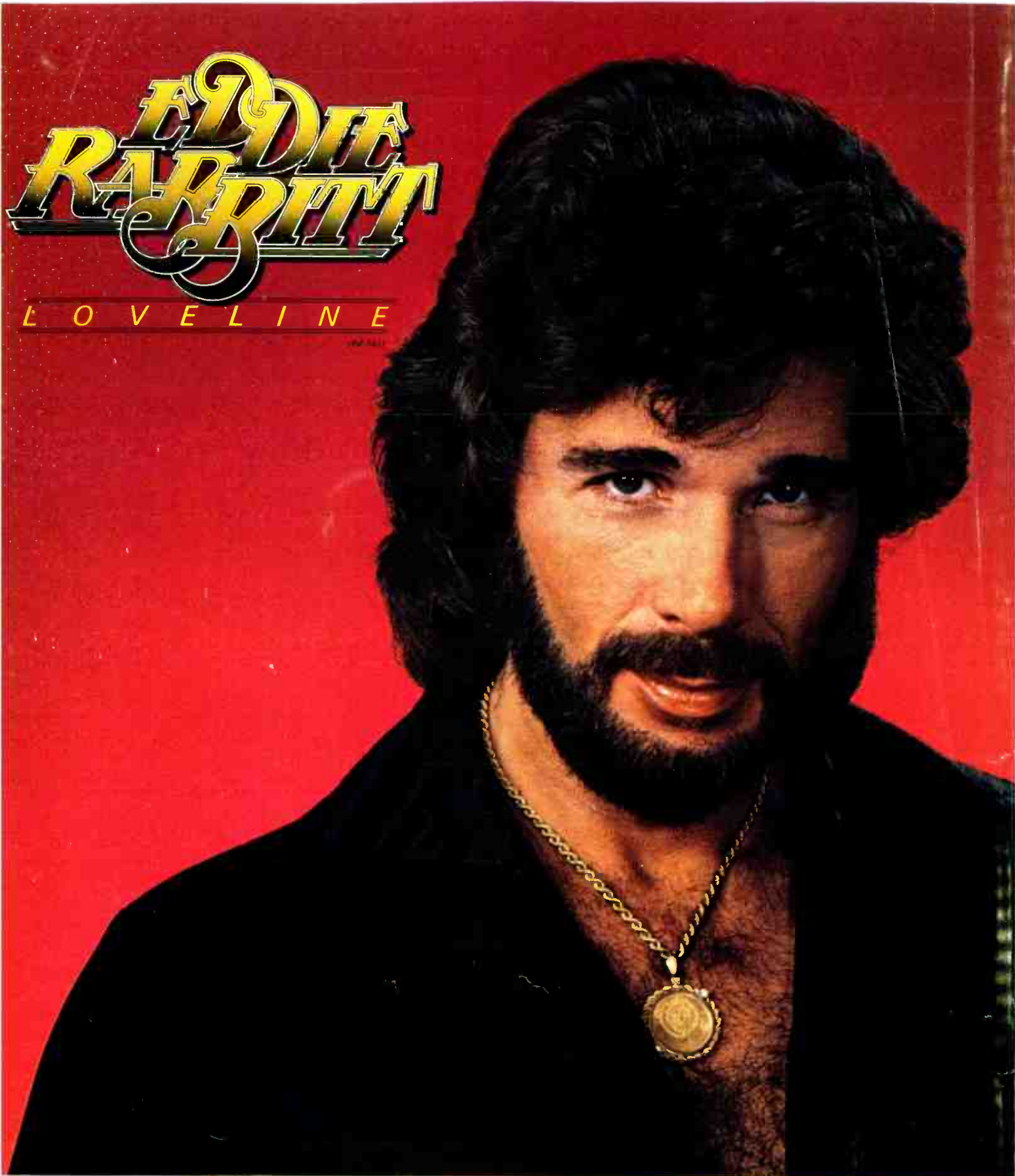
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EDDIE RABBITT

LOVELINE



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Features "Suspicions"

Management: Stan Mores,
Scotti Brothers Enterprises

Country Music comes alive at Opryland '79

"If you like country music, Opryland has to be the happiest place on earth."

Barbara Mandrell

Opry Stars at No Extra Charge!

When summer comes to Opryland '79, so does a lot of exciting new entertainment for the country music fan. First and foremost is the "Opry Star Showcase." You'll see individual stars of the Grand Ole Opry performing live in the Opry House in special one-hour concerts on Mondays through Thursdays this summer (June 11-Sept. 3). Names like Barbara Mandrell, Marty Robbins, Loretta Lynn, Larry Gatlin and Roy Acuff. Best of all, Opryland guests enjoy the Showcase at no extra charge!

New Faces and Shows

Summer marks the opening of other great shows. In "Today's Country Roads," bright, young Opryland performers sing the top hits of the current country charts. And every Saturday night at our magnificent new, \$3 million Roy Acuff Theatre it's time for "Country Comin' Up!" You'll see the future stars of country music on their way to fame and fortune.*



Familiar Favorites

If you've ever been to Opryland, there's one show we *know* you can't wait to see again — "Country Music U.S.A." This singing, dancing salute to all the great stars and hits of country music...from Hank Williams to Bill Monroe to Dolly Parton and Larry Gatlin. All the immortals seem to appear on stage through the talents of our young Opryland performers.

And Opryland has some living legends who perform regularly in the park...Bashful Brother Oswald and Charlie Collins are always dishing up some fancy licks and hearty laughs. And over in our Appalachian Hill Country, Mack Magaha with his Country Bluegrass Show and Russ Jeffers with Smoky Mountain Sunshine are settin' the woods on fire!

Your Kind of Music, Your Kind of Fun.

Summer is full of music and fun at Opryland...whether you're enjoying one of our 14 fully staged musical productions, clinging to our million dollar super coaster, "The Wabash Cannonball," or just strolling through the beautiful trees and flowers that abound everywhere. You can enjoy it all — rides and shows and fun — for one low admission price. Plan your trip to Opryland '79. See how country music comes alive for you!

*A separate admission is charged for performances of "Country Comin' Up."

Opryland '79!

Your kind of music! Your kind of fun!

For information write: Opryland U.S.A., 2802 Opryland Drive, Room 130, Nashville, TN 37214 (615) 889-6611. Opryland '79 is open daily from May 27- Sept. 3. Weekends only Sept. 8-Oct. 28



the original

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COUNTRY MUSIC



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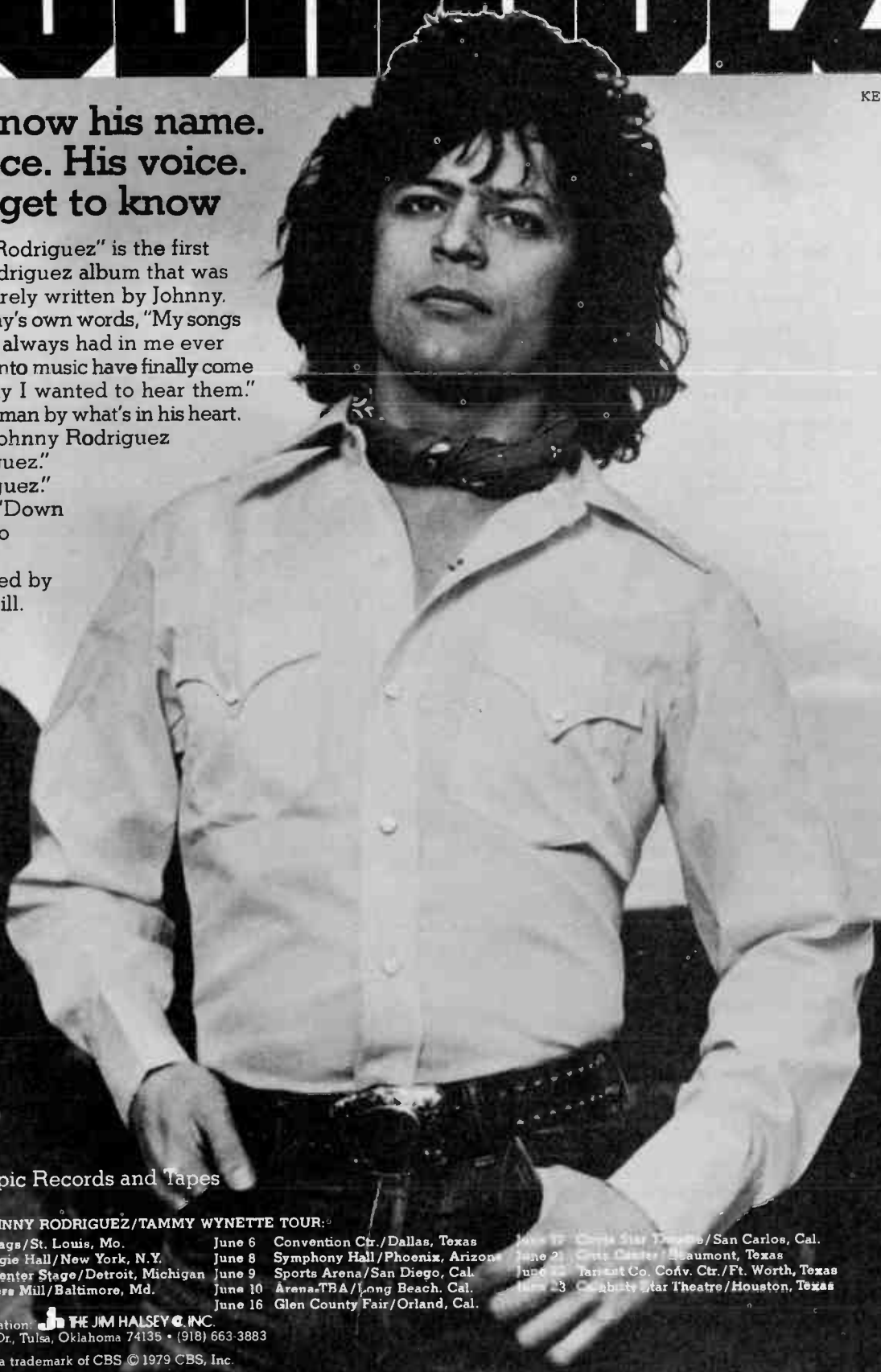
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"Rodriguez."

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May 31 The Center Stage/Detroit, Michigan	June 9 Sports Arena/San Diego, Cal.	June 22 Tarrant Co. Conv. Ctr./Ft. Worth, Texas
June 2 Painters Mill/Baltimore, Md.	June 10 Arena:TBA/Long Beach, Cal.	June 23 Celebrity Star Theatre/Houston, Texas
	June 16 Glen County Fair/Orland, Cal.	

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RECORD TWO:

Theme Song/Cowboy Blues/Story-Doc Reardon Is Tried For Involuntary Manslaughter/From The Rim Of The Canyon/ Ragtime Cowboy Joe/Longing/Can't Shake The Sands Of Texas From My Shoes/Story-The Caleb Hooten Story/ The Singing Sands Of Alamosa/Pat Buttram and Johnny Bond: Someday You'll Want Me To Want You; Up The Lazy River; Texans Never Cry/Caleb Hooten: Home Cookin', and more!

RECORD THREE:

Theme Song/Good Old Fashioned Hoe Down/How Long Is Forever/Pat Buttram: My Truly, Truly Fair/Mr. And Mississippi/ Story-Gene Is Held Up And Robbed/The West A Nest And You/Theme Song/For Me And My Gal/Take In Your Arms/Pat Buttram: Ezekiel Saw The Wheel/Arkansas Traveler/He'll Be Comin' Down The Chimney/Story-John Loves Martha/Peace In The Valley/Theme Song, and more!

RECORD FOUR:

Theme Song/Tweedle-O-Twill/Half A Phot Photograph/Pat Buttram: Tree Top Tall/In The Blue Canadian Rockies/Story-Church In Wilson Valley/Theme Song/Hair Of Gold/Pat Buttram: Git Along Little Doggie/Lonely River/Story-Champion Saves Gene And Pat's Lives/The Wheel Of The Wagon Is Broken/Theme Song-Back In The Saddle Again, and more!

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Send me set(s) of the 4-Record Set of Gene Autry for only \$15.95 ea. (\$14.95 plus \$1 postage and handling.) (R7296)

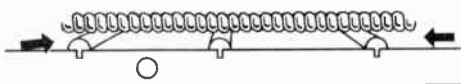
No tapes available. N.Y. and Tennessee residents add sales tax. Canadian orders add an extra \$2. No other foreign orders accepted.

“Son, I’ve done a lot of pickin’ in my time. But never on nothin’ like these Gibson Equa guitar strings.

They actually make yer guitar easier to play.”

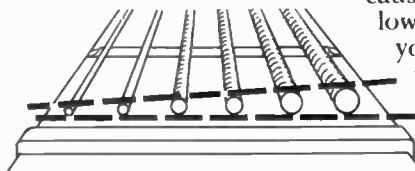


“These new . . . how d’ya say it, E-Q-U-A . . . strings give you really low playing action. These new strings are what ya call equalized on the same plane, so they sit low next to the frets. Just look at that there picture.



“That means yer playin’s gonna be easier and faster. ‘Cause the strings are equalized, you can use a lighter gauge string, which makes playing easier. An’ that makes it simpler for those fingers of yours to make the chords. So ya play faster too. And get a load of this . . .

‘cause one string ain’t lower than the other, you won’t have so much chance for fret buzz.



“Then there’s this thing called equal resistance. It’s another way these Equa strings help ya play faster. Ya won’t be havin’ yer fingers, or yer pick, gettin’ hung up on an uneven string. And, less ya want ‘em to, one string won’t play louder than the other.

“And yer neck won’t get twisted all out of shape. Uneven pull on guitar strings can sometimes twist the neck out of shape. Since these Equa strings are evenly pulled, ya just won’t have that problem.



“Ain’t never seen a package this big, have ya? These Equa strings come in this here big package, so they won’t be so tightly coiled. With a looser coil, there’s less distortion. ‘N that means yer strings will sound better longer.

“Good ole Gibson. You’d expect it from ‘em. Been makin’ guitars for 85 years. Did ya know it took ‘em two years of fiddlin’ around to get these strings right? Good ole Gibson. Ya can hear the tradition in every string.

“Ya got that son?”

Gibson
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LETTERS

Record Rip-Offs

My heartfelt thanks to you and Douglas B. Green for publishing his article, *Nashville's Embarrassing Record Rip-Offs* in the April 1979 issue. It was like a page of my recent past.

I had personal contact with "representatives" of Caprice Records here in the Washington, D.C. area about a year ago, and friends of mine who are with major labels told me categorically that if I had to lay out a dime to have my own record put out, they were to be AVOIDED! What I ended up doing was working through my local agency and recorded a song of my own, *Dozen Days To Go* and released it to the area. We got some airplay on the #1 MOR station in the market, simply because it fit into their format and a couple of stations on the east coast requested copies for airplay. It was never a gold record (heavy sigh) but we didn't have to shell out anything close to what the "rip-offs" demand.



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If you could run that article once a year, or make it available as a reprint to the public, you would be doing the legitimate music business a huge service.

Thanks again for your very timely article.

LEN JAFFE
OLNEY, MD.

We are a small non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of old-time country music and assisting aspiring country music artists in whatever form we can.

Your recent article by Douglas B. Green entitled "*Nashville's Embarrassing Record Rip-Offs*," is exactly the kind of material that is most helpful to the novice performer of country music hoping to make a niche for him/herself in the music business.

May we please have your permission to reprint this article as a handout to our members at one of our workshops. Thank you.

BOB EVERHART
PRESIDENT
CORNHUSKER COUNTRY MUSIC
CLUB, INC.
LOUISVILLE, NEB.

WSM And The FCC

I've read thru the April 1979 issue and enjoyed it very much, as usual. I do have a comment on the article *Can It Be The End of the Grand Ole Opry*, on page 13. I can sympathize with the concern of the owners of WSM over the possibility of losing their clear channel status.

But I have a suggestion. Why not syndicate the Opry on a network to other stations in the country. I'm sure there are a lot of people like myself who are unable to pick up the WSM signal and would like to hear the Opry broadcast. I can't go to Nashville as often as I would like, so it would be nice to hear the Opry locally on WHN radio.

Think about it. I think it's a great idea. Think of how large your audience would be.

TOM TORTORELLA
NEW YORK CITY

P.S. It was great seeing the Opry on the PBS network.

Concerning your article in the April 1979 issue of Country Music, about WSM radio, I feel that any other radio station that wants to broadcast and meets qualifications should have the right, whether it be a small or big station.

If WSM is so worried about the FCC

control of clear-channel frequencies bringing an end to the Grand Ole Opry, why doesn't it try to form a network with other country stations? Not only could the Grand Ole Opry stay alive, but it could be heard over the entire USA and possibly eventually over many parts of the world.
THOMAS D. BUNNEL
WELDA, KS.

Country Challenge

I just finished reading the April issue and had to set right down and write you after reading the interview on Johnny Cash. It was a terrific article. I was so glad that Johnny said what he did about Marty Robbins and Ferlin Husky and other country greats like them. He is so right. Those two have long deserved some recognition. We true country fans do want to see more of them on any TV program and especially the CMA awards. I challenge other country fans to let it be known that we do want to see more of our country greats on programs even if they do not have a hit on the charts at the same time that they appear.

Your article on Charlie Rich was also very nice.

Please print my letter so other fans can be aware of my challenge. Keep up the good work.

A TRUE COUNTRY FAN
WALDA CLARKE
KANSAS CITY, MO.

Johnny Cash

Thank you so very much for the Johnny Cash article in the April issue of Country Music. The pictures are outstanding. He is still the greatest entertainer ever and thank you so much for all the articles you have done on him and the record reviews. I truly enjoy every issue of your magazine.

BETTY ANDERSON
PEORIA HEIGHTS, ILL.

Larrie Londin

Regarding *Larrie Londin Drum Sound* by Bob Allen, Mr. Allen states that drums were first heard on the Opry in early 1950 and were played behind a curtain. Not so. In 1945, not the early 1950's, Bob Willis played the Opry, and contrary to rumor, his drums and horn section were not hidden behind a curtain but were out in the open for all to see.

I am using as a reference page 109, note 29 from *San Antonio Rose, the Life and Music* of Bob Willis by Charles R. Town-

FANS' FARE



When it comes to the best new music, fans flock to Warner Country...



Emmylou Harris *Blue Kentucky Girl*
Featuring
"Save The Last Dance For Me"
Produced by Brian Ahern for Happysack Films



Con Hunley
Featuring
"Since I Fell For You"
Produced by Norro Wilson



Rex Allen, Jr. *Me And My Broken Heart*
Featuring
"Me And My Broken Heart"
Produced by Buddy Killen



Margo Smith *A Woman*
Featuring
"If I Give My Heart To You"
Produced by Norro Wilson

T.G. Sheppard (New album out soon)
On Warner Curb records and tapes



send. I always enjoy your magazine, especially the comments on the Texas Playboys.

CHARLES D. WILLIAMS
WHITTIER, CALIF.

Gary Stewart

Concerning Gary Stewart. I don't see how records like *Sweet Temptation* which was perhaps more subtle than his earlier releases or *Flat Good Timin' Man* which was perhaps too rock oriented could be called stylistically predictable. I think the fault lies with an audience and DJ's who

want something more familiar and aren't willing to let the free riding format of Gary's on the airwaves enough. He reminds me of a cross between the intensity of Gene Vincent and Mitch Ryder with his country soul rock. And Ed Ward must have been listening with his nose to the lp, *Your Place or Mine* because it is terrific and I can't imagine how he panned it. Gary Stewart is an artist, an adventurous one not a smarmy entertainer, leave him alone.

MARC BEARD
SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

Ray Price

I have heard so many pros and cons about Ray Price being a country singer. After attending a country music festival at the Convention Center in Anaheim California recently, I think Ray Price is a real pro and country music fans should feel he is a real asset to country music.

My friends told me if I went to one of those concerts to take ear muffs as the music is usually so loud. Not so with Ray Price. It was such a pleasure to hear him sing I felt my 80-mile drive in the rain to attend was well worth it. He received a standing ovation at the end of his performance and that should speak for itself. Now that he has come out of semi-retirement he is singing better than ever.

G.D.J. ROMONA
POMONA, CALIF.

A Note Of Thanks

As usual Country Music (March issue) is top quality, excellent writing, objective reporting and constructive critical reviews. The magazine is without parallel and is to be congratulated on its consistently high standards.

The stories on our clients Tammy Wynette, Freddy Fender and Buck Trent are much appreciated. I want to thank you for the fine story John Morthland did on our company (November 78).

It's an honor to be included in your fine publication.

JIM HALSEY,
PRESIDENT
THE JIM HALSEY CO.
TULSA, OKLA.

Ray Stevens

I just wanted to write and say thank you for such a fine written article on Ray Stevens in the April issue. He is and always has been a great writer, performer and singer. His talent often goes unnoticed. I would like to see more articles of him in future issues of your magazine. Since he is not actually what one would call a "teen idol," you see absolutely zero written on him in teen magazines. Very little is ever written on him anywhere. And he deserves to be recognized.

MARILYN SAWYER
JENNINGS, LA.

Due to our great volume of mail, we regret we can't answer all letters individually. We welcome your opinions and will publish the most representative letters in this column. Let us hear from you. — Ed.

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ARE YOU SURE
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GOOD HEARTED WOMAN

GREATEST HITS



WAYLON

ONLY DADDY
THAT'LL WALK THE LINE

I'M A RAMBLIN'MAN
LONESOME, ON'RY AND MEAN



LADIES LOVE OUTLAWS

MAMMAS DON'T LET YOUR BABIES
GROW UP TO BE COWBOYS

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CRAZY

LUCKENBACH, TEXAS



THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC

WAYLON

RCA
RECORDS



Recording Studio At Home



Teac's A3440 4-channel recorder.



Pioneer's RT-909 tape recorder.

So you think you've got talent. Anyway, your friends like to hear you and they think your songs are great.

Now to get your foot into professional doors, or maybe even on the first rung of that mythical ladder of success, you've got to make a demo tape and take it to your friendly neighborhood record company. They may not instantly recognize you as the next Emmylou Harris or Johnny Cash, but at least they usually tell you honestly what they think of you and why. That alone is worth something, because—after all—they know their business or else they wouldn't last in it.

Next to having your cousin's girl friend working for the A&R chief of the record company, the biggest help in getting a fair hearing where it really counts is to present a professional-sounding demo tape. Having such a tape produced at a commercial studio can be quite expensive. Besides, the studio situation might get you up-tight with stage fright—what with the engineers twiddling knobs behind those glass panels—so chances are you won't be at your best. That's why many amateur musicians itching to become pros make their own demo tapes at home with a good tape recorder and a bit of editing know-how.

Most home recorders nowadays are of the cassette types, and they'll do a fine job if all you want to do is copy records, tape off the air, or make informal "live" recordings through a mike. But to do the kind of editing necessary to produce a good demo tape requires an open-reel recorder. The big advantage of an open-reel machine is that it lets you cut and splice the tape. That way, you can delete all your flubs and present only your best "takes" to your critical audience.

The technique for doing this is not really difficult but it takes some practice to learn. Such tape splicing can be compared to splicing movie film. Yet there is one im-

portant difference: you can't see what's on the tape. You have to locate the exact splicing spot by sound. That's why it helps to have the kind of recorder on which you can hear the sound when the reels are slowly moved back and forth by hand. That way you can isolate every single note in the music and pinpoint the exact place at which the splice is to be made. Of course, the sounds you hear as you "rock" the tape back and forth slowly to search for the right spot for joining two different "takes" may at first seem to you like the growling of a disgruntled bear. But after getting used to it, you will clearly recognize words and syllables in the song and thus make your cut at just the right place.

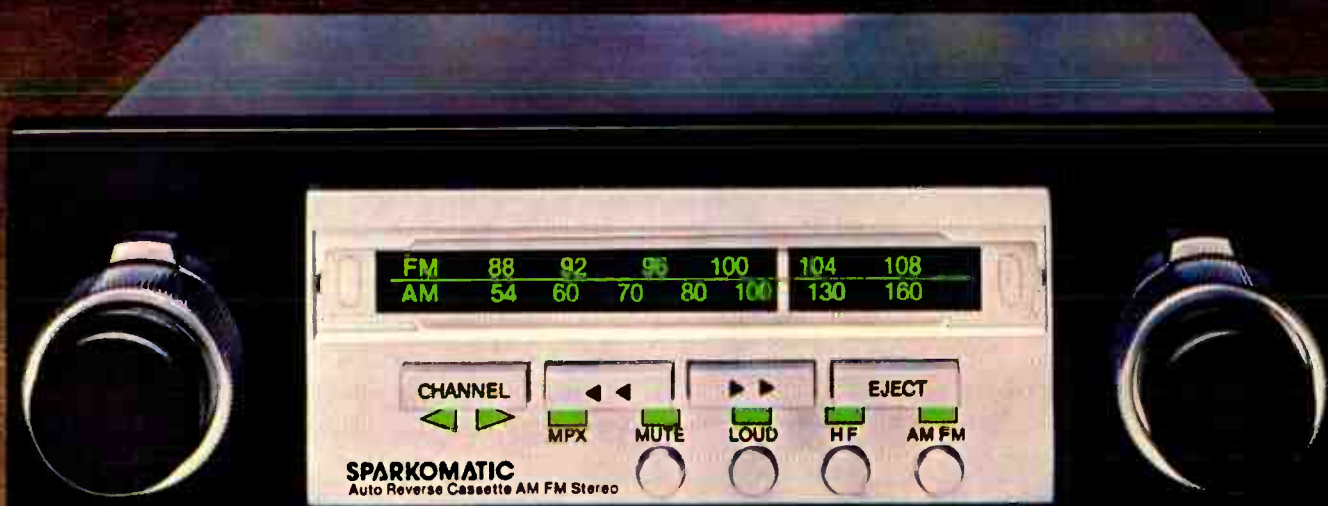
It is difficult to give specific instructions for tape editing of this kind. The necessary skill comes with experience. But it is possible to point out the basic tools. In addition to the open-reel recorder, you will need a tape splicer, splicing tape, a marking pencil, and a single-edged razor blade. The splicer and the splicing tape can be bought for a few dollars at just about any good audio shop, and Radio Shack stores carry a wide selection of them. I prefer the simplest kind of splicing device, called a splicing block. The one made by the **Editall Company** looks something like a miniature version of the miter box used by carpenters. You just lay the tape into a groove that holds it firm and then cut across the tape at angles indicated by slots in the splicing block. For a very sharp sound division—such as between single words or single notes of a song—cut across the tape at a 90-degree angle. Otherwise—for example to splice at the silent interval between two separate songs—cut at a 45-degree angle, which produces a stronger and quieter splice. Since the block helps you cut all tape ends at precisely matching angles, it is easy to join them end-to-end and connect them by putting pressure-

sensitive splicing tape on the back. The marking pencil is used to mark the exact spot for cutting after you have located the proper spot by moving the tape back and forth and listening to the sound.

If you plan to edit your tapes, you should record each tape in one direction only. The reason is obvious. If you put two separate recordings on the same tape—one in each direction—you can't cut one without also cutting the other. Also, it is advisable to record at the higher tape speed of 7½ inches per second (ips) rather than at the slower 3¾ ips speed, that way the pauses between separate words or notes take up twice as much space on the tape and thus leave you more leeway for your cutting and splicing.

Some of the more elaborate open-reel recorders provide facilities that virtually make the recorder a self-contained sound studio. The most significant of these features is called the Sel-Sync. This lets you hear a previously recorded track through monitor earphones while adding new sounds through the microphone in exact synchronization with what has already been recorded. That way you can sing duets with yourself, or add additional instrumental parts (guitar, drums, bass, or whatever you like) to a song that has already been recorded. In this manner you can build up the background for your song—track upon track—on a single tape until you have it sounding just the way you want it. Some recorders equipped to do this also feature a circuit to add artificial reverb to any or all of the tracks, producing a variety of effects limited only by your imagination.

If you are interested in such advanced recording techniques, some of the larger audio dealers will be glad to offer you some instruction and let you experiment with the equipment. Of course, ultra-sophisticated tape recorders with such sound-on-sound facilities are not cheap. **Pioneer**, **Teac**, **Sony**, and **Akai** offer several models of this type with prices starting around \$900. A high quality open-reel recorder without the sound-on-sound feature costs about half as much. So, if you made adequate demo tapes without overlaying one track on the other, you can save yourself a pile of money and still get a very good, professional-sounding machine. **Pioneer's** RT-701 (\$525), **Sony's** TC-377 (\$450) and **Philips' N4505** (\$450) are among the best designs of this type. If you think you've got what it takes to be a musician, they may prove stepping stones into a career. ■



THE SPARKOMATIC SOUND. CAR STEREO FOR THE TRAVELIN' MAN WITH EARS OF EXPERIENCE.

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TEAC
Multitrack Series

Country Scene

"Country Current" Brings Country Music to the Navy



Country Current in concert: (left to right) Ben Winter, Jeff Agnew, Joe Barnes, Bill Emerson, Pat Verner and Bob Kaufman.

*"We pick and sing. We do our thing.
We came here with one thought in mind—
To pick and sing and have a good time. . . ."*

So sing the members of "Country Current," the U.S. Navy's country/bluegrass band, in an unpublished song written for the group by one of its members, Jerry Gilmore.

The seven-member unit, formed in 1973, is the only military band to appear in a live performance on the Academy of Country Music Awards Show, aired on ABC's Wide World of Entertainment Mar. 1, 1976. They have also performed in the White House, the Kennedy Center and the Grand Ole Opry.

"We try to be as diversified as possible," explained Chief Petty Officer Bill Emerson, the band's musical director who plays banjo, guitar and is lead singer. Gilmore has performed on stage with the Everly Brothers, Merle Haggard, Charley Pride and Johnny Cash. "We play bluegrass, middle-of-the-road country, country rock and pop.

"It's kind of a combination of the Nit-ty Gritty Dirt Band and the Eagles. We have the traditional country instruments, plus a lead guitarist who can play rock style, a hot electric bass player, drums and we can sing."

The other five members of Country Current include Petty Officers 1st Class Pat Verner (electric bass), Joe Barnes (drums), Bob Kaufmann (fiddle and vocals), Ben Winter (lead guitar and vocals) and Jeff Agnew (pedal steel guitar). Agnew has toured with Nashville performers Bobby Borchers and Johnny Paycheck. Sound technician Petty Officer 1st Class Bob Palmer mixes and balances the Country Current sound.

Emerson was selected as Banjo Player of the Year (1972 and 1973) by the "Muleskinner News" magazine and he was a member of the "Country Gentlemen" bluegrass band before enlisting in the Navy.

"As a whole, the Navy has a higher level of professionalism than you find among civilian musicians," Emerson said. "If you're into a country-bluegrass bag, that's generally all you listen to. Because we're part of the Washington, D.C. Navy Band—a unit of 174

musicians who perform in ceremonial, concert, jazz and stage and rock bands—we're constantly exposed to all kinds of music. I've learned more as a Navy musician in the past six years than I did in 20 years as a civilian musician."

"There's a lot of security, opportunities to travel and meet people and excellent educational benefits," said Gilmore.

The band spends much of the time on the road performing in high schools and colleges and at fairs in support of Navy recruiting. Because Country Current is a White House support activity, they play at official government functions and have an active summer concert program in District of Columbia area parks. Their latest album, "Country Current '78," is available from Navy recruiters.

"A band is the most effective thing the recruiters have for hitting the young audience . . . much more effective than giving away pencils that say 'Go Navy' or bumper stickers," Emerson said.

Gilmore's song ends:

*"The music that we play is free.
American and a bit country.
Country, Country Current."*

GLENNA HOUSTON

Country Scene

Watch This Face: Gail Davies



The critics of America took Gail Davis to their heart with the release of her stunning debut album, *Gail Davies*. Impressed with the scope of her vocal range and the impressive range of styles covered within an ostensibly country framework, they were likewise awed by her impressive songwriting ability, displayed on more than half the stongs included. Used to albums by talented newcomers which show the promise of much to come, they were treated to an album by a talented newcomer whose promise has arrived and whose talent is in full bloom.

"It was originally to be a concept album," admitted a grateful and enthusiastic Ms. Davis, "a sort of introduction to Gail Davies, an exploration of my background. There were even spoken introductions to the songs, but they somehow got lost along the way to the finished product."

Gail Davies is indeed autobiographical, though the thread of continuity is slightly askew. Born in Broken Bow Oklahoma a bit over thirty years ago, Gail celebrates the joy of country life in *Bucket To The South*, as well as some of the pain—her parents' marriage broke up when she was quite young, and she moved to Washington State as a small child. Still, *Grandma's Song* tells a warm tale of family love and the binding of generations through music.

Soft Spoken Man reflects on her stepfather, and her early life was filled with music—the three songs on the album she

did not write are country classics of the 1950s she learned as a child: Johnny and Jack's *Poison Love*, the Louvin Brothers' *Are You Teasing Me* (a big mid-fifties hit by Carl Smith), and one of Mel Tillies' earliest songwriting successes, Webb Pierce's rockabilly bombshell of 1960, *No Love Have I*.

Gail and her brother Ron (now a successful L.A. based songwriter) began performing in an Everly Brothers style while still children, and she now says flatly "I never had any other aspiration than to be a singer. There was never anything else I remotely considered since the day I could talk. I've done this all my life; I've done nothing else. This coming summer will be my sixteenth year."

Shortly after graduating from high school she began singing in touring bands, and spent the next nine years of her life on the road, singing rock and ballads, before both her voice and her marriage (to a jazz musician) failed. She covers the marriage and its dissolution with tenderness in *What Can I Say* and her hopes for the future with *Someone Is Looking For Someone Like You*, but doesn't cover her rock years; her musical autobiography is strangely silent on the subject (perhaps something like "screaming rock and power chords/put blisters on my vocal cords" might have done the trick).

While regaining her voice (by not using it) she turned her attentions to songwriting, and combining a natural gift with a wellspring of experience, became a

very fine songwriter indeed. Her singing, and her songs, eventually obtained the attention of Tommy West, of Lifesong Records, and the autobiographical *Gail Davies* was created shortly thereafter; after nearly 15 years as a professional singer, she finally got her first album, a most impressive debut.

Though she is often compared by reviewers to Linda Ronstadt, she does not have that powerful, rich tone; though she is compared to Emmylou Harris, hers is not the unspeakably tender feel which characterizes Ms. Harris' best work. Gail Davies' voice is clearly her own, underivative, and if not unique it is nevertheless distinct. Though seemingly folkish at its roots, it does not have the studied self-consciousness that marred most of the folk singers, even the best. Though she professes her influences to be Billie Holliday, Patsy Cline, Ella Fitzgerald, and Kitty Wells, her voice echoes none of them (except in tribute); it is unmistakably her own.

It is a voice which is expressive without gratuitous emotional displays. It has an edge but does not become brittle; it has sweetness but does not cloy. It sounds more serious than her sunny personality would lead you to suspect, but gives the proper gravity to the themes of her songs.

As for her future, she is of course ebullient. She has a new seven-piece band, and is trying to work a strictly concert schedule: "I love to do concerts. I love to open for other acts. I want to play for people who *know my music*—you can't imagine what a thrill that is!" She is working on a new album—in the planning stages—which like the first will contain at least half her own material, though it won't be so frankly autobiographical this time: "You can't write about your family and your childhood forever. My newer songs are not written on a topic, though they are usually inspired by actual events. I will say that they are truthful—I don't make things up for effect." The other songs will, as one would suspect, be other country classics from her memory, including an Everly Brothers duet for which she's recruiting her old partner, her brother Ron: "We have that family closeness in our harmony." There's even what she calls a reggae country song to be included.

So this is Gail Davies at the threshold of success, justly lauded for a smashing debut album which is not a harbinger of great things to come, but an announcement that a great talent is in our midst here and now.

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Country Scene

New Creations for Hoyt Axton

Hoyt Axton stood in the middle of his living room, checking off the items on his survival list as he packed them into his set of hand-tooled leather saddle bags. Lake Tahoe, visible from almost every window of his mountain home, rolled in white caps while the voice on the radio spoke of impending storms and ever-gathering clouds.

Half-way through the list, after the beef jerky, dried fruits, nuts and high-protein bars had been placed in his bags, he began a brief but thorough search for his lunalights—a glass cartridge that gives off 40 watts worth of light for 25

hours.

The irony of the situation lay in the fact that Axton's boots were not taking him further into the Sierras but were instead leading him to his three year old pick-up which was headed in the direction of Los Angeles. A place where Hoyt felt the need to survive to be at its most intense.

Though he has made himself responsible for the business part of his life and the creative aspects, he limits his visits to L.A. to performing, recording or filming.

Besides writing his songs from his mountain retreat he also spends a lot of

time drawing. So a secondary survival system has been incorporated into his life.

"I had a buddy who used to do felt-tip pen drawings until he was killed in an automobile wreck. It looked like it would be fun to draw little characters like he did so I kind of continued where he had left off. After a while I found it had a far deeper meaning to me. It became a release—a time of complete concentration that took me out of the realm of everyday decision making. Some people take their hard earned bread to a psychiatrist. I create little figures that make me feel good," says Axton.

The drawings are a continuing flow of line which is both fluid and simplistic. The original characters have been expanded so that there are enough of them to be housed in several books. *Line Drawings Vol. I* and *II* and the *Telephone Message Book* were published

Louise Mandrell and R.C. Bannon: "We Thought You'd Never Ask"

A Nashville super wedding by an emerging duet team is quite an affair. Especially when the bride is Louise Mandrell, as pretty and promising as her sister, Barbara. In her biggest year ever on the charts, Barbara faced an excellent opportunity to help showcase Louise with a double-edged media extravaganza. The natural site for her to exchange vows with R.C. Bannon had to be either the Grand Ole Opry or the Exit/In. And to top it off, the event would coincide with their

anybody except our parents." In February the two slipped away to Las Vegas, and after a side trip to Disneyland "to see Mickey Mouse," they got married. The only guests were Barbara and her husband and one other couple.

R.C. Bannon is the writer of Ronnie Milsap's hit, *Only One Love in My Life*. Of his own records, the biggest was *It Doesn't Matter Anymore* from last year. Earlier this year, Louise missed in a race with Narvel Felts on *Everlasting Love*. But the popularity of duets prompted CBS Records to do a little matchmaking. Louise and R.C. are now the only duo on the label (CBS) (Johnny Duncan and Janie Fricke have parted).

R.C. is optimistic that working with Louise will help, not only in their joint recordings, but in each of their solo careers as well. "It's nice to come home to somebody who understands music. Before Louise I had only dated people outside the business." Coming from a musical family, Louise remarked, "I'm spoiled. I expected it to be like this." To hear her tell it, she can sit around the house and fiddle, at least part of the time, while R.C. is in the kitchen fixing dinner. The couple met last summer in Nashville at Fan Fair.

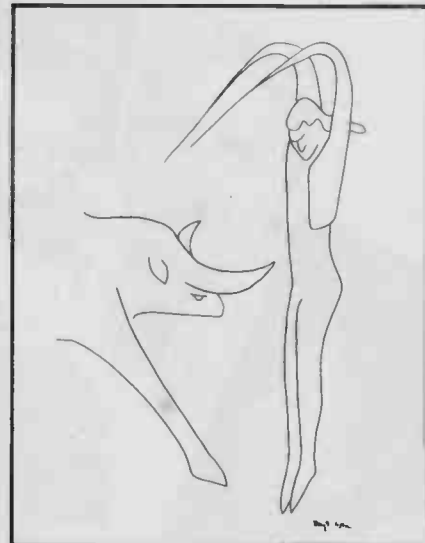
What lies ahead depends in part on that elusive criterion known as public image, which could include comparisons to George and Tammy and Kris and Rita. Both R.C. and Louise claim to "lean towards country, but not the real hard-core stuff." R.C.'s entrenchment as a Nashville songwriter and Louise's fiddling background point them away from a permanent West Coast address. Louise, however, taped a spot for a network TV special in April.

BILL OAKLEY



catchy duet release, *I Thought You'd Never Ask*.

That's exactly why they didn't go through with it. In fact, the idea was never even considered. "We wanted a small, private wedding, and a chance to be by ourselves for awhile," Louise commented. "It could have been turned into a publicity stunt, so we decided not to tell



in a limited edition by Axton. Blue Mountain Press is responsible for the *I Want You to Be Happy* book, which contains selections of Hoyt's songs and drawings. Recently a series of greeting cards were made available by Blue Mountain Arts and are designed by Stephen Schutz and contain excerpts from Hoyt's songs. They are available at bookstores all over the country.

Axton has written a children's musical and is currently drawing the characters which will be animated when it is sold to television. The musical concerns the repression grown-ups put on kids. And by writing, creating a children's festival of art in an adult world.

GAIL BUCHALTER

Judge Scolds Billie Jo Spears

We assume, naturally, that most people we interview for this magazine put their best foot forward, maybe even tell a white lie or two. We don't expect people in the public eye to confess all their imperfections, even though we might love it if they did. It is rare, however, that anyone would expect to have a courtroom judge call attention to their inconsistencies. The following article by Mike Pigott of the Nashville Banner describes just such a case:

Circuit Court Judge Harry Lester gave country music star Billie Jo Spears a severe scolding at her divorce trial here after she admitted lying to her fans in a magazine article.

Lester's reprimand came during Miss Spears' testimony that her husband, Michael Edlin, had brought her nothing but unhappiness during their marriage.

Her testimony contradicted statements she made in an interview with *Country Music* magazine in August 1977 when she claimed Edlin had made her a happy woman.

"She said she lied in the article—that she made the statements just to make an impressive article," Lester said. "I asked her how I could tell if she was telling the



truth in court if she didn't tell the truth to her fans."

The judge said Miss Spears, who appears at the Grand Ole Opry and has recorded several hit songs, told him that she was telling the truth while under oath at the divorce trial.

The judge granted the divorce.

"There were times I just wanted to quit life," she is quoted saying in the magazine. "I was ready to give up. But I was fortunate I had Mike around. I don't know what I would have done or what it would have been like if he hadn't been there."

Later in the article, she is quoted say-

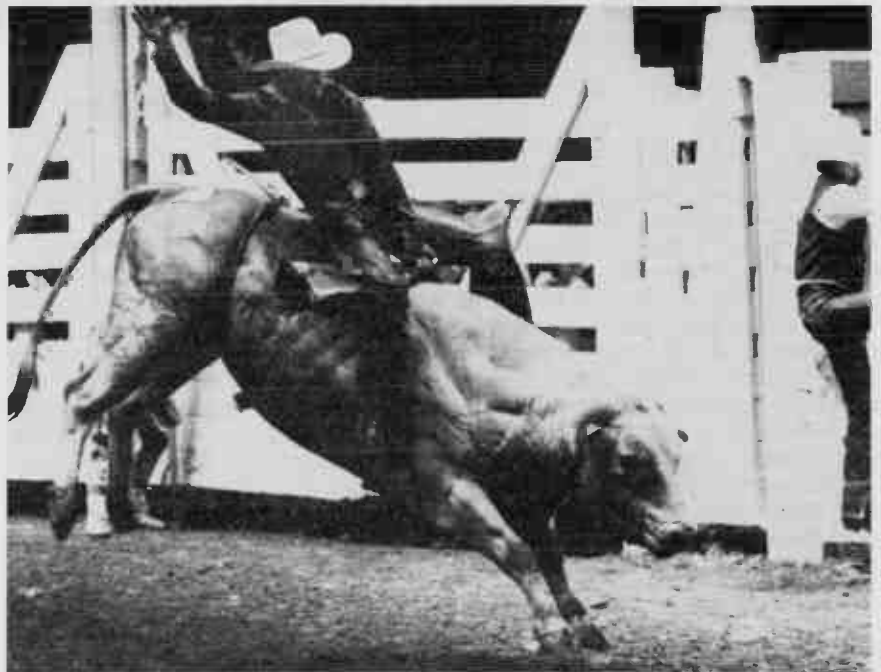
ing her marriage is "wonderful" and that "there was never anyone like Mike."

The article was entitled "They Said Billie Jo Spears Would Never Sing Again, But A Good Doctor and The

Right Man Put Her Back On Top."

"Judge Lester really raised Cain with her," said Edlin's attorney, Jack Norman Jr. "She had completely contradicted what she had said in that article."

Miss Spears' divorce complaint alleged Edlin had a violent temper and had often cursed at her. He denied the allegations in an answer to the complaint. They were married in August 1975.



Copenhagen/Skoal Rodeo Rides High

It was four days of riding, roping, racing and just plain fun at the 4th Annual Copenhagen/Skoal Rodeo Superstars Championship held at the Will Rogers Coliseum in Fort Worth.

Top professional rodeo cowboys competed for a total purse of \$112,500 (the largest in rodeo history) which featured these events: calf roping, bull riding, saddle bronc riding and barrel racing. \$18,500 was awarded to winners, Jerry Beagley (bull riding), Bill Smith (saddle bronc riding) and Paul Tierney (calf roping). Lynn McKenzie (barrel racing) received \$8000.

The event is the brainchild of former football pro Walt Garrison, Western Marketing Director for U.S. Tobacco (see CM Nov/Dec) and Red Springer,

National Marketing Director. As in the past three years, the beneficiary of the rodeo is the Fort Worth's Children's Hospital which received a \$50,000 check last year.

Country Music is as big a part of a rodeo as any of the events, and superstars Mel Tillis, Don Williams and Red Stegall were on hand to add their kind of fun. The fans cheered when former amateur rodeo cowboy Red Stegall rode in on his horse.

As well as rodeo fans enjoy country music, country music stars love rodeos. Tanya Tucker who was on her way to a show in Las Vegas was there because "I know a lot of people in the rodeo." The Hager twins were also on hand.

Taped for TV, the Copenhagen/Skoal Rodeo Superstars Championship will be aired on over 100 stations.

ROCHELLE FRIEDMAN

Tom T. Hall

Interviews

Country Music Legend

Herman Woonzel

by TOM T. HALL

Herman Woonzel became as famous as his talents would permit. Herman played the banjo, danced a little and sang the way a person sings if he's pretty good but not professional. If you sat down and talked to the man and looked at him real close, you had to wonder how he became a legend in Country Music. "There ain't much of entertaining," Herman would say, "I've seen folks laugh at a dog chasing its tail, and that ain't no big trick."

It was pouring rain one April morning, and I didn't have anything to do, so I called Herman and asked him if I could come by and talk to him. Herman said, "What you wanna talk about?"

"I'd like to talk about show business," I told him.

"Well, I hate to be this way, but you bring the fifty dollars in cash when you come—and bring me a couple of cans of Spam. I'm hungry for something, and I think it's Spam."

I agreed to bring the money and the Spam. Herman charges fifty dollars to talk to anybody about show business. Talking is his only activity now. Herman is retired and lives in an old wooden house on a little piece of ground north of Benton, Tennessee. Herman refers to his little farm as a ranch. It is so far removed by geography and function from a real ranch that you feel more comfortable referring to it as a "place."

I drove out to Herman Woonzel's ranch and found him sort of sitting-lying in an old rocking chair on the porch. I parked in the weedy little driveway and walked up to shake hands with the famous man. "Howdy Mr. Woonzel, I'm Tom T. Hall and I came out to talk to you, like you said I could."

"You bring the fifty dollars and the Spam, like I asked you to?"

"Yes sir."

I handed him the Spam in a brown paper bag and gave him an envelope containing five ten dollar bills. Herman took the money from the envelope and counted it. "Old show business habit," he said. "People make a lot of honest mistakes." Herman looked into the brown paper bag and took out the Spam. "Now here's something that's really good to eat. I discovered this stuff during the second world war. There was a great song about it then."

There's Spam and Wham and Double Bam

*And something new called Zoom
You just take it home and eat it
To the temperature of the room.*

Herman sang the song in his deep raspy voice and spread his arms wide to take me in as an audience. He chuckled slightly as he finished and then stared off down the road with a slight smile on his face.

Having invested fifty miles in gasoline, two cans of Spam and fifty dollars in this adventure, I decided to get right down to business. I said "Mr. Woonzel, I want to ask you a question, and I want you to think about it for a minute and then give me as good an answer as you can. What is Herman Woonzel really like?" Herman Woonzel looked at me for a second and then burst out into a real, genuine, honest belly-shaking laugh. "Son," he said, "that is the whole point of the thing about show business in the first place. Somebody told you to find that out didn't they? Well, you had part of the answer before you ever left the house. Herman Woonzel is the kind of guy who needs fifty dollars and likes Spam. See what I mean?"

"Yes sir, in a way."

"Look here boy, I ain't like nothing. I am Herman Woonzel and live here, and I sit on the porch and wish I wasn't so damned old, and Spam tastes the same to me as it does to everybody else. But I don't want to hurt your feelings now. That's a good question. Show business is professional foolishness. Now you take a feller who gets up and makes an ass of himself and dances around and sings and tells jokes and there's a band and he's laughing and carrying on acting like it's a big muckety-muck or something and he gets paid for it—why, that's what people want. You understand?"

"I think so."

"Well, see, that's the whole thing. Now when that feller gets off that stage and gets back on his porch, he don't do nothing special with it—the money I mean. He don't think about how he got it so much as he does about what he's gonna do with it. I did buy a diamond ring one time in my hey-day. Had a big horseshoe on it. I swear people would buy me drinks 'cause I was wearing that ring. But that's the main thing about it that you need to know."

"Mr. Woonzel, do you think show business people are different?"

"Well, I think they're different like other folks are different. You take a carpenter. Now I knew one who had a little string wound up in a little box with chalk in it. When he pulled out the string real tight across a board and snapped it, it left a nice red line right down that board. You ever see one of them things?"

"I have."

"Now that kind of got me to thinking. That's a pretty good idea. You need ideas like that in show business. You un-



Illustration: Paul Milosevich

derstand?"

"Yes sir."

"Now there's another thing about show business that I'm interested in. I don't know how old I am exactly. See, my folks left me with some neighbors and went out West and never did come back. So I worked on their farm until I got into show business, and when somebody asked me at the radio station in Knoxville how old I was, I just said I was sixteen even though I probably wasn't that old or maybe I was a little older—see? I never really knew and maybe that has something to do with me getting into show business."

Herman Woonzel sat and looked hard and long down the little dusty road and it made me feel sorry for him in a way. He spoke again, "You know my wife, Sarah, died. Now after that I didn't like show business. I could still get a few laughs and some would ask me to work here and there, but I just couldn't do it because I didn't feel like getting into the foolishness of the thing like I did before."

"Mr. Woonzel, you were friends with Uncle Dave Macon weren't you?"

"Now, me and Uncle Dave worked some together. I didn't copy him though. Some said I took my style after him but it ain't right. Me and Uncle Dave never wrote most of the stuff we did. We got most of our gags and routines from traveling folks—and they probably got it somewhere, so that don't matter. I guess you could go all the way back to The Bible and not find an original entertainer in the whole history of things. A fat man can tell a skinny man's joke, or a pretty man can sing an ugly man's song, and it's all different. You know what I mean by that?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, that's thing you have to know about it." Herman Woonzel looked off down the road again as if he expected someone to appear in his driveway.

"Are you tired Mr. Woonzel?"

"Now there's another thing. I've always been tired. The government thinks I'm eighty one years old, and I don't know if I am or not, but I've always been kind of tired. And when you get tired, you get a little case of the blues with it. Maybe that's why I got in show business. Now you take a guy who's a little tired, and he'll do something to kind of perk himself up—like play the banjo or sing a little song or tell a gag—you know what I mean?"

I nodded my head up and down in affirmation.

"See that lizard sitting there boy?" Herman nodded toward a little black lizard sitting in a patch of sunlight that had broken through the clouds after the April shower of the early morning. I looked at the little lizard, and told him I could see it. He squinted at the little critter and said, "Now that lizard has what you'd call a break-away tail. You get him sitting on the end of a board, you hit that board with a hammer

and his tail will fall right off, and he'll grow him another in no time. That's so when anything tries to catch him he just lets 'em grab that tail, and he goes right under the porch and grows another tail. Now a man has got to be like that, too. I've had my tail broke a hundred times in my life, and I'm still here."

"Mr. Woonzel, what would you do if you had to do it all over again?"

"I'd get me an education and be a big movie star."

"What makes you say that?"

"Well, now boy, you asked me what I would do if I started all over, and I told you."

"Yes sir. What do you think of the new sounds in country music?"



Illustration: Paul Milosevich

"How's that?"

"Well, a lot of people say that country is too modern, that it has lost its value, and that it's going up-town and things like that."

Herman sat there for a minute looking at me as if I had somehow not been listening before. Herman spoke. "Now show business is just what it's always said it was—a business. It's hard to entertain folks. You get crossways with a crowd, and

they'll run you out of town. I used to work with a roller-skating bear. Now that bear was as good an act as I ever worked with, and good natured about it too. He used to ride in a horse trailer behind our old Packard, and sometimes we'd stop and catch him a fish, and he'd fish a little himself although he was out of practice being in show business so long. But he was a talent, make no mistake about that. Now you take this big chested blonde-headed girl folks are always writing about. Now there's a girl with talent. I mean you can tell just by seeing the way she smiles that she's got show business in her. I'd put her up against that bear anytime. You know her?"

"Yes sir."

Well, you tell her she oughta learn to dance, she'd look good dancing, you tell her that."

"Yes sir."

Herman Woonzel suddenly seemed to be having a good time, he slapped his knee and sang out, "Doo Da Doo Da."

"Mr. Woonzel, is there anything else you can tell me about the business and yourself? How about the way a person should dress? Some folks say people don't dress up enough anymore."

Herman Woonzel snapped back from his momentary joviality and said, "Now there's a good one. You know that it's important what I heard one time. Nobody would know a general without his clothes. But don't get that wrong. A costume to one man is another man's street clothes. A feller's got to be careful what he wears on stage. I saw a boy on TV the other night wearing a prospectors outfit. Big beard and a hat and some overall pants. Sung pretty good, too. Kind of made you wonder about him in that prospectors outfit. That's important in show business—let people wonder about you. I used to have a hat with a big bite taken out of the brim. Good hat for my act at the time—told 'em a mule took a big bite out of it. Told 'em when a feller caught up with me and that mule and wanted to know what I was doing with his mule, I told him I was feeding it. Now that was a fairly good gag in my day. Well, boy, I'm gonna make me a Spam sandwich here in a minute and take a little nap. Remember that nobody don't owe music or entertainment nothing. Music and entertainment owe the people who make it. Are you religious?"

"In a way."

"Well, say a little something for me if you get the chance. I ain't real religious, but it don't hurt none having folks pray for you."

"Yes sir."

Mr. Herman Woonzel closed the screen door and left me sitting in the sun on the small wooden porch. I looked down the little dirt road that led up to his house to see if anyone was coming up the drive. ■

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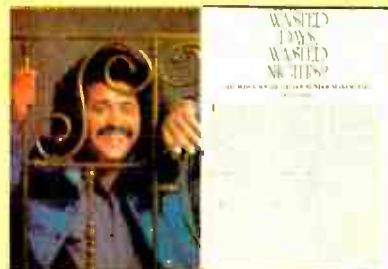
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THE OAK RIDGE EXPLOSION

Tracking down the American Dream in the "Country Smoke" with the supercharged Oak Ridge Boys.

by **BOB CAMPBELL**

It comes rolling out of these two long tubes attached to a barrel-full of dry ice on each side of the stage in the Greenville Memorial Auditorium in South Carolina. The *IT* is manufactured smog which is fast lathering the stage in huge layers of bluish-gray smoke that is overflowing like a small waterfall into the front rows of the audience. These folks don't seem to mind. In fact, they are rather taken by this strange wet mist, wrapping itself in and around everything in sight and growing progressively thicker and more eerie against the blinding array of red, white, blue and amber stage lights. The Oak Ridge Boys, who have just wrecked the place with a blistering 40-minute performance, call this little device "country smoke" ("We're gonna get us a country laser show too," says Duane Allen, lead singer of The Oaks.).

But this has hardly been your typical country show; and The Oaks aren't through yet. The Greenville audience of 7,000 is on its feet stomping and screaming for more, and the guys are hustling back out front again for an encore, smog machine and all. The Oak Ridge Boys are opening for Kenny Rogers on this grueling, month-long tour which started eight days ago on March 8 in Nashville when The Oaks taped a segment of the *Kenny Rogers Television Special* at The Grand Ole Opry House. And right now, waist deep in swirling "country smoke," with a bright-orange Oak Ridge Boys lighted marquee sign glowing thirty feet in the air above the stage, The Oaks are singing and prancing to the "metal" country-rock

sound of The Oak Ridge Boys Band.

To see The Oaks in person is an electrifying sight—a visual smorgasbord, a whirling menagerie of color, sound and kinetic energy, all syncopated to the beat and brass of the band and the custard and cream harmonies of the four Oaks themselves. Their records are good, but The Oak Ridge Boys onstage are extraordinary. They are a group in tune with the times.

The notion of The Oaks moving from gospel to country is a dead issue. At this point, they are even stretching the boundaries of country music to suit *their* talent. It is the American Dream personified, an appetite for achievement. After they left gospel music in 1975 (after winning four Grammys and 15 Dove Awards), The Oaks weathered a couple of tough, lean years. But they took a hard look inside themselves, and with the help of people like Johnny Cash, decided to go for the brass ring. That confidence and purposefulness pervades their presence and envelops anyone within range. All these guys are veterans of at least 10 years of show business, but they act like kids with a new toy. The Oaks are absolutely *infected* with the excitement of reaching new plateaus, new audiences and rubbing elbows with the side ornaments of fame. They are fun to be around.

Consider their past year: The Country Music Association voted The Oaks "Vocal

Group of the Year" in the nationally televised CMA Awards Show last fall, and their band won the CMA "Instrumental Group of the Year" Award. All three major music trade magazines—Billboard, Cash Box and Record World—recognized them as the "Number One Country Group In The World" in either albums or singles polls. The Oaks have averaged one appearance a month in the past year on national television shows, including *The Tonight Show*, *Dinah*, *The Mike Douglas Show*, *The Midnight Special*, *Hee Haw* and the recent *Kenny Rogers Special*. Six straight singles by The Oaks have reached the top 10 on the country charts, and their new album, *The Oak Ridge Boys Have Arrived*, is their best-selling album yet. On the wall in their office in Hendersonville, Tenn. is a framed gold record recognizing The Oaks' harmony work on Paul Simon's single, *Slip Sliding Away*. If you want to hire The Oak Ridge Boys for a future date, the price is \$20,000, a slight increase over the \$1,000 they were getting a few short years ago.

* * * * *

The basement of the auditorium in Greenville is composed of a maze of ugly pale green stairways and rooms, an instant reminder of dank high school locker rooms and old hospitals. The Oaks and their band ate supper here before the concert this Friday night (a healthy catered meal of barbecued beef, squash casserole, green beans, fresh green salad, home-cooked cornbread and spice cake). Hollow, sterile, subterranean fluorescent-lighted rooms



The Oaks in action: "Music is the universal language." says Duane Allen. "When I die, I hope through my music, someone can say I did something for peace in the world."

like these are normal docking places for entertainers immediately before and after a concert. Right now, a few short minutes after leaving the audience panting for more, bass singer Richard Sterban is back downstairs, drinking a can of Coke and talking baseball, one of his passions in life. At one time when he was singing with The Stamps Quartet, Richard backed up Elvis Presley. On the road, he jogs regularly and loves to hear women scream when he leans against the mike and hits a low bass note (*Crying Againnnnn . . .*). But Richard, who owns a small part of the Nashville Sounds AA Baseball Team, is awed by the fact he is now getting a chance to meet and associate with some of the major league players he admires.

"We've had a chance to meet some of the Houston Astros on some of our trips down there, and we were all invited out to Joe Niekro's house for supper one day. He is the knuckle ball pitcher. His brother, Phil, plays for Atlanta. We had supper and Joe said, 'Come on outside, let's throw a ball around.' So he took us out in the back yard and let us catch while he threw the knuckler. It's amazing the way that ball works. It was almost impossible to catch. He wasn't throwing as hard as he could, and a knuckle ball isn't fast anyway, but it would do crazy things. It would just dart off to one side or the other. Joe told us he never really knew himself where it would go if he was throwing it right.

"It was really great being around him," said the 35-year-old Sterban, a native of Camden, New Jersey. Richard also demonstrated how Niekro grips a ball to throw the knuckler. After a few more minutes of baseball discussion and comments on the show, the dressing room is deserted for the more appetizing atmosphere of the Oak Ridge Boys' touring bus. The bus is named "Chocolate."

* * * * *

Touring buses for bands are both a necessity and a luxury. This particular one is equipped with a front lounge, six bunks and a bathroom in the middle compartment, and another more private lounge in the back. "Chocolate" also has a helluva sound system wired up in front and back. These buses never shut down. On a tour, the bus pulls up at a hotel or motel (clean-up rooms, they're called) and runs all night on its own generator. If the bus has to pull out at some gruesome hour like six in the morning, the guys can sleep undisturbed in their bunks.

The morning after the Greenville show, at 10 o'clock on this crisp, ice-blue South Carolina Saturday everybody is asleep except for Duane Allen. The bus is rolling on the open road towards Raleigh, North Carolina where the Kenny Rogers/Oak Ridge Boys/Dottie West tour will play tonight before a packed house of 12,000 at the Raleigh Civic Center. A small-town

boy from Taylortown in upper East Texas, Duane normally goes to bed at a reasonable hour and gets up early. He is wide awake this morning, talking philosophy. . . . "Music is the universal language. It surpasses politics. Not even love does that. When I die, I hope through my music, someone can say I did something for peace in the world."

This is strong stuff for a lazy Saturday morning in the midst of a grinding tour, but Duane is a believer and he makes others believe. At 35, Duane Allen is the understated leader of The Oaks. He is calm, shrewd, patient and immensely likeable. But then all The Oaks are likeable, a disarming trait in a business where sincerity and good manners have little to do with talent or success. Through 14 years with The Oaks, Duane has learned from his mistakes and misses little. It is largely due to his careful attention that The Oaks' organization is run efficiently.

"Although we don't have a lot of rules, I do try to run the group like a major corporation," Duane explains. "We do have business meetings. I want the group to keep going on long after Duane Allen is gone. I feel like The Oak Ridge Boys were an institution more or less before I joined them, and I think it will be even more so when I retire."

While the morning burned away under the wheels of "Chocolate" with still no sign of the other Oaks (the boys DO like to



Photographing four faces for one magazine cover is not an easy task. Photographer Leonard Kamsler solved the problem by stacking The Oaks on top of each other.

unwind in the early hours after a show), Duane talked about all the good things that have happened to The Oaks in the past year. They worked on a TV special with Roy Rogers, Dale Evans and Dennis Weaver, and Duane told a couple of funny stories about meeting the old Western stars.

"We were working on this show with Loretta Lynn, and we all just stood around in a circle listening to Roy and Dennis tell stories about how they made all those old movies and TV shows. Roy said they would film a chase scene against the side of a mountain and use the same footage in a bunch of different movies. All those stories were great. We just stood around with our mouths open. Loretta stood there like a little girl and never said a thing. Bob, you and I remember *Gunsmoke* and *Roy Rogers*. I appreciate Roy Rogers for the things he meant to me when I was growing up—those values. Dennis Weaver called me Duane on the set, and I thought he had read my name on the program or something. I saw him again awhile back, and he was sitting by himself in a restaurant way across the room. He saw me come in and hollered, 'Duane!' It really thrilled me to hear Chester holler Duane clear across the room. He is a down-to-earth guy."

The Oak Ridge Boys are an autonomous group, with four distinct, strong personalities. But it is Duane who hovers over them with a fine-tuned eye for any weakness or breakdown in unity. Duane understands their strengths. Bill Golden, the quiet one from Alabama with the disheveled look, is 40 and has been an Oak for one year longer than Duane. Bill and Duane own the majority of stock in the Oak Ridge Boys corporation, and Duane often seeks the counsel of Golden, who has the engaging habit of listening intently to a story or involved question and answering with little more than a radiant, beatific

smile. If Bill were a pitcher, his best pitch would be a slider. You can forget he is there, but every so often he will say or do something that will break right in on you—a subtle, but arresting reminder of his solid understanding of the mechanics of The Oak Ridge Boys. . . .

"Bill, would you like to say something? You are the only one who hasn't talked," a reporter at the Sunday afternoon press conference before the concert in Salem, Virginia had asked him.

"Wellll . . ." smiled Bill, rising slowly from a chair to give a short, precise analysis of the group's unity.

"Bill and I complement each other," Duane says. "We meet in the middle. I am the man who gets things done on a day-to-day basis and Bill is the dreamer. He is a

planner who thinks months ahead. Bill used to think in concepts that we couldn't even dream of, and now they are happening. He is the one who came up with the idea of us wearing stylish California clothes onstage. All the guys in this group have their specialty. Richard knows every deejay in the country. When we go into a town, Richard calls them up. And Joe is handling the child abuse concert we are doing in June."

We pull into Raleigh about 2 p.m. and head for our hotel rooms. The Oaks are all up now and bound and determined to watch the college basketball playoffs on TV, but a scheduled interview with pretty, blonde-haired Susan Wenzell of the *Raleigh-Durham Sun* Newspaper has to be disposed of first. The Oaks treat press conferences and interviews like a performance. They throw the questions back and forth between themselves drawing inspiration and wit from some source of central group power—another example of their close-knit friendship. This warm camaraderie runs like a lightning bolt throughout the entire Oaks' organization. This morning, Duane talked deeply about his feelings for The Oak Ridge Boys.

"I think the thing that has kept us together is understanding our business and understanding each other—understanding how it all works. We believe in what we are doing and we believe in each other. We are all friends. If I had to do business with anybody in the world, even if it was something else, the first people I think I would call would be the people in this group. We do think we can cause a better thing to happen in people's minds than the news headlines can cause. I feel like we can cause people to have a better day and a better night if they come to hear us. I think



The Oaks joined Kenny Rogers, Dottie West and Ray Charles for a concert at the Grand Ole Opry which was taped for a TV special.



The Oaks: (left to right) Joe Bonsall, Duane Allen, Bill Golden and Richard Sterban.

we can take their minds off the world's problems and all the hassles they have, and give them some sort of entertainment that will maybe make them a happier person. Now that gets into philosophies and things, and it is kind of vague. It is also kind of American and apple pie. But honestly, that is what I am. If I had the chance to go out and create something again, it would be exactly what I am a part of."

* * * * *

"You are aware by now that we are not doing this thing to hype anybody or anything, I hope. I think you understand that." It's nine o'clock Sunday Night and tenor Joe Bonsall is talking about the June 22 "Stars For Children" Benefit Concert for Child Abuse which will feature The Oaks (along with Roy Clark, Larry Gatlin, Tammy Wynette, Buck Trent, Johnny Rodriguez and George "Goober" Lindsey) and will be held in the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Along with the Fort Worth Association For Retarded Citizens, The Oak Ridge Boys are the designers and sponsors of the non-profit "Stars For Children" organization.

The bus is finally heading back to Nashville. It has been a long week for The Oaks, and they are winding down, one by one stretching out on their bunks. But Joe, who earlier had candidly discussed growing up in the rough streets of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Joe was once a regular on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*), is providing an in-depth look at why The Oaks are sponsoring the June "Stars For Children" concert. The most intense Oak, wiry and hyper, the 30-year-old Bonsall is also articulate and deeply committed to the prevention of child abuse. He is chair-

man of the "Stars For Children" Concert Committee.

"For a long time we starved and weren't able to give much. Not that we are making gigantic fortunes now. But at the same time we want to do some good for somebody. I had read appalling articles—and you have too—about how children in this country are abused in epidemic proportions. Right away, I think about my five-year-old girl and I think about all the guys in the group who have kids—and I think of someone actually using their fists or blunt instruments or matches or whatever to keep little children from being little children. It is one of the saddest things in the world. So The Oak Ridge Boys decided to help with child abuse. First we were going to have a tennis tournament. We got to talking about some of these golf things and all that raise money. They spend so much money bringing in celebrities and all and treating them first class that most of it doesn't go to charity. So the idea came about to have a concert. We will take every cent of that money and we will put it into the "Stars For Children" fund, and it will go to a more extensive education-type thing, mainly TV ads. We are trying to build more and more places where people can be educated.

"The reason for the Stars For Children Concert is to, by God, keep people from beating up on their kids. I keep a very grim file in our office of bad child abuse things. I remind everybody in our group—if you ever want to really know why we are behind this, just go look through that file for awhile. But don't look through it long because it will make you cry."

* * * * *

The Sunday afternoon show ended a few minutes ago, and the bus is trying to

maneuver an opening into the backed-up maze of cars leaving the concert. The Oaks have been talking to fans and watching *The Wide World of Sports* on tv, but they are still restless and haven't unwound from performing. "Chocolate" is going to stop by the Holiday Inn Motel to pick up a few stray items and then head straight for Nashville, some 10 hours away. However, Raymond Hicks is on board and mischief is in the air. Raymond is assistant to Oaks' manager Mickey Jones and a direct descendant of the silver-tongued devil himself. Raymond can charm a rattlesnake and rip the meanness clean out of a wart hog. He likes to have fun. He also has a real talent for smoothing all the tiny wrinkles that surface all the time on a tour of this size. Raymond has changed out of his jeans into what can only be described as a floor-length men's dressing gown of thin material. . . . "I'm getting comfortable for the trip home," Raymond announces with a grin.

But the traffic has boiled over, and the bus is getting nowhere. Earlier that day, Raymond had directed traffic on the way to the coliseum and his talents are needed again. "Raymond, come on up here and get out and move some of these cars," Joe hollers. Everybody soon warms up to the idea of Raymond playing cop in his night gown. After some persuasion, Raymond bounds out the door into the middle of an intersection and starts waving his arms. Remember . . . it is four o'clock on a bright Sunday afternoon on the quiet outskirts of Salem, Virginia and a crazy man in a night gown with nothing else on, including shoes, is walking up to cars in the middle of a traffic jam and chatting with folks about God knows what. The Oaks are rolling on the floor in absolute pain. This whole scene is hilarious—a priceless bit of absurd comedy. And Raymond is playing his part well. This little game goes on for five or ten minutes and Raymond climbs back inside, grinning from ear-to-ear. The Oaks aren't the only entertainers on this tour.

It was a small moment, but a jewel for quality. It was a joke among friends and representative of The Oak Ridge Boys today—full of confidence, adventure, humor and energy. Duane succinctly summed up the essence of The Oaks in a short statement to a reporter Saturday, who wondered how they could keep up the momentum after all these years. . . . "There is something about this group that has transpired that I have been lucky enough for it to touch my life. I actually feel like I'm with a new group now, and I have been a member of The Oak Ridge Boys for 14 years. We are just now getting to do some of the things we have dreamed about."

To live's to fly low and high
So shake the dust off of your wings
And the sleep out of your eyes
"To Live's To Fly"
Townes Van Zandt

1979 MUSICAL INSTRUMENT REVIEW

Ever go to a show to see your favorite country entertainer and wonder about those guys in his band who stand in the shadows behind him—how much money they make, how they travel, and how they got their jobs?

In 1977, Country Music Magazine's Special Musical Instrument Section showed you a pictorial feature of the finest collection of musical instruments in Nashville. Last year, we took a look at two of the world's largest guitar manufacturers—the superb craftsmanship of the CF Martin Company and the ingenious innovations of the Ovation Instruments. This year in our sixth annual Musical Instrument Review we take you out on the road to take a look at the lifestyles and occupations of the people who make a

living playing these instruments.

Kelly Delaney, in his article, Three Road Bands takes a look at Mel Tillis' Statesiders, one of country music's highest paid bands; The Joe Sun Band, one of country's newest and still struggling bands; and last but not least, The Charlie Daniels Band, one of the most versatile country rock bands in the field.

Douglas B. Green's look at the Superpickers Band fills you in on why a group of Nashville's highest paid studio musicians have decided to hit the road.

Contributor Rich Kienzle also gives us a look at Pickers New Products, the latest in technical innovations for amateur and professional musicians alike.

A LOOK AT THREE ROAD BANDS

by KELLY DELANEY

Charlie Daniels Band

*Now the seats are all empty
Let the Roadies take the stage
Pack it up and tear it down
They're the first to come
and last to leave
Working for that
minimum wage
They'll set it up in another town
Tonight the people were so fine
They waited there in line
And when they got up on their
feet they made the show
And that was sweet
But I can hear the sound
Of slamming doors and
folding chairs
And that's a sound they'll
never know*

The road musician, whether he comes from Nashville, Los Angeles, New York, or somewhere in between, is a special breed of person. His family ties exist for long stretches of miles, only in his mind and heart, and in those of the loved ones he leaves behind. He listens to his

children grow up over long distance telephone calls. He sleeps on buses and in motel rooms more than he does in his own bed. He eats more burgers and fries than any high school kid, and he often dreams of a home-cooked meal.

To the thousands of people who watch him perform on stage in their town, he is a hero whose fast-paced lifestyle they admire. Yet, every night when the concert is over and the gleaming stage lights are replaced by the two steady eyes of the bus headlights shining through the darkness of the interstate, he is often left with only his own thoughts of home and a can of "rodeo-cool" beer for company. Soon the whine of the diesel engine and the steady hum of the tires lull him to sleep. He downs his beer, crushes out his cigarette, and climbs into his bunk, with the last notes of the concert, min-

gled with boisterous applause, still ringing in his ears.

Sleep is a refuge until he has to get up tomorrow and do it all over again. By the time the tour is over he may have likely covered 10,000 miles, performed in 30 different cities, and thrilled an estimated 300,000 people who have come to hear him play.

True, the road musician is a free spirit, yet his unique brand of freedom is also the chain which binds him. He is addicted to the road. He lives in the "Now;" his future is a nebulous cloud of smoke, like the last puff on his cigarette disappearing in thin air.

In many ways, road musicians are throwbacks to the days of the Old West when outlaw gangs roamed the countryside. Instead of the James Gang or the Daltons, now it's the Statesiders and the Charlie Daniels Band, among many

others, each a separate entity with its own style and sense of pride. They eat, sleep and work together, share road secrets, and fiercely defend each other. They'll come into your town, pull off a job, and hightail it down the highway to the next show. It is a brotherhood of music and nowhere else in the music business does the sense of camaraderie run deeper. The musicians are devoted to each other and to the leader from whom the band frequently draws its name.

It is a team concept, like that often associated with sports. To be successful, they must work together both on and off stage. While the road musician's body often suffers physically on a long tour, his determination remains as fixed as that of any olympic athlete. Often only sheer willpower and a flaming desire to be the best get him through the closing dates of a

The road musician is a special breed. His family ties exist...only in his mind and heart.

1979 MUSICAL INSTRUMENT REVIEW

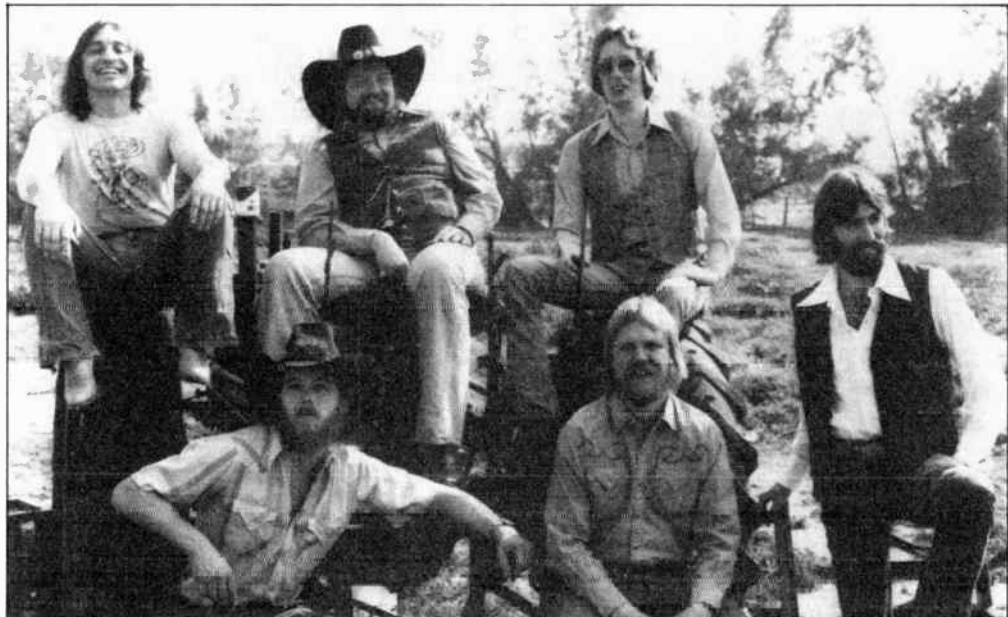
tour.

With the end of a tour in sight, he is burnt to a crisp and he yearns for the comforts of home. Yet, true to character, given a few days off to rest and collect his sensibilities, he is anxious to go out and do it again. And again. And again. Endlessly. The lure of the bright lights, the yearn to travel, and a thirst for new experiences in strange places takes hold again. Like the proverbial tiger in a cage, soon he is pacing the floor of his home, just itching to ride again. As Taz DiGregorio of the Charlie Daniels Band put it, accurately if not eloquently, "Man, we ain't nothin' but road hogs."

Both the Charlie Daniels Band and Mel Tillis' State-siders epitomize what a successful road band is all about. The core personnel of both bands have been together for years and the musicians have paid their dues, working their way up to top billing and plush buses from playing small clubs and traveling in crowded vans or even more crowded automobiles. The price of the next concert ticket you buy might be a bit easier to swallow if you understand what it takes to put on a show in your hometown.

When the Charlie Daniels Band goes on the road, it takes no less than 26 people, two buses, and three tractor trailers loaded with equipment. Plus, there are innumerable hours spent in advance to plan the logistics of the tour. There is close to a million dollars tied up in equipment alone for CDB. On top of that comes salaries for band and road personnel, plus commissions to Sound Seventy Productions which manages Daniels and plans his tours.

"We've got a real good organization with a lot of depth to it," says Daniels proudly. "When we accept a date, our people go to work. They get on the phone and find out the power available at the hall, dressing room facilities—they



The Charlie Daniels Band: "I'm just one of the boys," says Charlie. "I sleep in a bunk just like everyone."

find out everything. We map out the shortest route from the hotel to the hall and then they time it to see how long it takes to get there. I've got the easiest job of the bunch—all I have to do is play my music."

While all facets of a tour are researched in advance, with very little being left to chance, occasionally there are minor stumbling blocks.

"Every once in a while a truck will break down," Daniels draws, "but that's to be expected. We have trouble getting over-height trailers through some tunnels, but there are so many alternate routes. In places like New York City we've had to back up and go another way because we couldn't fit through the Lincoln Tunnel.

"When we do play in New York, we park everything in front of the hotel. We take the whole block. We just take care of the gentleman who's in charge of the parkin' on that block because we know we've got to have a place to park when we go up there, and we want it to be a good, safe place."

While Daniels once had a promising career as a Nashville session picker, the lure of the road finally won out. "I did

make good money playin' sessions for a while," he admits, "but most of it was one or two accounts." (His session work includes performances on three Bob Dylan albums as well as work on albums by Ringo Starr, Al Kooper, Pete Seeger, Leonard Ochen, Flatt and Scruggs, Marty Robbins, and Claude King, among others.) "I prefer the road much more. I don't know why—I guess I just got sand in my shoes. The way I'm on the road now I wouldn't trade it for four sessions a day for the rest of my life. I love it. I love playin' to people instead of microphones."

While it is the Charlie Daniels Band and he is unmistakably the leader, Daniels considers himself just another musician in the band. "I'm just one of the boys," he says. "I sleep in a bunk just like everyone else. The only difference between my bunk and anyone else's is an intercom. There's one in my bunk, the road manager's bunk, and the road accountant's bunk because we're the people who need to be got a hold of more often. I've also got a large readin' light because my eyes are so bad.

"I don't have a private bedroom or any of that bullshit. I just don't wanna be that way. I

don't wanna be separate from the human race. I even ride on the road crew bus sometimes. Their bus is newer than the band's. When we got a new bus, I said let's give it to the road crew. They've been ridin' around in crap for three years, so let's give them somethin' good. Besides that, we've got our bus the way we want it."

Daniels' bus is well-equipped for traveling long distances. It contains three separate stereo systems, a telephone, video cassette player, television, radio, CB, and lamps and earphone jacks in all of the bunks. "It's not a real plush sort of bus," he offers. "It's nice, but it's built for hard travelin' and built sturdy for a bunch of men. We live on that bus."

*But the band's on the bus
and they're waiting to go
We've got to drive all night and
do a show in Chicago
Or Detroit, I don't know
We do so many shows in a row
And these towns all
look the same
We just pass the time
in our hotel rooms
And wander round backstage
Till those lights come up and
we hear that crowd
And we remember why
we came*

With the end of a tour in sight, he is burnt to a crisp and he yearns for the comforts of home.

1979 MUSICAL INSTRUMENT REVIEW

Most of CDB's traveling is done in the wee hours of the morning. "Our favorite way to travel is three to five hundred miles per night, since that's when I get most of my sleep. I like to finish a gig and leave about three in the mornin' and wake up in another town. Our bus is made to spend time on with somethin' to do to keep you from goin' crazy.

"Our routin' has worked out pretty well the last few years. We used to have to bust it to get from one gig to the next. We were takin' anything we could get just to stay busy. But now we're able to plan our tours much more in advance. If we're goin' to open a tour in San Francisco or Tucson, we don't even consider motel rooms. Our drivers are capable and willing to drive 24 hours to get us where we're goin'.

"During that 24-hour period we might play some poker if anyone's got some money. Or, we'll lay in the bunks and read, listen to music, watch TV or video tapes—there's a lot of talkin' goin' on. I spend a lot of time sittin' in the jump seat by the driver. I like to ride up there."

Through experience, Daniels has learned that it is best to have a tour with few open dates on it. "We like to work every night we're out," he explains. "The worst thing you can do is give this band a night off on the road. Everybody gets too drunk. There's nothin' to do except stare at the motel room walls, go to a movie, or sit in the bar. That's usually where we all end up at."

There are few rules set down by Daniels; however he is a stickler for promptness. "If we're scheduled to leave at eight in the mornin', our bus pulls out at 8:05," he says firmly. "If somebody's not on it, there's an envelope left at the desk with plane fare which comes out of the next paycheck." Daniels abides by his own rule, should he miss the bus.

"I try to stay away from makin' any hard and fast

rules," he adds, "but that's one of 'em. We're pretty flexible, because you're dealin' with 26 different personalities. I don't like rules like 'no smokin' on the bus.' That's bullshit. I wouldn't ride on a bus I couldn't smoke on—if I was a smokin' man. The bus gets messed up sometimes, but what the hell." (Daniels does chew tobacco and a can of tobacco juice is frequently within reach.)

Another Daniels rule is that everyone stays on the bus when they are checking into motels until the road manager has completed room arrangements with the desk clerk, thus avoiding confusion.

Members of the Charlie Daniels Band are treated in many ways like employees of any company. "We try to treat everybody right," Daniels says. "We pay twice a month—the first and the fifteenth. We figure that's better than tryin' to pay everybody by the night. There's a certain amount of stability that goes with workin' in the Charlie Daniels Band."

There is more than financial stability too. "We're a pretty clannish bunch of people," Daniels adds. "If you wanna fight one feller, you've got to fight all 26 when you get down to nitty gritty time. We try to avoid situations like that, but that's the way it is when you come down to it. I try to keep my people out of any situations where they might get hurt. They're not gettin' paid to fight. Security people do get paid for that sort of thing, so we let any problems be handled by them. If it gets out of their hands, then our people get involved."

Within the band there are few personality problems. "We all get along exceptionally well," Daniels says. "We do have squabbles, misunderstandings, arguments once in a while, but they're minimal for as many people as we carry on the road."

Due to the idiosyncracies of his profession, Daniels like any road musician, must have a

New Products

Super-Sensitive Rosin

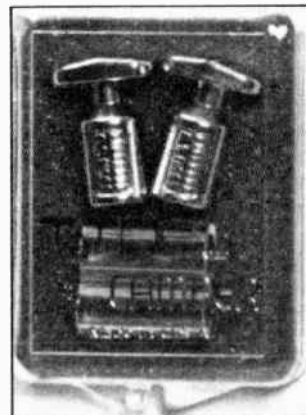
If a fiddler can't fiddle without a bow, he surely can't do it without rosin on the bow. *Super-Sensitive Musical String Co.* now has a fine



rosin for fiddles, encased in a wood block with an easy-open box. It's available for \$1.50 from many local dealers, or from *Super-Sensitive Musical String Co.*, Box 30-V, Route 4, Sarasota, Florida 33582.

Camber's T-Top

If you've played in bands, as I have, there's one thing that can blow your concentration faster than a busted string: that rare and dreaded occasion when a drummer, in the throes of musical ecstasy, slams a cymbal, only to have



it fly off the stand and crash to the floor. *Camber*, the distributors of *Camber Cymbals*, now has a remedy known as the "T-Top." Screwed onto the cymbal stand, it effectively eliminates the need for the standard wing nut to hold the

cymbals on the stand. Since it stays on the stand permanently, you can't lose the wing nut (which makes it harder to lose the cymbal in mid-crash). Made in one piece, of chrome-plated metal, the "T-Top" is threaded to accept all stands on the market without additional adapters. It comes in sets of 2 and can be found at most music dealers.

Ace Guitarist Gift Pack

There are several things guitarists inevitably lose, or otherwise find themselves without when they need them most. A pitch pipe, a strap, a capo and especially picks. The



Ace Guitarist Gift Pack is the perfect hedge against that awkward moment when one of those items is suddenly missing. It includes the *Ace Hootenanny Guitar Strap*, the *Ace Pro-Tuner Pitch Pipe*, a capo and an assorted group of guitar picks, packaged in an attractive gift box. It's available for \$9.95 at most music outlets, made by *Ace Musical Products*, 4 William Street, Lynbrook, New York, 11563. RICH KIENZLE

Like the tiger in his cage, soon he is pacing the floor of his home, just itching to ride again.

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strong family unit if he is going to have any family at all. "I'm a professional musician and they're a professional musician's family," he says matter of factly. "This is just what Daddy does for a livin.'" I've got a wife and a 14-year-old son. They don't miss me any less when I'm gone and I don't miss them any less than anybody else—like a carpenter who takes a job in Israel or somethin'. They know how much I love it and they wouldn't have me doin' anything else."

Enter Taz DiGregorio, Daniels' keyboard player for the past eight years. "Ya kiss your wife goodbye at the door," he says, "and hope she remembers you when you get back home. Who's this stranger walkin' in the door? Why don't my children know me?" He laughs at the hyperbole he's created.

DiGregorio is often a spokes-

man for CDB which also consists of Tommy Crain, lead guitar; Charlie Hayward, bass; Fred Edwards, drums; and Jim Marshall, drums. "We used to travel in a '66 Chevy with a U-Haul trailer," DiGregorio recalls. "Then we went to a van—seven guys in one van. Then we went to a bus called the 'Uneasy Rider' (named after Daniels' first hit). There were 13 of us on the bus and we carried all the equipment on there with us. It was loaded down. We used to have to push it to get it started. It was like a rolling sanitarium!

"The money wasn't as good in those days, so you did whatever you could—we used to party pretty hard because when there's nothin' else you have to do something to relieve the tension. We went from that bus to a brand new MCI bus."

The band's mode of travel has changed and so has its sound. "We used to play at 480

decibels," he jokes. That's an exaggeration, but it was pretty loud. Since then I've lost part of my hearing from it and we had a vocal coach tell us that if we didn't quit playing at such volumes we'd all eventually go deaf. So we changed our equipment. It's down to a lot smaller stuff." (it should be noted that it still takes three tractor-trailers to haul all the sound and light equipment.)

The Daniels Band does endorse equipment for various instrument manufacturers. The drummers endorse Ludwig equipment while the guitarists endorse Epiphone instruments and Gibson strings. "I wouldn't endorse somethin' I didn't use," Daniels says. "I'm not gonna tell someone to play somethin' I wouldn't use myself."

DiGregorio has been around long enough to see the road personnel change for the better too. "We used to have roadies

that would pass out on the equipment and we'd have to haul them and the equipment out after a show," he says in his raspy voice. "Now we have qualified, professional people. Everybody does their job well."

*Now roll them cases out
and lift them amps
Haul them trusses down and
get em up them ramps
Cause when it comes to
moving me
You guys are the champs
But when that last guitar's
been packed away
You know that I still
want to play
So just make sure you got it
all set to go
Before you come for my piano*

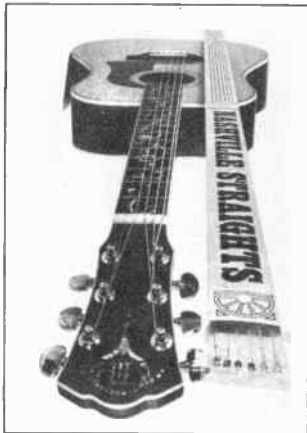
We carry a guy, James Aldridge, who's a Steinway technician. He can take the whole piano apart and rebuild it. He not only tunes my piano, organ, electric piano, and clavinet, but he also tunes the guitars. So he keeps the whole band in tune. There's nothin' worse than a band that's out of tune. No matter how good you play, you have to be in tune."

Despite the preventive measures, equipment still breaks down. "The last time we went out my Fender-Rhodes (electric piano) wouldn't work right," DiGregorio says. "So James would go down to the hall in the afternoon, plug it in, tune it, and it would work fine. 'I'd sit down at it at night and it wouldn't work. These kind of hassles you can never get away from."

An instrument technician is almost a necessity for a band which travels 250 days a year from coast to coast. "Extreme changes of weather, hot and cold, affect the guitars and pianos," he adds. "Sometimes my piano will drop a whole tone between gigs in different climates. So it has to be re-tuned. Even in going from the dressing room to the stage, if there's a blast of cold air, it knocks the guitars out of tune." (Strobe tuners on stage help the guitarists in such situations.)

New Products

Nashville Straights



One new trend in stringmaking has been the full-length string packaging, which forsakes the standard coils of strings. Many feel, rightly or wrongly that this can extend the string's life and keep the sound crisp longer. *Nashville Straights*, a product of *Fretted Industries*, is now

employing a new protective wrapper for their full-length strings, designed to shut out moisture vapor and other atmospheric chemicals. The new package uses saran-coated nylon with mylar laminated on metalized polyester. What all of that boils down to is a longer life while on display and a new feel to the string regardless of climate for the purchaser. *Nashville Straights*, using this new package, are available in most music stores. Contact *Fretted Industries*, 1234 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, Illinois, for more information.

Acoustic's Model 114

Country bands usually use small amps, easy to transport and set up in clubs. *Acoustic's Model 114 Guitar Amplifier* fits the requirements of many club platers. It includes 2 10-

inch speakers, a master volume control, LED (Light Emitting Diodes, which don't burn out) status lights for power, reverb and master volume controls, dual inputs, bright switch, treble, bass and midrange controls as well as reverb. It features a snap off



grille in front of the speakers and vinyl covering. The 114 is rated at 50 watts RMS. For more information, write *Acoustic*, 7949 Woodley Avenue, Van Nuys, California 91406. RICH KIENZLE

"Ya kiss your wife goodbye at the door...and hope she remembers you when you get back home."

The hotter the better. Viper.

A solid body guitar is only as good as its pickups. That's why a lot of professional guitarists have started to customize their instruments with hotter, specially wound pickups.

Now there's a solid body guitar with factory-installed pickups that are hotter than custom units and engineered for a fuller sound. The Viper by Ovation.

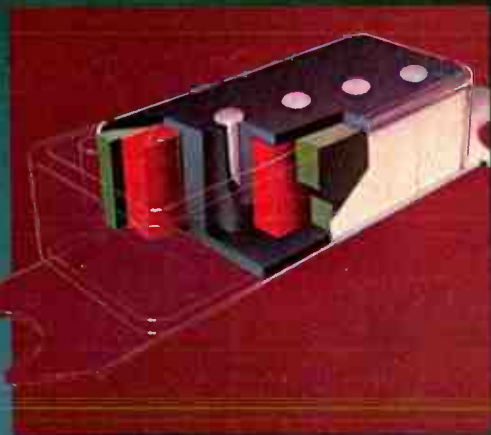
A stronger signal, with more bite.

The Viper uses two single coil pickups. In each pickup, Ovation sets six alnico magnets in the bobbin and wraps the coil with 30% more windings for a stronger signal. Then, the entire assembly is surrounded with vibration-dampening material. And because it is shielded by a patented split casing, the Viper pickup reproduces less line noise and more highs than conventional single coil designs.

The Viper pickup is 6db hotter than other single coil pickups. Play in the upper register and you can hear the notes snap with a clear, razor-sharp tone. Play in the bass or middle registers and the response is clean and full.

Other standard Viper features: a rock maple neck and fingerboard with a full two-octave range, a 25½" scale length for added high harmonics, six individually adjustable solid brass saddles for perfect intonation, master volume and tone controls.

The Viper. It's the only professional quality solid body guitar engineered to have hotter pickups.



For sharper, cleaner treble response, the magnets on the Viper bridge pickup have been angled from the bass to treble strings.



Ovation
A Kaman Company

For information, see your Ovation Dealer or write to:
Ovation Instruments Inc., Dept. CB, Bloomfield, Ct. 06002.

World Radio History

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All the equipment is packed into heavy-duty cases to prevent damage. "My Steinway is in a seven-foot long case that just rolls in," DiGregorio explains. "Everything is very portable and road worthy. If it's not sturdy, it can't go out on the road. It'll never last."

Keeping the musicians in

good shape is quite another matter. "If you're not in good health, there's no sense in going out on the road," he shrugs. "You're miserable. You don't feel good. So you have to keep yourself as healthy as possible."

A musicians' road diet would put anyone's health to the test.

"On the road you don't really get any good food," DiGregorio says. "I'm not saying hotel food is bad—it's just not home cooking—it's grease. Every day at the hall, there's a crew meal, and it's usually pretty good—roast beef or steak with vegetables and a salad. You can get a good meal if you go to the hall. Of course, if you stay up all night and sleep on the bus all day, you miss the meal."

Sometimes it's what musicians drink and not their lack of a balanced diet which affects their health. DiGregorio says: "Every time we go to Texas we try to get across the border to Juarez. There have been times when I don't know how we made it back across the border without getting locked up. We go down there, go to a bar, and raise a little hell."

DiGregorio says there is no such thing as "starities" in the band. "That's something we don't have," he adds. "Charlie has always stressed that this is the Charlie Daniels Band. He is a member of the band, even though he is the boss."

Daniels is one of the few recording artists to use his road band in the studio to record albums. "I like the way they play better than studio pickers," Daniels says. "This is the Charlie Daniels Band, not Charlie Daniels and his band. We write and arrange together. We do the whole thing together."

The tensions of a long road trip can wear everyone's nerves a bit thin, attests DiGregorio. "Everybody has little things they do that may irritate some people, while others might laugh at it," he continues. "Those things you have to overlook. You have to love each other and enjoy being around each other. Nobody is perfect."

The rhythm of the road can soothe one's nerves. "We're so used to being on a bus, it becomes normal," says DiGregorio. "It's like being at home except you're moving all the time. Sometimes we'll listen to

tapes of past performances and pick on each other jokingly about the mistakes. We have a beer cooler, so if it's a long ride, we might drink a lot of beer."

A financial advantage to being a member of CDB is that the musicians have extra incomes from recording and writing. "Most of us get paid on a regular basis whether we're on the road or not," he says. "The basic pay is not phenomenal, but it's enough to make a decent living. If you want the frosting on the cake though, you have to work for it. Charlie does a lot of side projects—like we did the Jim Owens and the Drifting Cowboys album. So we get to play on other things too. Plus, we've done a movie score for a film called, *Whiskey Mountain*. Also, if you can write, that's where the money is. In the band we all write, which gives everybody a chance to make some extra money. But playing live, man, it's the highest you can get. There is nothing in the world that can get you that high—it's incredible."

DiGregorio has been a "road hog" since 1962 when he and Daniels were in a band together called the "Jaguars." "It's a way of life," he says. "I just spent the weekend with the Winters Brothers. They don't have a bus—they've just got a van—18 hours in a van to Miami! So you've got to live it, not just like it."

"I don't know how to do anything else. I could probably learn, but at this stage of my life—I just turned 35—I don't have the patience to learn anything else. And I love what I do."

Yet, there are moments of loneliness. "You get lonesome sometimes," reflects DiGregorio. "It might be three in the morning and you'll be sittin' up in the bus alone thinkin', 'man, I'd sure like to be home.' But bein' home doesn't put food on the table. I imagine everybody gets homesick once in a while. I just can't ever foresee not playing the road. It's the freest you can ever be."

New Products

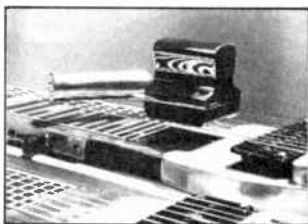
Ovation's Magnum 1

Ovation, who gave you the roundback guitar, now has two new bass guitars on the market: the *Magnum 1* and *Magnum 2*. The huge pickup closest to the neck has four coils, individual volume controls on each coil, allowing the player to adjust the volume of each string separately, eliminating the aggravation that can occur when one string is louder than another. Both models have

control and a 3-band graphic equalizer to make the kind of tonal changes you just can't get out of a standard tone control. The tailpieces are aluminum with built-in mute; the neck has the usual adjustable tension rod, with the added advantage of three carbon-graphite strips. *Magnum 1* lists for \$560 and *Magnum 2* for \$675. Contact Ovation Instruments, 1330 Blue Hills Avenue Extension, Bloomfield, Connecticut 06002.

Heet's E-Bow

Fiddle bows are common, but guitar bows?? Yep, Heet Musical Instruments designed the *E Bow* a couple years ago, the first electric bow for



guitar. Now there's the *E Bow* for steel guitarists as well, endorsed by such legends as Buddy Emmons, Red Rhodes and MSA founder Maurice Anderson. Hearing this used on several steel records, I can vouch for its effectiveness. No price is available yet, but you can secure more information on it by writing to Heet Sound Products, 611 Ducommun Street, Los Angeles, California 90012. RICH KIENZLE



mono/stereo output jacks, while the *Magnum 2* has the added advantage of a battery-powered preamplifier, which makes it easy to change the tone without losing volume. *Magnum 2* also has additional features like a master volume

"Everytime we go to Texas we try to get across to Juarez...go to a bar and raise a little hell."

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blended with advanced solid state electronics make these guitars sound as good as they look. But the ultimate test is playing one. After you do, we're sure you'll agree that at any price it's hard to beat a Hohner electric guitar.

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*Now we got country and western on the bus
R and B, we got disco in eight tracks and cassettes in stereo
We got time to think of the ones we love
While the miles roll away
But the only time that seems too short
Is the time that we get to play*

Mel Tillis's Statesiders

Across town at Mel Tillis's Nashville headquarters, his road band, the Statesiders are busy preparing for another extended tour. The Statesiders are one of the largest bands working the road today. Its members are: Kenny Sears, Paul Justice, Jim Buchanan, and Hoot Hester, fiddles; Bob Younts, drums; Ronnie Mack, piano; Larry Lee, bass; Paul Franklin, steel; Jerry Reid, lead guitar; and Bill Pippin, who in addition to conducting, also plays trumpet and flute.

The Statesiders consider themselves entertainers as well as musicians, and indeed their anecdotes and comedy lines on stage are an integral part of Tillis's show. "We just did a live album with Mel in Phoenix," says Larry Lee, "and behind Mel you can hear what all goes on back there in the band. You can hear where some of the routines come from. As long as it's in pretty good taste he don't mind you using it in the show. If it gets a laugh, it stays in. If it don't—look for another gig—it's real simple. Is Porter rebanding?" Comedy has become a way of life for the Statesiders. "Seriously," Lee adds, "if you do your job, you're here for life. The gig with Mel is real respected in town, and thus the musicians are well-respected too."

Since Tillis was named the Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year in 1976, his career direction has escalated toward a larger, Las Vegas type of revue. And, of



Tillis & The Statesiders: The basic rule is to be straight enough to do your gig and look presentable.

course, the money has increased too. He performs approximately 200 dates each year which means the Statesiders are on the road about 250 days. "It gets to be a drag sometimes," Lee admits. "We work as much if not more than anybody. The bigger the money for the dates has gotten, the more we've worked. Usually it slows down because people can't afford you. But we're still working more than ever before."

Tillis' increased popularity translates into higher revenues for bandmembers too. "The average salary in this band is about \$40,000 per year," Lee estimates. "It's almost double any other gig I know of with the exception of a few. That's why everybody stays here and gets along. Mel's good to us—he really is. "We enjoy what we're doing and we make good money at it. We're making more than most studio pickers right now also."

"Now that's salary. We might pick up some money from TV shows, and like this live album—we'll make good money off of that. Plus we get a huge Christmas bonus—what'd we get last year—thirty-two dollars a piece?" "No, six

apples," jokes Bob Younts.

In the music business, job security is a luxury, and the Statesiders enjoy that. "We know we've got a gig here," Lee adds. "We don't have to wait for that phone call to come in like studio pickers do. The promoters are calling for Mel, so we know we've got work. It's a good feeling."

The urge to travel and perform seems inbred in the Statesiders, since many of them have been successful studio musicians. "We have boys in our band who could sit in town," Lee says. "We've got guys who left session work to come on the road. We get into each other's playin' when we're working live. We're not playin' the same old stock stuff." "We've all been with other groups," adds Younts, "and worked for other artists. But there's a brotherhood in this band. Everyone gets along."

Most of the Statesiders have been together for about five years. "We have some guys who have been here for ten years and some members who have only been here a couple of months," Lee says. "but the average is about five years."

Since Tillis owns two airplanes, not all the Statesiders'

traveling is done by bus. Tillis usually flies to the dates in an Beechcraft King Air. "We split it up," Lee explains. "Five of us fly to the gig and a different five fly back—whatever's turn it is. Mel is looking at a larger plane, a Fairchild, which would eliminate any germiness by busdrivers, eating in 76 truckstops, and getting in 36 hours late from Memphis because of a breakdown! We all love the plane—it gets us home quicker."

Tillis' show also has expanded to include a sound, staging, and lighting company, the "Naked Zoo" from Minneapolis, Minnesota. The company reportedly charges about \$2500 per show to provide sound, lights, backdrops, all the trimmings of big time concert promotions. "They go in ahead of us and set everything up," Lee explains. "That helps a lot. As far as our own personal amps go, we're still using the same ones we had. The sound has grown a lot larger, but you don't need larger amps. When you're miking them, a little amp will work." The Statesiders also endorse equipment for various manufacturers, including Rogers drums, Guild guitars, Peavey amplifiers, and D'Angelico strings.

"The average salary in this band is about \$10,000 per year...Mel's good to us."

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New Products

Saga Electric Guitar Kit

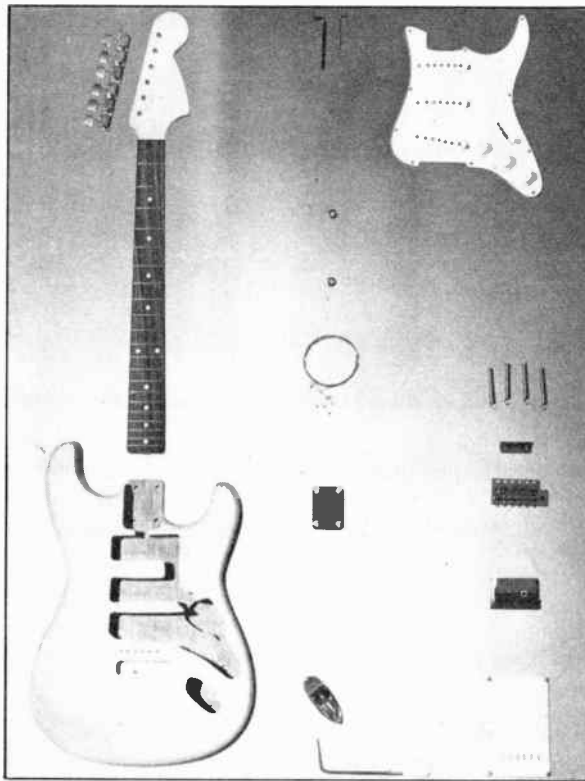
A lot of guitarists dream of someday building their own model, not realizing the years of apprenticeship required to build even the crudest acoustic or electric. Likewise, there are plenty of budget-minded or beginning guitar pickers who would like a Fender-styled instrument, but don't like paying several hundred dollars. Well, *Saga's Electric Guitar Kit* may well provide the answer to both dilemmas.

You needn't be a craftsman or electronics whiz to assemble the guitar. It can be put together with just a few hand tools. The soldering of the electric component is already finished. For your trouble, you get a reinforced birch and mahogany body, arched maple fingerboard complete with frets and adjustable truss rods. Three single-coil pickups complete with tone, volume and selector controls are premounted in the pick-guard assembly. The body is presanded and unfinished (giving you a choice) though

complete finishing and assembly tools are included.

It's available, by mail only, shipped prepaid and

guaranteed for \$169.00, from *Saga Musical Instruments P.O. Box 2841, South San Francisco, California 94080.*



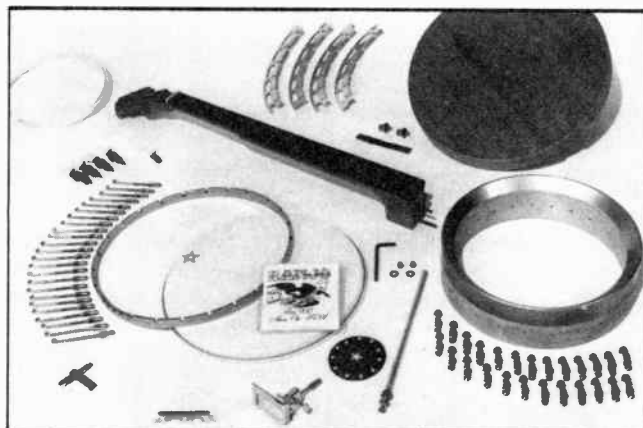
Eagle Banjo Kit

I mentioned the fact that building guitars wasn't easy. Well, building banjos can present untold problems, too. But, again, an enterprising company comes to the rescue of the budget minded banjoist. *Stewart-McDonald's* line of *Eagle Banjo Kits* come ready to assemble. They include Honduras Mahogany necks, rosewood fingerboards and nickel-silver frets. The mahogany resonator is laminated, and designed for maximum flexibility for pickers who want to add or remove the flange without modifying the banjo. They use the company's Five Star Planet Tuning Pegs. All you

need is a screwdriver, sandpaper, glue a finish and some time. All instructions come with the new models, which include the style 3 and 3R

models and the No. 2 and 2R models. Details in a new catalogue can be obtained from *Stewart-McDonald, Box 900, Athens, Ohio 45701.*

RICH KIENZLE



While the plane is used frequently to travel, there are still times when the entire band travels on Tillis' two Silver Eagle buses. According to Lee and Younts there is plenty of entertainment to pass the time. "We listen to music a lot," Lee says. "We listen to Stevie Wonder, Steely Dan, Billy Joel. We've got some nice blow-up dolls. They come in real handy. And those balloons that hold all that water. . . ." "We also do a lot of hand shadows," interjects Younts. "Actually we eat about every fifteen minutes on the road," laughs Lee. "It's our main source of entertainment. Anyone caught not eating is given a pink slip and anyone caught wearing their shirttail in, it's automatic dismissal from the band." Concerning Tillis' rule of "No Smoking" on the bus, Lee winks, "That's only when Melvin's on the bus."

Although there may not be any smoking on the bus when Tillis rides, you can bet there will be plenty of Strohs beer. He rarely goes anywhere without an ample supply. "Strohs and Light are about the only two beers that grace our bus," Lee says. "I've seen several amps leave the bus in order to make room for beer. You can always get amps. That's our philosophy. Some little reservation in Tucumcari is using all Peavey equipment now."

While the Statesiders approach their jobs seriously, there is ample time for fun. "All the horsing around—Mel loves it—it keeps him happy," Lee says. Apparently, the Statesiders can hold their own when it comes to post-show activities. "Are you kidding," exclaims Younts. "We put Waylon's band to bed." "Not only that," Lee continues, "but the Oak Ridge Boys have checked back into Goodpasture Hospital for the 'learn to roar' class!"

Aside from the no smoking on the bus rule, Tillis has set few rules for his bandmembers. "The basic rule," Lee ex-

"We eat about every fifteen minutes on the road. It's our main source of entertainment."

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plains, "is be straight enough to do your gig and look presentable on stage. He don't care if you take a drink before." "If you can get up there and play, and do it well, that's it," adds Younts. "If you can't, well, that's another story."

There's no ring drawn around our feet when we're on stage," Lee says. "Freedom—

being able to do what we want and still stay straight for our gig. There's no pressure overhead." "Mel treats you like a man," Younts agrees.

And so it goes for music's traveling minstrels. The exhaustion of a long road trip is soon replaced with the enthusiasm for new adventures. It's always the same and yet it's

always different.

*"People you've got the power
Over what we do
You can sit there and wait
Or you can pull us through
Come along, sing the song
You know you can't go wrong
'Cause when that morning sun
comes beating down
You're going to wake up*

*in your town
But we'll be
scheduled to appear
A thousand miles away
from here"*

(All lyrics from the song *The Load Out* by Jackson Browne and Bryan Garafolo, 1977 Swallow Turn Music, ASCAP and Gianni Music BMI). ■

The Joe Sun Band

Joe Sun picks up a newspaper off of a desk in an Ovation Records office and reads aloud the headline for a full-page advertisement. "What the hell is this?," he exclaims. "'How To Get Rich Quick The Lazy Man's Way.' Look at this! Now, we know from experience that there is no such thing."

He continues reading the ad which recounts the rags-to-riches saga of some guy with a wife and eight kids who was in debt up to his bloody ears. Within 30 days, the ad states, he allegedly multiplied his bank account ten fold bought a

\$250,000 home, an office building, two ocean front condominiums (one in Hawaii and the other in Mexico), two boats, and a Cadillac. For a fee he offers to sell his "secret" to dreamers and schemers everywhere. Sun chuckles and shakes his head, "No way' boys."

Sun is both a dreamer and a schemer, only his timetable for success involves years of struggling and hard work. With his first two hit records in the past year, *Old Flames (Can't Hold A Candle To You)* and *High And Dry*, he has been meticulously building a solid foundation for his career as a

recording artist.

A former promotion man, Sun made a deal with long-time friend Brian Fisher in 1977. If Sun would promote records for the Kendalls (also Ovation recording artists) Fisher would get him a recording contract with the label. Well, *Heaven's Just A Sin Away* went on to sell a million copies and it became the number one song in the charts for four weeks. Sun lived up to his end of the bargain and soon found himself in the studio singing his dream into reality.

With some success as a recording artist to his credit, Sun was ready for phase two—

put a band together and hit the road. It was something he had never done before." I wasn't really heavy into putting a band together," he relates. "It just kinda fell together. I played it by ear, which is usually the way I do with most stuff."

Within a few weeks after meeting guitarist L.D. Stamps, who was picking in a local Nashville honky tonk, the band was together. Stamps knew Butch Paulson, a bass player. Another guitar player, Robert Alvis, had expressed interest in working with Sun. Alvis knew a drummer, Mark Edwards. Sun took the nucleus of his band downtown to Deemen's Den to sit in with the vastly underrated Neil Flanz, a pedal steel guitarist who had worked with the likes of Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris, and Ernest Tubb. The results were encouraging.

In effect and somewhat by chance, Sun has assembled a solid cast of musicians with backgrounds in both country and rock 'n' roll. "It's a matter of blending it all," Sun says. "I've got a blues background with country influences, so our sound is sorta up-dated Ernest Tubb-blues-country-rock."

In order to tighten up the sound, the band took a two-week job playing nightly at the Silver Eagle in Nashville and then went to Key West, Florida to woodshed for a month. "We did a lot of practicing and hard work down there," Sun explains. "Then we hit the road and we've been going to Texas every weekend since."

Texas, with its infinite number of live music clubs, has kept more than one artist from send-



The Joe Sun Band travels in a new Dodge van. Since they can't afford a full-time driver, everyone takes a turn behind the wheel.

Joe Sun's band started out with a van that took three people just to open the door.

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ing in his last few bucks to the get-rich-quick ads. However, when you live in Nashville, as Sun and his band do, the weekly pilgrimage to the Lone Star State becomes rigorous, let alone dangerous.

To ease the hardships, Sun purchased a new Dodge van, which is customized for six passengers with individual earphone jacks for radio, tape deck, and television. The seats recline to provide some semblance of sleep for the weary. They carry a cooler for beer, pop, and sandwiches. Since they can't afford a full-time busdriver, everyone takes a turn behind the wheel. Sun also bought a trailer to haul the band's equipment.

"It rides good," says L.D. Stamps. "I have traveled in a lot rougher. You can sit and watch the soap operas all afternoon if you can get a pattern going through all the towns." "We started out using my van," adds Paulson. "But it's on its last leg. Everybody had to suffer with that. It takes three guys to open the door on the passenger side. The new van is almost like riding in an airplane."

"The van is mainly to ease the strain of traveling," Sun says. "What happens is that we've been traveling 20-24 hours in the van to get to the gigs and then we have to hit the stage a few hours later. We roll into town, set up our equipment, do a sound check, get to a motel and take a shower, and then put on a 150 percent show at night. That's hard. We need a bus, but that's to come."

"I try to schedule everything so we can get our motel rooms and get a quick shower before the gig. We usually sleep in the same town that night and then hit it early in the morning to the next gig."

"It's all just something you have to put up with," Paulson adds stoically. "Like this weekend we have to drive over 2,000 miles to play one night. It's just one of the things you have to do in this business."

"We're struggling very much," confides Sun. "If I

didn't have help from Ovation Records I couldn't have gotten the van. They're behind me a hundred percent. Some artists have no help from their label.

"We just initiated a policy that if we don't make a certain amount in our bookings for the month, Ovation will compensate for the rest." Without the tour support from his record company, the band's chances of survival would be slim at best. Sun has guaranteed his band members a minimum of \$1,000 per month. While the guarantee is more than some bands make, it is still well below what more successful bands earn. "As many bookings as we get," Sun notes, "they could make \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month too. Right now they get a percentage of the action, so it's kind of an incentive. I'm trying to offer them an opportunity at a shot for a future."

As further incentive, Sun has offered his band the opportunity to record on his albums. "Some guys put a road band together and then they come back to Nashville and use session pickers when they go in the studio," Sun says. "My direction now is to cut my third

album live with these guys. We want to create our own sound, have our own style."

"We've all had other offers," Paulson explains, "but the fact that Joe is willing to share in the profits, we've turned the offers down, because we feel in the long run we'll come out much further ahead. Plus, we like the music." "You can work the bars for the rest of your life," adds Stamps. "That's not gonna get you anywhere. I've done it for 15 years. There has to be a direction, or you're wasting your time. But it's a hard road."

Since the road experience is all new to Sun, he relies heavily on his bandmembers who are all highway veterans. However, Sun's music business experience is proving invaluable in helping him to realistically set his short and long-term goals. "This is all new to me," he notes. "But when I was a promotion man I watched other artists handle their careers. I watched one performer have a couple of hit records, go out and buy himself a bus only to find himself \$30,000 in debt with nowhere to go. I've

watched their mistakes and I try not to make those, because at this point it would be drastic."

Actually Sun could make more money by not carrying a band on his payroll. "Some performers fly to their gigs with charts of their music for the house band at the club," he says. "They'll make around \$50,000 that way. I won't. I'll be lucky to get out of this year making \$4,000. Every cent I make I'm putting back into the project."

You can't do anything by yourself," concludes Sun. "You've got to have a team concept. As far as I know, the only way to get that teamwork is to give everyone some of the action and give them a shot at their own dream."

In the meantime, for Sun and his band, it's praise the Lord for Texas, plug in the earphone jacks, lean back, and relax. With each mile down the highway, the distance between reality and the dream gets just a little bit shorter. And for Joe Sun, the means to that end is not to be found in a get-rich-quick ad. ■

THE NASHVILLE SUPER PICKERS

by DOUGLAS B. GREEN

It is traditionally the cherished dream of musicians in road bands to someday break into the elite circle of musicians who make most, if not all, of their living playing on Nashville recording sessions. It is traditionally deemed the pinnacle of musical success, for the session players must be facile, quick, adaptable, familiar with all styles, have impeccable pitch and timing, and be relaxed under pressure. These men and women, whose names will be familiar to habitual readers of record jackets, are sometimes known as super pickers, after the yearly awards NARAS (the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences) gives to musicians who played on

records reaching the #1 spot during the course of a year.

An outfit of shifting personnel called The Nashville Super Pickers however, is reversing that old trend; they have formed as a group to take time away from the studios and go back on the road for limited times, and do both recording and television work for fun, for money, and for the enjoyment of playing before live audiences as well.

The formation of the Super Pickers came about in a rather casual manner, according to bassist, front man, and nominal spokesman Henry Strzelecki, a veteran of many a super session: "I was down in Austin a couple of years ago filming an

Austin City Limits with Chet Atkins, and the producers of the show casually mentioned they'd be interested in having me put together a band of Nashville's top session men, for the sole purpose of taping that show. Well, I got Johnny Gimble and Buddy Emmons and Pig Robbins and Charlie McCoy and several other of the top players in town, and we did just that. The show was broadcast just this last spring.

"We all had a ball, and Flying Fish Records picked up the audio tapes and put out a record recently (*Live at the Austin City Limits*), and we more or less decided, well, why not? Let's play a few road dates and have some fun at the same

"You can't do anything by yourself," says Joe Sun. "You've got to have a team concept."

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time.”

Because of conflicting schedules, demands on time and the like, there is a core group of superpickers who make up the heart of the band, to which is added a cadre of other super session men as time and money permits. Strzelecki is the bassist and front man, and occasional singer. Still in his thirties, he has been a professional for two decades, playing on numerous record sessions (check those album credits next chance you get) for the likes of Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley, Simon and Garfunkel, and virtually every Nashville recording artist.

Rounding out the rhythm section is Buddy Harmon, who was one of the original creators of “The Nashville Sound” in the late 1950s, when on-stage jams with Chet Atkins, Hank Garland, and Gary Burton evolved a newer, smoother, jazz-tinged musical style. He has recorded with virtually every pop and country entertainer—and now a few jazz bands—who have recorded in Music City over the past 25 years.

John Propst is the Super Pickers pianist (causing one to wonder if a piano can truly be “picked,” though a case could be made for the harpsichord), and has a foundation in jazz, pop, and Dixieland, for he spent several years in New Orleans working with Pete Fountain, Al Hirt, and John Coltrane. As versatile as any of his associates, Propst can play delicate country, get-down boogie, or advanced harmonic jazz.

Phil Baugh, who has a long established underground reputation as one of country music’s finest guitarists, coaxes every manner of sound out of his Fender Telecaster through his mastery of a bank of electronic devices which lay in complicated array at his feet. He is a remarkably fluid guitarist, with or without the electronics, and his searing breaks often make for musical excitement both on stage and off.



The Super Pickers on Austin City Limits: Buddy Emmons, Buddy Harmon, Russ Hicks, Johnny Gimble, Charlie McCoy and Henry Strzelecki.

Manning the sax is Donnie Sanders, whose background is eclectic as the rest: one of the handful of country sax players, his training ground came first with the Bill Black Combo, then with the Godfather of Soul himself, as a member of James Brown and his Famous Flames. Since moving to Nashville several years ago he has established himself in the studio with Charlie Rich, Conway Twitty, and a host of others.

Playing the fiddle for the Super Pickers is Buddy Spicher, who is as visually exciting as he is musically. A master of all styles (he spent a couple of seasons with the Nashville Symphony a few years ago simply to expand his technique and improve on his reading), he has recorded everything from bluegrass to pop, as well as putting out a half-dozen albums of his own on Direct-to-Disc, Flying Fish, and other labels. He has been in demand for sessions for years, and is currently the reigning fiddle virtuoso in Nashville. He is also the Super Picker who has gone through this experience twice: a decade ago he and some adventurous studio players put together a band called Area Code 615, who made two highly acclaimed albums but played just a handful of personal appearances.

Those six are the core of the Nashville Super Pickers, but a

whole host of other Super Pickers are part-time bandmembers, given the date, the situation, and the locations. Foremost among them is Buddy Emmons, whose technically and imaginatively inventive steel playing has made him a legend at a young age. He played a week at the Super Pickers two-week stand at Nashville’s Carousel, and will be appearing with them when possible.

Charlie McCoy, who rewrote the book on country harmonica, is also a when-available member, frequently appearing with the Super Pickers on TV and on record, and occasionally on personal appearances. One would run out of room listing his credits but his most recent Monument album, *Appalachian Memories*, is a one man tour de force in which he plays and sings all instrumental and vocal parts thanks to multi-track technology.

Although he now lives in Austin instead of Nashville, Johnny Gimble frequently adds his great charm as well as his fiddle magic to the Superpickers, particularly when they are in the southwest. Though their styles are quite distinct, he and Buddy Spicher can blend beautifully as well, making for flowing harmony as well as impassioned solos.

With their strict, sometimes

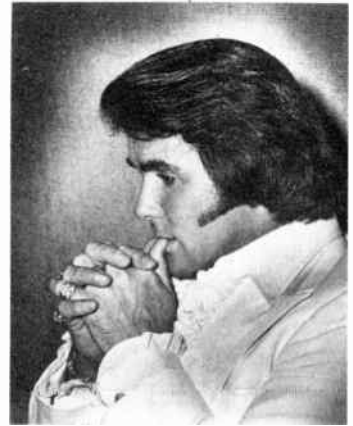
formulaic background in the studios, one might expect the Super Pickers’ music to be icily perfect, but happily that isn’t so. On stage they are loose (occasionally a bit too loose) and free flowing, swapping solos and trading hot licks in the grand jazz manner. Their repertoire is as varied as their background, and they move swiftly from country chestnuts like *Columbus Stockade Blues*, to rocking blues like *Raunchy* to pop classics like *Misty* and on and on. Their only weakness is their singing; Strzelecki’s vocals, while pleasant, do not match up to the calibre of musicianship supporting them.

Still, it is as pickers they made their mark, and as pickers they hope to succeed as a band. The whole concept, according to Strzelecki, is more than a lark, more than good jamming, more than some extra cash, more than the thrill of playing before enthusiastic audiences. It is in the nature of a crusade: “People know the Nashville Super Pickers can pick country. We want to show the rest of the world how much we can do, can play, how musically versatile we are and can be. We think of ourselves as music ambassadors, bringing the full scope of Nashville’s musical possibilities to the rest of the country; we want to represent Nashville’s music to the world.” ■

Most road bands long for studio work. Nashville’s Super Pickers did just the reverse.

And now, a few words from **BILLY CRASH CRADDOCK**

by **MICHAEL BANE**



There are people who claim, with good cause, that sheetrock is a malevolent god's revenge on a lowly mankind. Sheetrock, drywall, plasterboard—whatever you want to call it—you lift it up, 32 square feet of it, screw it to a wall, tape the joints with paper, cover it all with gooey joint compound, then sand it off and do it again. After a day of hanging sheetrock, your back aches something fierce, there's plaster dust in every single orifice and pore of your body, and you've got just about enough strength to go home and get enough sleep to be able to do it again the next day.

One year after *Knock Three Times* rocketed Billy "Crash" Craddock to stardom, he was still hanging sheetrock in Greensboro, North Carolina.

"So this guy walked in the door—he knew I was working in his home. . . . And I'm up there on stilts, with my little putty knife and all. And he says, 'Crash, what in the hell are you doing up there? I just heard your record on the radio and it's a Number One hit song across the nation!'"

Crash leans back on the couch in Capitol Records' New York offices, right across the street from a scenic building under destruction, and laughs:

"I wouldn't quit working! I was scared to death! I told him, 'Listen, I've got to make a living!' He just shook his head."

But that, folks, in a nutshell is the hard-core philosophy of Billy—"Crash" because he was a highschool football star—Craddock, former full-time sheetrock hanger and sometime country music star, who might have been the next Fabian and ended up, instead, as the finest drywall man in country music.

Of course, all that was before he met the pharmaceutical salesman who wanted to make it big in the music business, and a long time before all those strange hands snaked out of the audiences to pull at his clothes and make futile grasps at what should remain private even on a public personality.

And, finally, he had to quit before he could really get started, and even then it took the better part of two decades for him to become an overnight success.

"You've got to love the business an awful lot," says Crash, and one would be hard pressed to imagine a man who loves it more.

Billy Craddock's story has the same distinct ring of triumph over adversity as that of *The Little Engine That Thought It Could*. Like so many other singers, Crash listened to the Grand Ole Opry while he was growing up in rural North Carolina, and at one point he vowed that he, too, would make that celebrated journey to Nashville and place his feet where Hank Williams once stood.

He'd stand in his parents' barn and take his bows to an imaginary audience, and every day he reaffirmed his own solemn pledge—some day.

This is the point in the story where a bolt of lightning usually rips out of the sky, or some other manifestation of Blind Luck makes itself felt, and our boy is miraculously transported to the hallowed stage of the Ryman Auditorium, where he gets three encores and a contract with Star-maker Records.

And it goes without saying that such was the case with Crash.

The lightning came in the well-disguised

form of a representative from Columbia Records, who happened to catch a performance of the group the Four Rebels, featuring 17-year-old singing sensation Billy "Crash" Craddock. The rep was blown away—the time was 1959, and discovering a kid who could shake his hips and *sing* was . . . well, need we go on?

Papers were brought forth; contracts were signed; and Billy Craddock went to Nashville to become a Star.

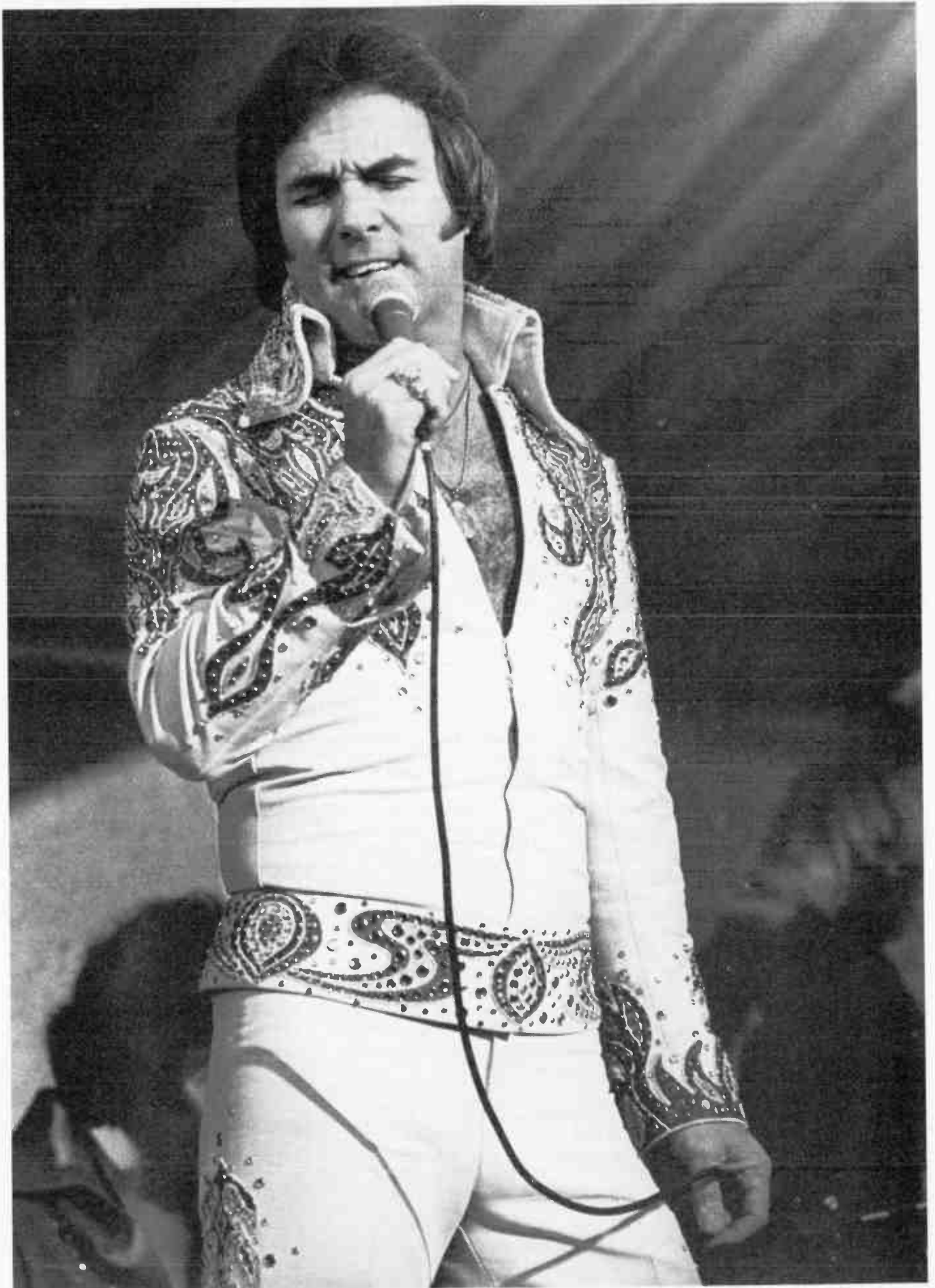
"I'll tell you," he says today, "anybody who's going in to record for the first time, it's a long, hard road. I went into Nashville, and well, *everybody* goes with the hopes that their first record was a hit. My first record was *not* a hit."

Perhaps you remember it?—*Boom Boom Baby* b/w *Don't Destroy Me*?

"I guess the thing that I remember most was I went in one time at a deejay convention. I was homesick. I didn't have any money—they were taking care of the motel room. One of the guys that was looking out after me said, 'Crash, I'm going to pick you up and take you over to a reception.'" So the guy picked him up and carried him to one of the deejay convention's fabled parties, with wall-to-wall stars and liquor flowing like a crystal stream. Picture 17-year-old Crash, fresh in from North Carolina, surrounded by the people he'd hoped all his life to meet.

This was *it!*

"So I'm looking at all these artists, man, and I'm just about flabbergasted, and this guy says, 'Crash, I'll be back in a minute.' I never saw him again. So I stood there about 20 minutes, then turned around, went and got my bags from the motel, went down to the bus station and





While in New York recently, "Crash" was the guest DJ on WHN Radio. Pictured here with real DJ, Mike Fitzgerald.

went home."

And that was it.

A round-trip ticket to Nashville, a record that didn't sell, and a quick return to the honky tonks of North Carolina. He'd headed for Nashville at the beck and call of the record company, and *still* had no hit. Columbia was trying to break into the pop market, and they weren't exactly sure what they wanted Billy Craddock to be. For sure they didn't want him to be Billy Craddock. This went on until about 1961, when Crash decided that hanging sheetrock paid the bills, and working the honky tonks didn't.

He didn't give up the music business, mind you, because it just wasn't in him to do that. But he had a wife, and he had to make a living, and he knew what hard times were all about. So he hung sheetrock.

"People think it's an easy life, trying to make it in the music business," he says. "But it's not—unless you hit overnight. There's a lot of hard times in-between."

So he began the hard times in-between; hanging sheetrock and playing the local clubs. And when he'd show up on the job each morning, there'd always be somebody

who'd laugh and say, "Hey, man, we thought you were in Nashville being a star!"

But he never gave up, not even once.

Not for almost ten years. Then one day he finally had had enough. He'd go to the country shows that played North Carolina, he'd look up there on stage, he'd think: "It could be me—why *isn't* it me?" And his friends said the same thing—"Why *isn't* it you?" And one day he finally drew the line, had all he could stand. So he went home and told his wife that he was finished. He quit. The one thing he had never said in ten long years, ten *hopeless* years. "I quit," said Billy "Crash (not Fabian)" Craddock. "I'm through with the music business forever."

Forever, as they say in country songs, came around quite unexpectedly, in the undisguised form of that aforementioned pharmaceutical salesman.

His name is Dale Morris, and he, too, had gone to Nashville to make it big in the music business—gave up a good job to do it, too. He linked up with producer Ron Chancey, and they were all set to make a go of it, but Morris had one condition: He'd seen this local guy perform a couple of years back, and he couldn't get that performance out of his mind. The guy was *great—tremendous!* The guy was a star just waiting to happen.

The guy, of course, was Billy "Crash"

Craddock.

Come to Nashville, Morris said.

With what? Crash replied.

Between the two of them, they were able to come up with bus fare. One more time, Crash told his wife, can't hurt.

"It was love," he says again.

The song they wanted Crash to record was a cover of the Tony Orlando and Dawn pop hit, *Knock Three Times*, and Crash was willing.

Actually, it was a stockholder in Cartwheel Records, the Morris-Chancey company, who thought of the cover.

"It was already Number Two in the nation, and Dale said, 'Okay, we'll try it,'" Crash recalls. "Then he called me and said, 'Go out and buy *Knock Three Times*. I said I'd never *heard Knock Three Times!*' He said, 'I don't care—you're coming in next week to cut it!' We cut it, and ten weeks later it was Number One. Thank God."

The song was so successful that it even crossed over to the pop charts while the Tony Orlando version was still on it.

"He was just meant to be," says Dale Morris. "It was Crash's time. I didn't know that much about the business. Ron Chancey didn't know that much about producing. Crash didn't know that much. We just all jumped in there, man. This sort of thing just doesn't *happen.*"

(Continued on page 68)

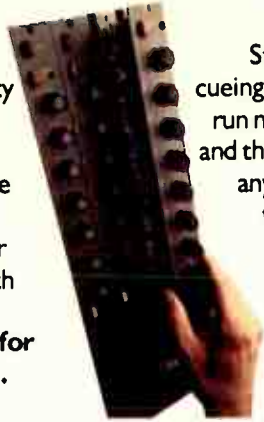
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Lynn Anderson

The Outspoken Lady Who Doesn't Play By The Rules

Outlaw Is Just Her State Of Mind

by LAURA EIPPER

The seductive blonde on the album cover looks at you provocatively, her shining, silky hair complemented by yards of lustrous white satin in the background.

She's wearing a drop-dead blonde fur coat, white satin pants and the kind of boots women have been known to shed tears over: pale blonde snakeskin. Diamonds twinkle discreetly on her ears and fingers.

She is clutching a six-shooter. A six-shooter?

And the album title reads **Outlaw Is Just a State of Mind**. Outlaw? This child looks about as much like Willie and Waylon and the boys as Jean Harlow.

The Outlaw in question is Lynn Anderson, who broke country music wide open in 1971 with her Grammy-winning *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*—a tune that was a number one pop hit a long time before the word "crossover" became the Nashville mantra.

At 31, she is one of the most widely-known country music artists in the business, and if the Outlaw tag seems a little unlikely, consider some facts about her maverick 12-year career.

A Journalism student at Sacramento State in California, she visited Nashville in 1966 with her parents Liz (a well-known songwriter) and Casey, hoping to write about what she saw. Instead, she was offered a recording contract with Slim Williamson's Chart Records and shortly thereafter had a number one hit, *Ride, Ride, Ride*.

Long before most country music artists had widespread exposure on mass-market television programs, she had been a regular for two years on *The Lawrence Welk Show*, and made dozens of appearances on everything from *The Carol Burnett Show* and *The Ed Sullivan Show* to *The Brady Bunch* and *Starsky and Hutch*.

The Country Music Association's Female Vocalist of the Year in 1971, she has nevertheless recorded pop tunes, old rock and roll standards and MOR ballads in addition to traditional country material. Her most recent single, *Isn't It Always Love?*, for example, was a pop chart record for its writer, Karla Bonoff.

She has earned a reputation as an outspoken young woman, determined to do things her own way, and uncompromising when it comes to being herself—regardless of what the current trends are.

"It's kind of an incongruous thing," Lynn mused one recent afternoon, tucked

up on a stool in the cheerfully cluttered kitchen of her Lake Charles, La. colonial home.

"I don't look like an outlaw. I don't dress to shock people. I don't go onstage in dirty jeans and stuff like that. But at times I have broken away from the norms and the mold and the accepted means of behavior for a country music artist. I haven't really paid attention to the rules."

"I didn't pay attention to what was hot or what I was supposed to be singing. I just kind of did my own thing and was very secure in what I was doing. I really didn't try to copy anybody else or be anybody else. I sing a little different than people's stereotypes of what country is supposed to be. Because of that they got to pinning the little outlaw label on me."

The little outlaw label didn't seem to hurt her career. Since signing with Columbia Records in 1969, Lynn has recorded some 20 albums and 35 hit singles, including such tunes as *Top of the World*, *Paradise*, and *Fool Me*. But if her professional life was active over the years, it lacked the fireworks it might have had after *Rose Garden*.

"Then, for the last three or four years things had been just kind of floating along, doing the same thing with a certain amount of success, but nothing flashy," she said. "I started to think about what I wanted to do with my recording career. The people at CBS and I sat down and had a kind of summit meeting. We thought about who I was and where I was going: where my interests were these days, what was happening with my life, how I could tie everything in. I wasn't dissatisfied—I had been rocking along having a wonderful time all these years. But we decided to try and do something a little different and a little fresh."

Currently, her career is undergoing something of an overhaul, as the cover of **Outlaw** might suggest. The album is the product of The Entertainment Company, the same folks who helped bring you Dolly Parton. In fact, it was produced by David Wolfert, co-writer of *Heartbreaker*.

But that, says Lynn, is about as far as the parallels go. She is not following in the footsteps of her country music colleagues who are trying for the brass ring of pop superstardom—ironic in view of her already wide acceptance by the general public.

"I get the feeling that a lot of people feel they must be more than country," she said. "If they want to be larger than country,

"I feel like I could sing rock music if I felt like it. My roots are in a lot of different kinds of music. I incorporate things in my show that would shock people. I would sing a Pablo Cruise song, for example. But it's country when I sing it. I would rather be the best country singer than the fifth best rock singer."



On the recent "Lucy Comes To Nashville" TV special, Lynn surprised Lucy with a gift as a token of her esteem.

that's fine—for other people. I'm country by choice. Why should I change my whole thing when country's been so good to me? I understand it. Why have to be more? You can expand the country audience to accept a little bit more and a little bit bigger."

"I feel like I could sing rock music if I felt like it. My roots are in a lot of different kinds of music. I incorporate things in my show that shock people. I would sing a Pablo Cruise song, for example. But it's country when I sing it. I would rather be the best country singer than the fifth best rock singer."

The added money, the glitter, the sheer glamour of hitting the pop music big-time, she says, simply doesn't hold much appeal.

"I had my bout with doing 300 nights a year and I came to the conclusion that there are only so many things you can buy, there are only so many days in the year that you can use. I decided that part of them were going to be for me to use and enjoy. I've had a very successful couple of years and I'm one of those strange people, I guess, who's satisfied with it. If in order

to make more money I have to try to be something I can't naturally be, that puts too much strain on me.

"I feel like everybody has got ten personalities jumbled up inside, but at least I've been able to draw from the ones that are just me without having somebody manufacture me and tell me, 'this is who you are. This is how you will dress. This is what you will say. This is your image.' I can't do that and it's not worth it to me for the extra amount of money I could make. What else could I buy? I have what I like, I love my family, I love my horses, I'm able to come home and blow it all off and relax.

In view of her feelings about keeping Lynn Anderson the way Lynn Anderson likes her, she has a long-standing policy of managing herself—near heresy in an age of super-managers who are frequently bigger celebrities than their clients.

"I've always been of the attitude that if you could get up and put your own clothes on and decide what you should do that given day, then why in the world should you pay someone to tell you what to do?" she says emphatically.

"People argue with me about that, and they've got good proof, good facts to lay

before me. They say I could do a lot more for myself with a high-power manager to do this and that. It seems to me, and this might be cynical that everyone is out for number one. And number one for a manager is the manager. So far I haven't run up on anybody that I trust with my life more than me. And that's what they're handling: your whole life."

It's an attitude, she admits, that might have cost her something in terms of her career over the years.

"It may be that it has hurt me to a certain extent, because maybe I could be a wonderful superstar or something like that. But I don't know if I'd be comfortable with that. How much success is too much success? I don't want to be Elvis Presley. I don't want to be Dolly Parton. I don't want to hide. I want to be able to go into a restaurant and have a nice meal. I want to be able to go shopping and buy my own clothes. I want to be able to go to a movie if I feel like it. I don't want to be afraid to walk down the street."

She is, and always has been, fiercely protective of her personal life, and privately leads a casual, comfortable Bayou-country existence with her husband, Harold "Spook" Stream (he was born on Halloween) and her daughter Lisa by a former marriage to producer Glen Sutton. Another child is expected in May.

She and Stream, a handsome, rangy Louisiana businessman with interests in oil, gas, cattle ranching and broadcasting, share a mutual passion for horses and raise championship quarter horses on their estate.

An average afternoon at home with Mrs. Stream, as she is called in Lake Charles, is likely to be a busy, spontaneous few hours. The phone rings constantly, Lisa bounces in and out to the stables and back, groceries are delivered and unpacked, household problems discussed and solved with a small staff, while the lady of the house coordinates it all, dressed in jeans, tee shirt and floppy hat.

Later that evening, she entertains friends in the kitchen with drinks and hors d'oeuvres while she cooks. Dinner is served in an antique-filled formal dining room, where the atmosphere is anything but formal, and afterwards, everyone troops out to the barn to see two new prize fillies.

It's a comfortable, informal, and busy life, and far from what you might expect from the glamorous lady in the fur coat, satin and expensive boots. But it's a contradiction this outlaw enjoys.

"I live in jeans and boots and fool with my horses every day. I literally go out and get my eggs from the chicken coop. I live more country than probably 90% of the people in the country music business.

"That's a surprise to people, because they don't really think of me as a country person. But my statement about that is that country is a state of mind. Country is how I live. Country is how I feel." ■

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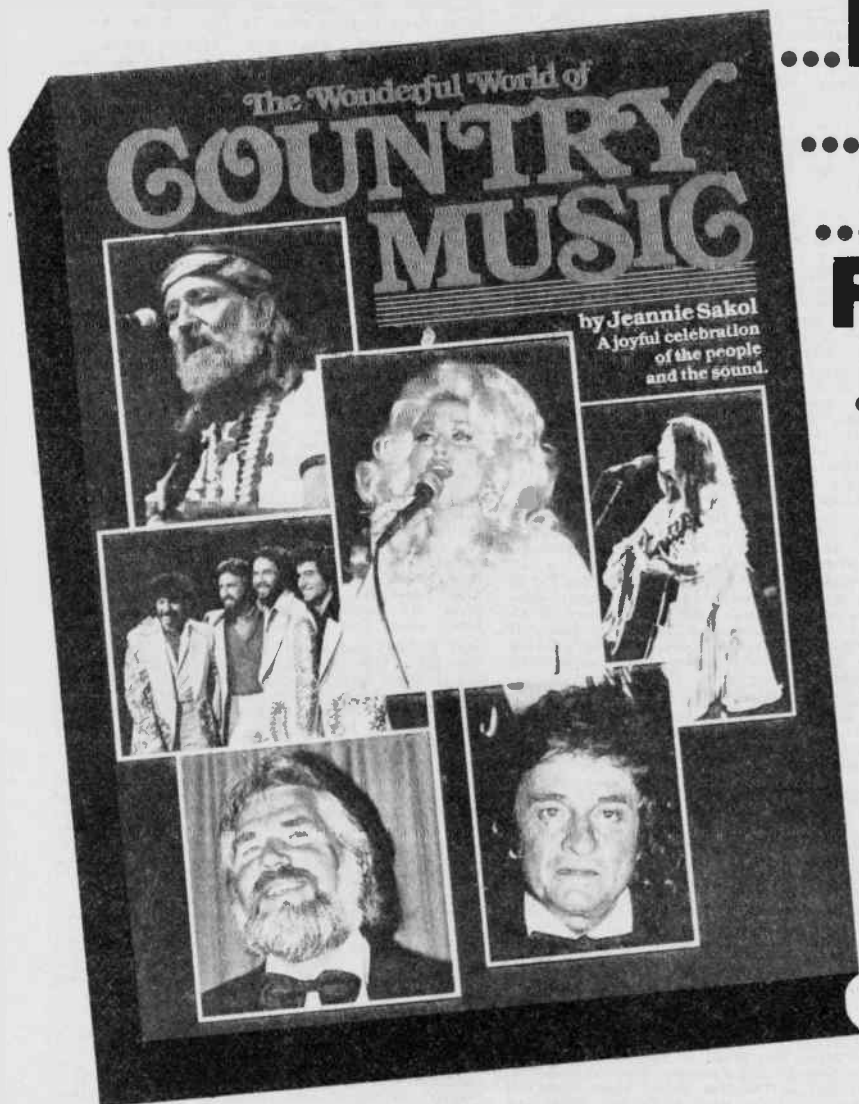
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JOE STAMPLEY

Waiting For That One Magic Record

He's been a solidly popular country artist with hits of his own and super hits for others. Now he's waiting to take his turn as a Superstar

· by **BOB MILLARD**

Actually, this is the story that almost wasn't. The first time I tried to interview Joe Stampley it was a late afternoon in Nashville. Joe was in town trying to cram a week's work into a day and a half. He was so tired that when I asked him if he did much hunting and fishing (two of his favorite sports) all he could say was "yeah."

Realizing that we were getting nowhere fast, Joe extended a kind of invitation: "If you can get away for a few days, why don't you come down to Louisiana when I'm at home and we can talk all you want at my house." It was a gesture made all the more generous by the fact that it was sincere. Joe flew in from Montana and I came from Nashville for the interview.

Having arrived a day before me, Joe was rested and relaxed. He talked candidly about the joys and disappointments of a twenty-year career in music which has seen him rise to solid popularity as a country artist, yet somehow kept him just below the rank of the super star he would like to be. What emerged is the portrait of an artist who, in the final analysis, has refused to let either fame and fortune or the quest for greater heights distort his basic instincts or character. Nearly twenty years have passed since he cut his first record, and he still spends about 150 days per year on the road; but Joe Stampley's ambitions continue to be tempered by a strong sense of home and family ties.

Touring with his band is both hard work and fun for Stampley. There seems to be nothing he enjoys more than the audience reaction when he starts into one of their favorite songs. A particularly long series of one-night engagements can be disorienting after a while and, he says, "You can be in one Holiday Inn, and they all look alike, and you have to ask yourself, where the hell am I?"

In the past, he has been very concerned about having recorded but not released as singles, songs which later became super hits for other people. *Most Beautiful Girl*, which reached sales of two million records for Charlie Rich, was one such instance. Stampley has had his share of Top Ten and even Number One records on the country charts, including *Roll On, Big Mama, Red*



Wine, Blue Memories, If You've Got Ten Minutes (Let's Fall in Love) and Do You Ever Fool Around. Still, he has not had a million seller, he has not had a record like a *Lucille* or a *Most Beautiful Girl*. He is still waiting for the one big hit that will establish him once and for all as a "star." But while waiting for that super hit, he hasn't lost his sense of humor about the "big one that got away."

"I want to play you a demo I cut once," Joe said dryly, slowly lowering the needle onto the grooves of one of his albums. He chuckled and rocked back in his swivel chair as strains of his version of *Most Beautiful Girl* filled the room.

"You know," Joe confided, "I played a gig with Charlie (Rich) shortly after that song had hit so big for him. He introduced it by saying 'I just want to thank Joe Stampley for doing the demo on this song for me. I worked it up off of his version of it.'"

"Sure," Joe continues, "I was pretty unhappy about it for a while, but you can't be mopey about things like that 'cause if you do . . . well it just don't get you nowhere."

Years of being a solidly popular country artist seems to have taken some of the edge off Stampley's concern. In fact, his ability to overcome disappointments, laugh at them later and keep on plugging is undoubtedly one of the most important factors in his staying power. A quick succes-

sion of hit records from his *Red Wine, Blue Memories* album last year didn't hurt him any either. Some of those hits did cause a stir in his hometown, Springhill, Louisiana, however, when neighbors began suspecting the lyrics of those classic honky tonk style "cheatin'" songs might be reflecting Joe's home life.

"When I came out with *If You've Got Ten Minutes* everybody around home thought Joanne and I had broke up," he laughs. "When *Do You Ever Fool Around* came out, people said 'Yeah, the boy's done gone crazy.'"

Nothing could be further from the truth, however, Joe Stampley, wife Joanne and their three children live very happily in their dream house, for which Joe had plans drawn up as early as 1969. They were all much happier in Springhill, close to family and old friends, than they ever were during a seven-month period they spent living in Nashville in 1976. After his hits *Soul Song* and *Roll On, Big Mama*, Joe decided to get closer to where "things were happening" but it just did not work out.

"I really didn't give Nashville a chance," Stampley explains. "I was on the road almost the whole first month we were there and I'd come home and the kids would say 'We don't like it up here,' so we just came back (to Springhill).

"It just feels laid back out here," he said, looking absently out the glass doors of his northwest Louisiana home. "It just seems like this has always been home to me. It's like when I'm on my own time I go hunting and fishing with my kids."

As we talk that afternoon, Joe's youngest son, Timbo (ten years old) and daughter, Terri Jo (thirteen) arrive home from school. They come running into the room to see their father, who has been on tour for the past two weeks. Terri Jo, by far the most assertive of the Stampley children, wanted to know right away what was going on.

"Have ya'll been talking?" she asked, laying her books down on Joe's desk.

"Yeah," Joe replied.

"Yakkety-yak!" Terri Jo exclaimed, mimicking her idea of an interview session.

Joe laughed at Terri's antics, but she turned mock-serious suddenly, gave me an



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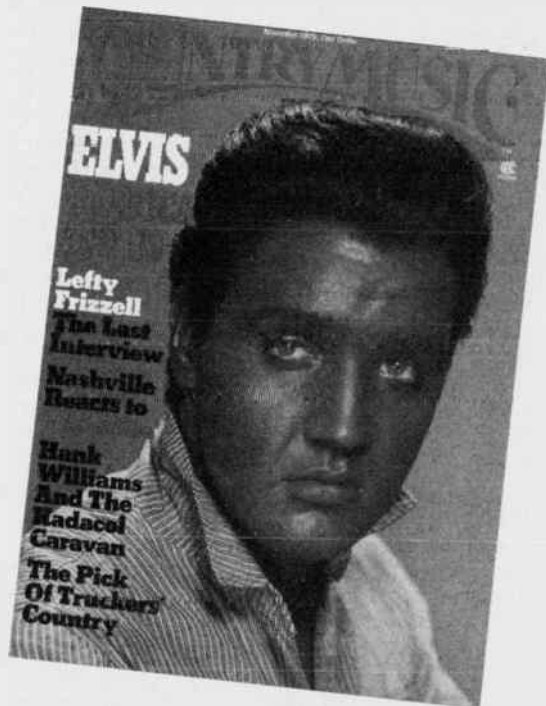
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exaggerated version of "the bad-eye" and asked another question of her father.

"Is he gonna show it to you?"

"No," Joe answered, "First time I'll see it is when it comes out in his magazine."

"Yeah, but then it might get messed up again like it usually does."

"Sometimes you get to reading back (after an interview is published) and unless you tape it, sometimes you look at it and wonder, did I say that?" Joe tells me. "Of course, they say as long as your name is spelled right it's OK."

Stampley maintains that Springhill, where he grew up, has barely changed at all since his earlier days. For better or worse, his children are growing up under many of the same influences that he did. Joe has a song called *Draggin' Main* on his new album *I Don't Lie* which tells what it was like for him as a teenager in Springhill, Louisiana:

*"Take me, Take me
Take me back to way back then
When draggin' Main
And feelin' no pain
Was our only sin"**

"When you grow up in small Southern towns," Joe elaborates, "it's just the thing to do when you get to junior high and high

*(C 1979, Mullet Music Corp./Huff & Puff Pub., Stampley, Stampley, Huff.)

school, to get in a car and drag up and down Main Street."

"That's what we still do." interjected Terri Jo with one of those exasperated sighs that seem to punctuate so much of what thirteen-year-olds say, "every Saturday night."

Reminiscing about his teenage years gets Joe involved in rummaging through the cabinets behind his desk. In short order, he pulled out a worn looking 45 r.p.m. record. It was the first record he had ever cut, called *Glenda*.

"I was fifteen when I did this," he says. "Boy it's awful. I sounded like a really young kid."

"He sounded like a sissy!" says Terri Jo, exploding into a flow of giggles.

"That was back when Paul Anka and all those guys were doing all those 'girl songs.' You remember, the ones with girls' names for titles."

Another reason Joe likes to get back to his home in the northwest Louisiana pine woods is for Joanne's good old southern style cooking. Although their neck of the Louisiana woods is more like the piney area of south Georgia and north Florida then the bayou country around New Orleans, Joanne is a master at Cajun dishes. Today, she's whipped up a big old pot of gumbo that is absolutely out-of-this-world.

"You're either gonna love this or hate it," Joe says as we sit down to piping hot gumbo and freshly steamed rice.

For those unlucky readers who have never tried this south Louisiana delicacy, I will warn you in advance, prepare to drool! Though the word big-G Gumbo refers to cooked okra, little-g gumbo is used loosely to define a sort of sea food Mulligan's Stew which often includes okra as one of many ingredients. This particular gumbo is an all meat dish which features whole shelled shrimp, crab meat and oysters, boned chicken and sliced hot sausage. It is seasoned with ground sassafras and various peppers, and cooked on the stove top all day long until it is a thick consistency in which only the shrimp and sliced sausage can easily be identified. Now, imagine this delicious stuff ladled over a double helping of rice and you will understand why, at the precise moment, I dig in, think I have died and gone to heaven.

"Some of the boys in my band won't eat it anymore," Joe tells me as I reach for seconds, "They tried it once and said it tasted like dishwater."

Gumbo certainly has a taste all its own, but dishwater? All I can say is that if that is what dishwater tastes like, I've been letting the best part of many meals escape down the kitchen drain for too long.

(Continued on page 68)

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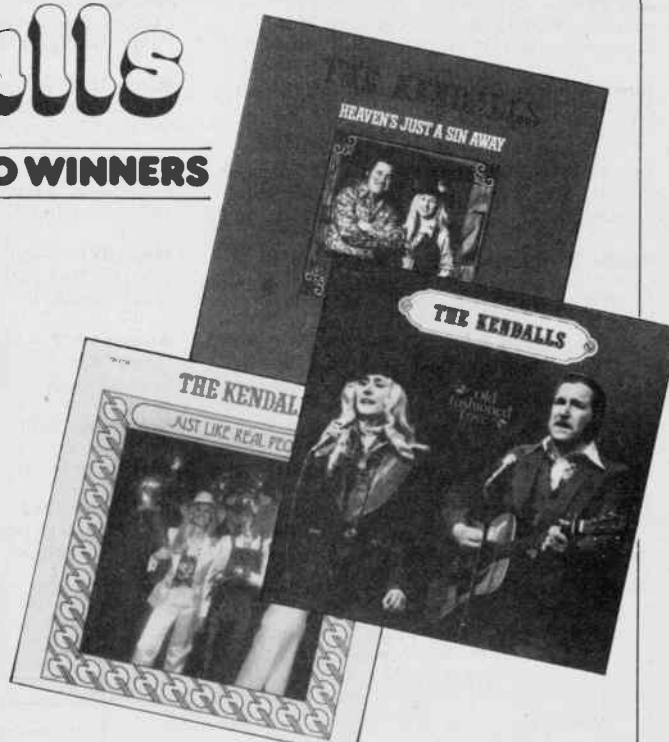
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The Statler Brothers The Originals

Mercury SRM-1-5016

A decade ago Merle Haggard, Bill Anderson, and Bobby Bare sang of nostalgic American heroes and patriotism. It was all part of the conservative backlash against the Vietnam protest movement. Since then country music has become more diversified, more receptive to change, and more sexually explicit. While traditionalist crusaders have been either heralded or assailed, the Statler Brothers have quietly ignored it all, claiming no other label than "successful."

The Originals is a well balanced concept album, bearing a handful of love songs, set against a backdrop of symbolic and heroic themes. All but three were penned by the Statlers. *How to Be a Country Star*, though a bit trite, ends on a clever note. Even more effective is *Where He Always*



Wanted to Be, with instrumentation by Carl Perkins, Mac Wiseman, Ernest Tubb, and other "originals." The lyrics hit awfully close to home. (Everyone should spend his first night in Nashville at the Sam Davis Hotel).

Love songs with a new twist are not easy to write and hard to come by nowadays. Hats off to Don Reid for *When the Yankees Came Home*. Lew DeWitt's *A Little Farther Down the Road*, with its snappy melody, could do well as a

single. The boys' open letter to *Mr. Autry* is an endearing tribute. Through a combination of wit and joyful spirit, the Statlers have delivered another smooth blend of moods and memories.

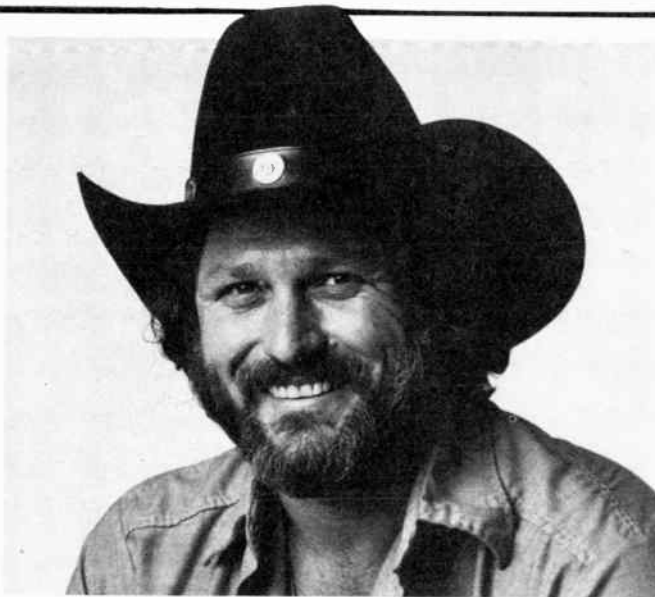
BILL OAKLEY

Johnny Duncan See You When The Sun Goes Down

Columbia KC 35775

There is less variety in this album than in many others coming out of Nashville today. And rightly so, for it concentrates on material that Johnny has been most successful with and handles very well. There are two cheatin' songs—*Too Friendly For Friends* (complete with cheap motel) and *The Last Cheater's Waltz*, in which a woman loses her lover to his wife. There's also a "let's cheat" song—*How Married Are You, Mary Ann?*

Three songs—*One Night Of Love*, *Slow Dancing* and *Warm Up the Night With You* are simple statements of how great



it is to love. *Make Believe It's Your First Time* says, in essence, we've both been there before, so let's get the most out of this love. It's the kind of thing Frank Sinatra used to do

so well; Johnny does it just as well.

Whine, Whistle Whine is about a husband fleeing by train from a confining marriage. He urges the train to get him away fast, because he's weakening and might go back. And *Oh, Maria* is a humorous pseudo-Mexican number in which the singer pleads for a little less bedroom activity. He needs a rest.

Billy Sherrill's production on this album is quite good, matching Johnny's considerable vocal talents. And there's no mawkish screaming for pop recognition. The music was handled primarily with an eye to producing good music. Nobody ran through the studio saying,—"Oh, my God, Johnny, don't let them know you're a country singer." ART MAHER

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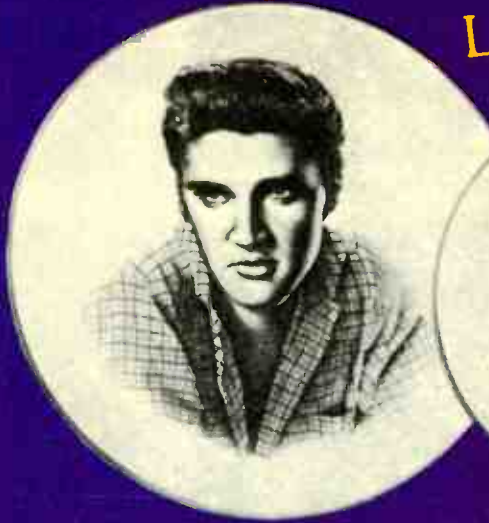
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Johnny Rodriguez Rodriguez Was Here

Mercury SRM-1-5015

The phrase, "Rodriguez Was Here" belongs in a Texas jail, in the western movie resort where his career began, and now in the offices of Mercury Records. This farewell package from the label gives no hint of the rock fantasies Johnny R. is said to be pursuing.

Included are no less than seven number one or top five hits made famous by other ar-

tists. Of these, he comes through best on Merle Haggard's *I Take a Lot of Pride in What I Am* and *You're My World* from Cilla Black, a British contemporary of the Beatles. His own *Alibis* and *Goodby Marie* fit right in. That's because Rodriguez was nurtured in the tradition of strong ballads and drifter songs.

But when it comes to just another "it's over before you noticed it song," his well trained voice goes to waste. *Flow River Flow* and *No Love at All* fall into that category.



She Thinks I Still Care is a disappointment compared to Johnny's previous recordings of *Fraulein* and *Jealous Heart*. The feeling just isn't there.

This album may have some shortcomings, but we cannot overlook the fact that the production is basically simple—a rare treat these days. As Johnny Rodriguez moves on to Epic Records, we can probably expect some changes.

And, if his latest hit single *Down on the Rio Grande* is an indication of things to come, we may be in store for a smooth transition.

BILL OAKLEY

Susie Allanson Heart To Heart

Elektra/Curb 6E-177

The dual roles of husband and producer have been assumed by many ambitious men in the country music field, but with mixed success. The intimacy between artist and producer is often undermined by the absence of an objective viewpoint, and several such projects have become too incestuous for clear musical thinking (i.e. Emmylou Harris and hubby/producer Brian Ahern). Although some of this is true of Ray Ruff and Susie Allanson, they deftly avoid most of the pitfalls of mixing marriage with music, and *Heart to Heart* further establishes her as one of the more successful country female newcomers in the past couple years.

Allanson's immediate acceptance by the country audience is directly attributable to her sugar-sweet vocal style, filled with girlish pep. Ruff understands this (it is what brought them together—they met at an audition) and chooses her material accordingly. *What's a Matter Baby*, a hit for Timi Yuro in 1962, is strong and vengeful lyrically but pure pop musically, keeping within Susie's emotional range. Having done well on her first album with *Maybe Baby*, it's no surprise to find her doing Buddy Holly's *Love's Made a Fool of You* here, even if she misses

some of Holly's bittersweet wit. And *Two Steps Forward and Three Steps Back* finds her fighting the temptation of a chronic love affair; the uptempo hook should make this her next single. Ironically, one exception to these astute choices is the current single, the pre-disco Bee Gees hit *Words*, which is too melodramatic for Susie's fluffy approach and somewhat overproduced by Ruff (the piano sounds as if it is in considerable pain). Better suited to the lush strings (arranged by Dick Hierony-

mous—good name, eh?) is *Hide Me in Your Love*, an anthem for anti-Women's Libbers which makes *Stand By Your Man* sound like a declaration of independence.

Susie's appeal is undeniable and hubby Ray has proved to be both sympathetic and evenhanded as a producer. She may yet lack the stage dynamics to become a major performer, but the Allanson/Ruff team should remain a fixture on the country charts for some time.

GARY KENTON



Ray Price There's Always Me

Monument MG 7633

Ray Price has carved out a comfortable niche for himself in easy-listening country music; in fact, he virtually created the mold with *Danny Boy* and *For The Good Times* night on a decade ago.

There's Always Me, which he produced himself for Monument, shows no departure from this trend.

Listened to individually, the cuts tend to be tender, romantic, and Ray has seldom been in better voice (although, for some inexplicable reason, he sings consistently sharp all through a tune called *Springfall*). There is an abundance of laid-back melancholy in these tunes, and his voice, grown mellow and husky with age, gives them the right poignancy, a sharing of emotion between adults. Listened to at one sitting, however, the lp tends to under-standable sameness.

One song deserves special attention: *Feet*. Despite its arresting title and slightly hokey introduction (footsteps, like the beginning of a Hitchcock film), *Feet* is the best of both worlds: the honky-tonk energy and biting two-part harmony of the Ray Price who was the biggest thing in country music in the late 1950s, and the lushness and warmth of his post-*Danny Boy* recordings. The combination works well.

There's Always Me is a safe album, never reaching for more than it can attain.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Janie Fricke Love Notes

Columbia KC 35774

Janie Fricke has long been regarded as one of Nashville's finest, most versatile singers, largely through her work on record sessions and in commercials. And truly her voice is a marvel, adapting with no apparent strain to virtually any style, falling with chameleonlike ease and grace into the required feel and nuance.

This remarkable multi-idiomatic gift is the real focus of *Love Notes*, not the implied theme of love itself, and is both the strength and weakness of this, her second Columbia album.

Although it purports to be about love, *Love Notes* (aren't these punning album titles beginning to cloy?) exists as a demonstration of Ms. Fricke's vast vocal talents, like a film wherein an actress plays several roles at once. Like such a film, it is an impressive display of talent, but so distracting as to reduce a total impact.

There is a song here for every market, nearly, and every style. You can hear the connections



being made with a nearly audible click as the song falls into the correct categorization: there's a laid back country tune, a bit of folk music, a Streisand-clone pop tune, awash with bathos; there is a MOR tune, and one geared for country-politan radio; there is a hint of soft rock and on and on. That Ms. Fricke handles it all with such apparent ease is indeed impressive, but it is also a bit diffuse.

A word should also be said about the production, to which

great care was obviously taken. Much (unfortunately, not all) of *Love Notes* achieves exactly the right feel for each song; it is lush where it should be lush and spare where it should be spare.

Love Notes is a fine album, and an impressive one, as it is meant to be. Still, there is too much display of ability here, and not enough heart. One hopes her next album with balance the two better, concentrating more on emotion and less on versatility.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Kenny Rogers & Dottie West Classics

United Artists (LA 946-H)

This collaboration has proved to be a clever move for both parties: Dottie gets to hitch her wagon to Rogers' skyrocketing career and, in Rogers' words, "It solidifies me with the country music audience." The result may be a commercial bonanza (their joint debut, *Every Time Two Fools Collide*, earned them CMA's 1978 Vocal Duo of the Year award), but they have yet to establish a communal identity apart from their solo careers. *Classics* is a fail-safe production, with can't-miss material performed by sure-fire artists, neither of whom has to rise very far to the occasion.

But Rogers and West both possess formidable, enveloping voices with ample power to take on such oft-recorded standards as Buck Owens' *Together Again*, Mann-Weil's *You've*



Lost That Lovin' Feelin', and *Let it Be Me* without shrinking from inevitable comparisons to earlier versions. Less appealing are Billy Joel's *Just the Way You Are*, *You Needed Me*, and *Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song* which were on the charts too recently to warrant covering, especially with so little differentiation in the arrangements. Perhaps partly by virtue of their relative unfamiliarity, the brightest moments are the rave-up *Midnight Flyer*, on which The Jordanares nearly outshine Rogers and West; Tammy Wynette's *Till I Can Make it On My Own*, stirring despite being inappropriate to a duet;

Hargus "Pig" Roggins Unbreakable Hearts

Elektra 6E-185

Pig Robbins certainly knows enough about putting together a good record. Over the years he's played piano on thousands of them with a rock solid style that could change, chameleonlike, at a producer's request. He learned plenty about production through all those sessions, for *Unbreakable Hearts* is one of the better-produced albums I've heard lately, with excellent sound mixes, creative arranging and string arrangements that move with the music instead of droning on. The sole question, then, is: does Pig Robbins have the depth to sustain himself as a vocalist/recording artist?

As an artist, yes; as a singer,

I'm not so sure. His voice is simply not that distinctive. All too often, his vocal delivery is too offhanded, even on a ballad like *Too Bad She Don't Love Me*, to be taken seriously. And



some of the material, particularly *Chunky People*, *Unbreakable Hearts*, *Love Love Love* and *Whatever Happened To The Girls I Knew* is simply too whimsical to sustain much interest.

Four keyboard instrumentals on side two are another story. They show a master musician at work, tackling everything from the Latin oldie *Anna*, to originals like *Get Off And Get On It*, *Patchwork* and the mellow *Easy Does It*. Here his work has all of the depth he lacks vocally, spotlighting careful playing and well-constructed phrasing. In the end, *this* is where he truly shines, and hopefully his future albums will stick to keyboards, where his abilities and artistry are beyond question.

RICH KIENZLE

and the bouncy *All I Ever Need is You*, which could become as big a hit for Kenny and Dottie in '79 as it was for Sonny and Cher in '71.

So far, the marriage of the Gambler and the Country Sunshine Girl is more convenient (same producer, same record company) than classic. More imagination and daring could be used in selecting the material for their next collective venture. But *Classic* is more than enough to keep the fans happy until then.

GARY KENTON

Freddie Hart My Lady

Capitol ST 11911

Freddie Hart has a talent for off-the-wall vocal licks, unlike George Jones, who has a genius for them. He likes a

slightly bizarre lyric, too, not only in his own songs, but in those he chooses by other writers. He seems to have a special fondness for the medical metaphor (one of his early titles was *Heart Attack*).

This album, for example, closes with Jerry Fuller's *Toe to Toe*, a veritable dictionary of body language:

*We've been going
toe to toe
Baby, we're not seeing
eye to eye . . .
We need a heart-to-
heart conversation
And a little mouth-to-
mouth
resuscitation . . .*

Most of the lyrics aren't that bad; still, it's not the sort of album a songwriter could love.

It is an altogether likeable album, however. Hart does what he does best, straightforward country singing, without the ex-

cessive lay-preacher sincerity that has made some of his recordings so sticky.

Wasn't It Easy Baby and *Guilty*, with their eerie chord progressions, are Freddie Hart



at his *Easy Lovin'* best, but the title song, *My Lady*, is the real standout. Producer Jack Grayson pulled out all the stops on this cut—it has more tracks than the L&N railroad—but he

made it work, drum rolls and all.

The entire album is what we used to call "overproduced" in the style for which Nashville has become notorious, but it doesn't seem inappropriate. For one thing, Grayson is always in control; the complex instrumentation never gets muddy.

What really sets the record apart is Freddie Hart's vocal style, which is distinctive enough not to be overwhelmed by production that would have buried many singers.

This formula—unvarnished delivery, full instrumentation, offbeat songs—could prove successful. With even straighter singing and fresher lyrics, Freddie Hart might build a broad mainstream audience.

Hart's in the right place here, or close to it.

TERRYE NEWKIRK

BURIED TREASURES

by RICH KIENZLE

Every year scores of fine collector's albums by American country artists are released abroad, often filled with unissued or rare material. They're generally obtainable in America only through a few specialty importers, with prices running between \$6 and sometimes over \$8. But considering the escalating process of American LPs and the scarcity of the music included on some imports, many are really a bargain, such as these:

From West Germany comes **The Unissued Johnny Cash** (Bear Family BFX 15016-\$6.98), produced in cooperation with Columbia Special Products. None of this material was ever released at all, including *Mama's Baby, Fools' Hall Of Fame* and *Walkin' The Blues*, from his second Columbia session in August, 1958. There's also a searing 1962 rendition of the classic *I'll Be All Smiles Tonight*. And if you ever wondered what *I Got Stripes* and *Five Feet High and Rising* sound like sung in German, they're here, too.

Though Don Gibson is primarily known for his ballads, he also recorded some hard rocking material in the late fifties, often backed by Chet Atkins. **Rockin' Rollin' Gibson** (CCL 1107-\$6.98), another German import, brings together 16 songs from this period such as *Sweet, Sweet Girl*, Hank Snow's *I'm Movin' On* and *Bad, Bad Day*, all of which show more than a little influence from Elvis and other rockabillys.

An interesting reverse on the above situation is Bill Haley's **Golden Country Origins** (Grass Roots 1001-\$6.95), an Australian import. Haley's presence at the dawn of rock is legend, but back in the late forties he led two C & W bands: the Saddlemen and the Four Aces of Western Swing. Here are straight renditions of Acuff's *Wreck On The Highway* along with *Foolish Question* and other uptempo tunes that give fleeting glimpses of what was to follow.

Anyone who loves *White Lightnin'* and other early

George Jones uptempo numbers will be more than satisfied with **White Lightnin'** (Chiswick 13-\$6.50), a British 10-inch album of some of his best Starday material from 1956 to 1962. Included are *Who Shot Sam*, *Revenooer Man*, *Maybe Little Baby* (which sounds a lot like Gary Stewart), *How Come It* and *Rock It*, which he originally recorded as "Thumper" Jones.

Foreign Bob Wills reissues are rare, but one exception is **In Memory Of The Daddy Of Western Swing** (Hillbilly Heaven HHL-5006-\$7.95), from Germany, culled from his 1947-1952 MGM discs. Since only a couple numbers are duplicated on domestic Wills reissues this is a good companion volume. There is, of course, the usual hot fiddle and steel from the Playboys as well as some great Tommy Duncan vocals. The twin mandolin solo alone on *Sally Goodin* by Johnny Gimble and Tiny Moore is worth the record's price.

One of the finest foreign rockabilly reissues is the British

CBS Rockabilly series. Volume 2 (CBS 82993-\$7.95) supplements **Volume 1** with Marty Robbins' countrified 1954 cover of Elvis's then-new *That's All Right (Mama)*, Freddie Hart's bopping *Snatch It And Grab It*, Rose Maddox's stomping *Wild, Wild Young Men*, Little Jimmy Dickens' apocalyptic *I Got A Hole In My Pocket* and *You're Humbuggin' Me*, probably the only song Lefty Frizzell ever did with saxes. Also included are detailed notes describing all 20 of the songs on the album.

All the above records are available for the prices noted, plus \$1.50 for postage, from the *Down Home Music Company*, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, California, 94530.

Also, in March's issue I mentioned Southern Record Sales of Huntingdon Beach, California as a source for the Bob Wills Transcription LP on Lariat. However, by the time that issue was out Southern had folded. Down Home Music, however, has that album in stock for \$5.99 plus postage.



Today's Hottest

*NOTE: Although these are all special collections containing far more songs than the customary album, in some cases this expanded number of hits is featured on a single record.

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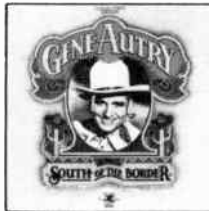
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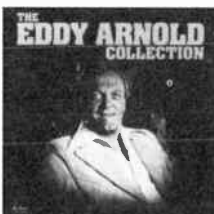
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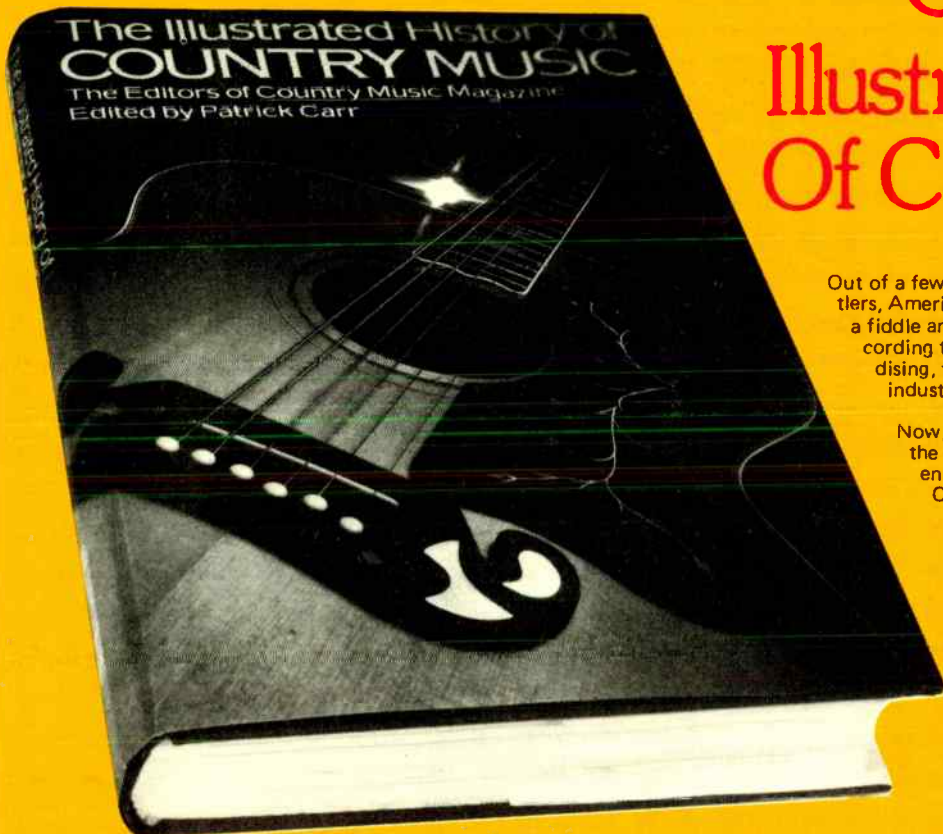
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STAMPLEY

(Continued from page 56)

A few miles over the Louisiana border, into Arkansas, Stampley is building a good-sized fishing lodge across a small bay from his brother Bobby's boat dock and bait shop. Joe jokingly refers to his lakeside property as the *Do You Ever Fool Around* cove, in honor of one of last year's big hits which helped pay for the cabin site.

Bobby Stampley shares more than an avid interest in the great outdoors with Joe, too. The Brothers Stampley played together in a rock/pop band called the Uniques before Bobby retired from the music business and Joe became a country artist. It is now the Cousins Stampley who carry on the tradition of keeping it in the family. Joe's seventeen-year-old son, Tony, occasionally performs with Bobby's son, Bobby Joe, on the famous Louisiana Hayride radio program.

Tony Stampley has quite a good country-blues voice for such a young fellow, as Joe proves by playing several rough tapes he has recorded of his oldest son. "I flew a couple of musicians down from Nashville," Joe explains. "Some guys in my band and some other friends and we went over to Texas to do these songs. These tapes aren't mixed down, but I think they give you an idea of how good he is."

Tony himself really isn't sure what he wants to do with his life yet. His mother says that, like many boys in their last year of high school, he has a new car and a girl friend as primary interests. He does enjoy singing, though, and if the decision is made

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someday to start Tony in a career as a recording artist, Joe insists that he will have his own identity.

"It'll be sort of like Crystal Gayle not using her sister's name when she got to going," Joe says. "I don't think it would be too good for him to get known as 'Joe Stampley's son' and then have to deal with that like Hank Williams, Jr. had to do for so long."

For himself, Joe hopes that there might be that *one* magic record forthcoming from his new CBS Records album *I Don't Lie*. He gives the impression of a man who is not as worried as he used to be about it though. He maintains that he will just keep "rockin' along doin' my shows and havin' a good time." He feels that in the last few years he has hit his stride as a singer and is fairly content until that one big song finds him.

One thing Stampley is doing in efforts at increasing his chances at a million-seller is broadening the kinds of songs he records. He is hoping that this will raise the odds in his favor of having one of his records "cross over" into the lucrative pop music charts.

"Right now," says Joe, "Let's face it, country is really modernizing from what it was ten years ago. I have enough confidence in myself that I'm not gonna get hung up on just one kind of thing. I'd like to go from the honky-tonk kind of country I've been doing all this last year to something different. Variety is the spice of life, you know!"

"I don't feel like I have the ego problem that some people do," Stampley adds, reflecting on his attitude about his life and his business. "I can be happy with what I am doing. I'm really just an ordinary down-to-earth kind of guy."

Before you get to thinking that this is a little overly modest for such a talented and well-established artist, you have to understand a few things about Joe Stampley. In a business with more than its share of alcohol and drug problems and multiple broken marriages, Joe Stampley is a pretty down-to-earth kind of guy. He has been married to Joanne, his childhood sweetheart, since he got out of high school. Except for the brief stay in Nashville, he has lived in the same town all his life. His favorite drink seems to be a cola and his biggest thrill, outside of his music, is angling for bass.

"Some people are on their 'trip' all the time," Stampley says, "but I don't want to be that way." Sure, he still bugs producer Billy Sherrill, as he did Norro Wilson before that, about which song should be his next single. Stampley is not so laid back that he has ceased to want that big tune, perhaps one that will "cross over" and put him into the super star league.

In his personal life, though, Joe Stampley says he can be happy with what he is, and that ain't bad. Even if he hasn't had a million seller . . . YET. ■

CRASH

(Continued from page 44)

"The next thing you know," Crash adds, "we were just honkin'."

Honkin', indeed. Since then, Crash has chalked up nine Number One country singles (including *Easy As Pie*, *Rub It In* and *You Rubbed it in All Wrong*), with 20 songs in the Top Ten. His stage shows are legendary—he works the stage like a demon ("I still get nervous before my shows," he says), and he leaves the fans screaming for more. He is one of the few performers with the ability to shift from a contemporary ballad (read: pop) to a raunchy rockabilly rip-it-up vocal without missing a beat, and Dale says there's still vast, untapped reservoirs of talent.

"We'd have been scared to death if we'd really known how hard it was," Crash says. "All the years I tried, I never really thought it was impossible to do this."

He's even become something of a, ahem, sex symbol among his female fans.

"Well," he begins modestly, "I didn't know I was a sex symbol. . . . No, I think, when you get on the stage a lot of times, they'll bring flowers to you, they want to kiss you and touch you and all—I think it does a man's ego good. Really. I think everybody likes to be hollered at. . . . When you walk on the stage the girls start screaming—I love it! I don't consider myself a sex symbol, but I love when I come on the stage to hear them hollerin' and all."

It would bother you, then, if they stopped?

"Oh, God, yes!"

And what does Mrs. Craddock have to say about her husband cavorting with the ladies—at least, on-stage?

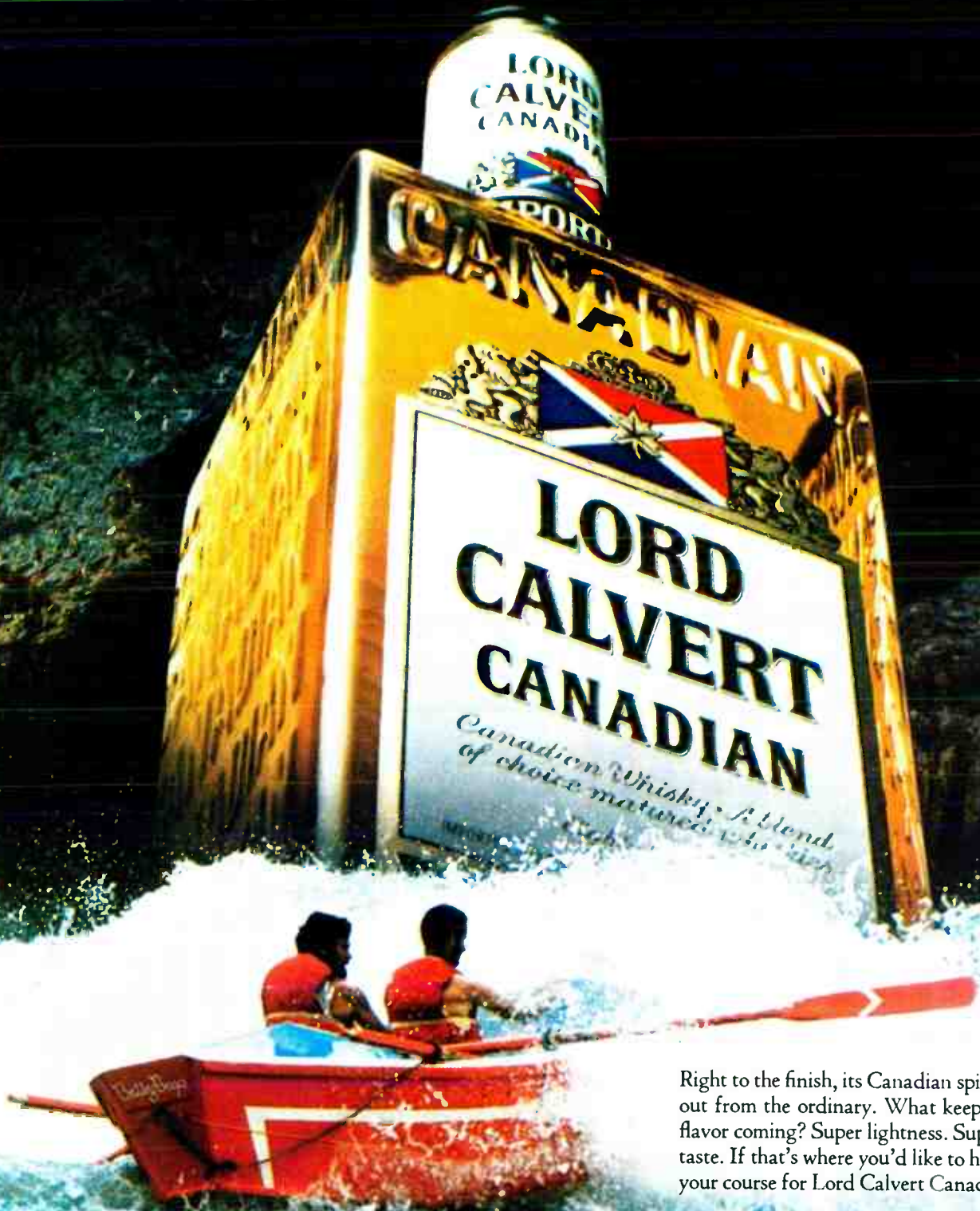
"She still remembers the hard times," Crash says, seriously. "She knows it was hard back then; what we did without. When we used to travel, there was a time when I had to send cards or write letters—as much as I hate to write—I couldn't afford to call home."

There was even the time a mysterious hand crept out of the stands and grabbed the escaping Crash, flanked by two cops, in a certain region of his lower anatomy.

"I still don't know whether it was a man or a woman or a whatever," says Crash, who still winces a little from the experience. "It could have been bad!"

That's one of the very few things that could have been bad for Crash these days. He just signed a *very* big bucks deal with Capitol Records, who are just as pleased as punch with their new acquisition. Records are selling like gangbusters, and the fans are asking just why *hasn't* he been nominated for Best Male Vocalist or even Entertainer of the Year by the CMA?

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