

Coal Miner's Daughter: Loretta's Life On The Silver Screen
Robert Redford & Willie Nelson: Electric Horseman
Plus: The Kendalls/Bobby Bare/Gatemouth Brown

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE COUNTRY PUBLICATION

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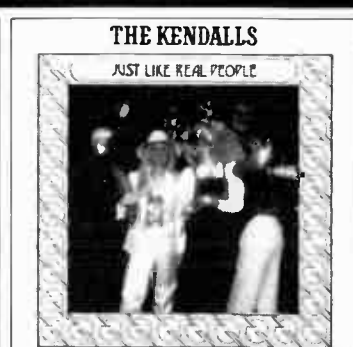
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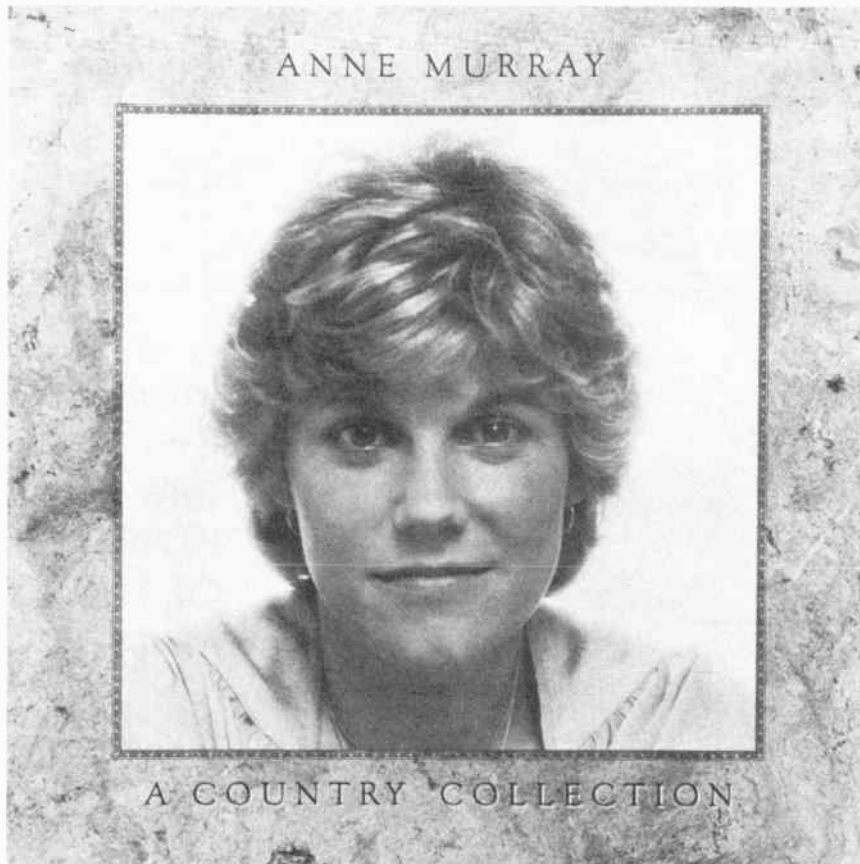


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Volume Eight; Number Six, March 1980

COUNTRY MUSICTM

DEPARTMENTS

12 Country Scene

Musical Instrument Exhibit at American Craft Museum,
Riders In The Sky Sign With Rounder Records, Charlie Daniels Buys the Exit Inn & more.

24 Everyday People

JOHN PUGH

26 Top 50 Albums

27 Nashville Insider

43 Record Reviews

Conway Twitty & Loretta Lynn, The Kendalls, Hank Snow & Kelly Foxton, Janie Fricke, Dottie West,
Jeanne Pruett, Freda & The Firedogs & David Grisman.

66 Letters

FEATURES

6 Tom T. Hall Apologizes

Herman Woonzel talks back and Tom T. learns how thin-skinned some stars can be.

TOM T. HALL

18 The Kendalls

An interview with the father and daughter team, Royce and Jeanne Kendall.

DOLLY CARLISLE

22 Where Does Your Money Go?

Did you ever wonder what happens to the \$7.98 you spend for a record album?

MARK MEHLER

30 Crystal

She's been the CMA's and ACM's *Female Vocalist of the Year* in 1977 and 1978, won a grammy,
earned two platinum albums, toured China and still Crystal Gayle doesn't think she's a super-star.

LAURA EIPPER

38 Coal Miner's Daughter

Loretta's best-selling autobiography becomes a movie with Sissy Spacek and Tommy Lee Jones
in the starring roles.

RUSSELL D. BARNARD / LOUISE BERNIKOW

49 Bobby Bare

Ten Points to one of the nicest guys in Nashville.

MARY ELLEN MOORE

52 Gatmouth Brown

He's been a professional musician for 40 years and for the first time in his life,
Gatmouth's making exactly the music he wants.

JOHN MORTHLAND

56 Willie Goes To The Movies

Singing's not the only thing that Willie Nelson can do. He has embarked on an acting career in
two movies: Electric Horseman and Honeysuckle Rose.

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Tom T. Hall Apologizes

HERMAN WOONZEL TALKS BACK AND TOM T. LEARNS HOW THIN-SKINNED SOME STARS CAN BE

by Tom T. Hall

I did an interview for Country Music Magazine with Herman Woonzel, country music legend, and I feel it is important that I report on some of the misunderstandings that occurred when I wrote the interview into a little story. I really enjoyed talking to the gentleman and it was an interesting piece. But I got a phone call from Mr. Woonzel the other day and I thought it would be fair to relate it to you. I answered the phone:

"Hello"

"Is this that Hall boy who talked to me a few weeks ago?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, this is Herman Woonzel, and that bear was a girl?"

"How's that?"

"I can say that bear was a girl. That bear we talked about, the one that roller skated with me on the road. He was a girl bear."

"He was?"

"Yeah, see we always said "he," because you can't tell about bears too good by just looking so we call him a "he." Get it?"

"I think so."

"I don't imagine there was anybody read that story who didn't see that bear at one time or another, and some of them knew he was a girl bear, and I think you ought to straighten that out somehow."

"Well sir, I don't know, *Country Music* is a busy magazine."

"Just put a little note in there somewhere."

"I'll try. I never did an interview before, and some of these things get confused. I probably should have asked you if the bear was a girl—it was my fault."

"And tell 'em I said Dave Macon was a real original. I didn't mean it like it came out."

"You didn't?"

"No, that Bible business and history was kind of a gag . . . get it?"

"I think so."

"And maybe you shouldn't have said I was eighty-one, 'cos nobody knows for sure, and maybe you should have said I

was seventy-nine. I was gonna ask you to do that but you ran off."

"Seventy-nine?"

"You notice how dark my hair was?"

"No sir."

"Well it's pretty dark, and that is that Greek formula. A guy eighty-one wouldn't have hair that dark, and I tried to explain to you that this is show business, and you still didn't understand. Some lady friends of mine were upset when they saw you wrote eighty-one instead of my real age of seventy-nine."

"I'm sorry."

"Well, now boy you did a good piece, and I'm glad you like my music, and all, but it hurts when things ain't put out right in the press."

"I'm sorry."

"I heard a lot about that piece you did. Some lady called me from all the way out in Texas, and said that boy I saw on TV wasn't a prospector, said he was an out-

law . . . what do you make of that?"

"I'd be afraid to say. Mr. Woonzel I hate to be rude, but I really have to go."

"Where you got to go?"

"Memphis."

"What you doing down there?"

"I'm a picker."

"Lawd, lawd, I'd figure a boy that types as good as you do would be making a living at it without having to mess with cotton."

"Well."

"Listen, watch out for snakes. And be sure and tell 'em about that bear. He was a girl bear, or my name ain't Herman T. Woonzel."

"T?"

"What?"

"Never Mind."

I hung up the phone with a vague feeling of despair and a quintessential respect for journalism.



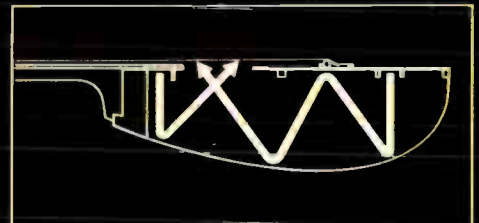
Tom T. tries to clear up misunderstandings as he speaks to Herman Woonzel on the phone.

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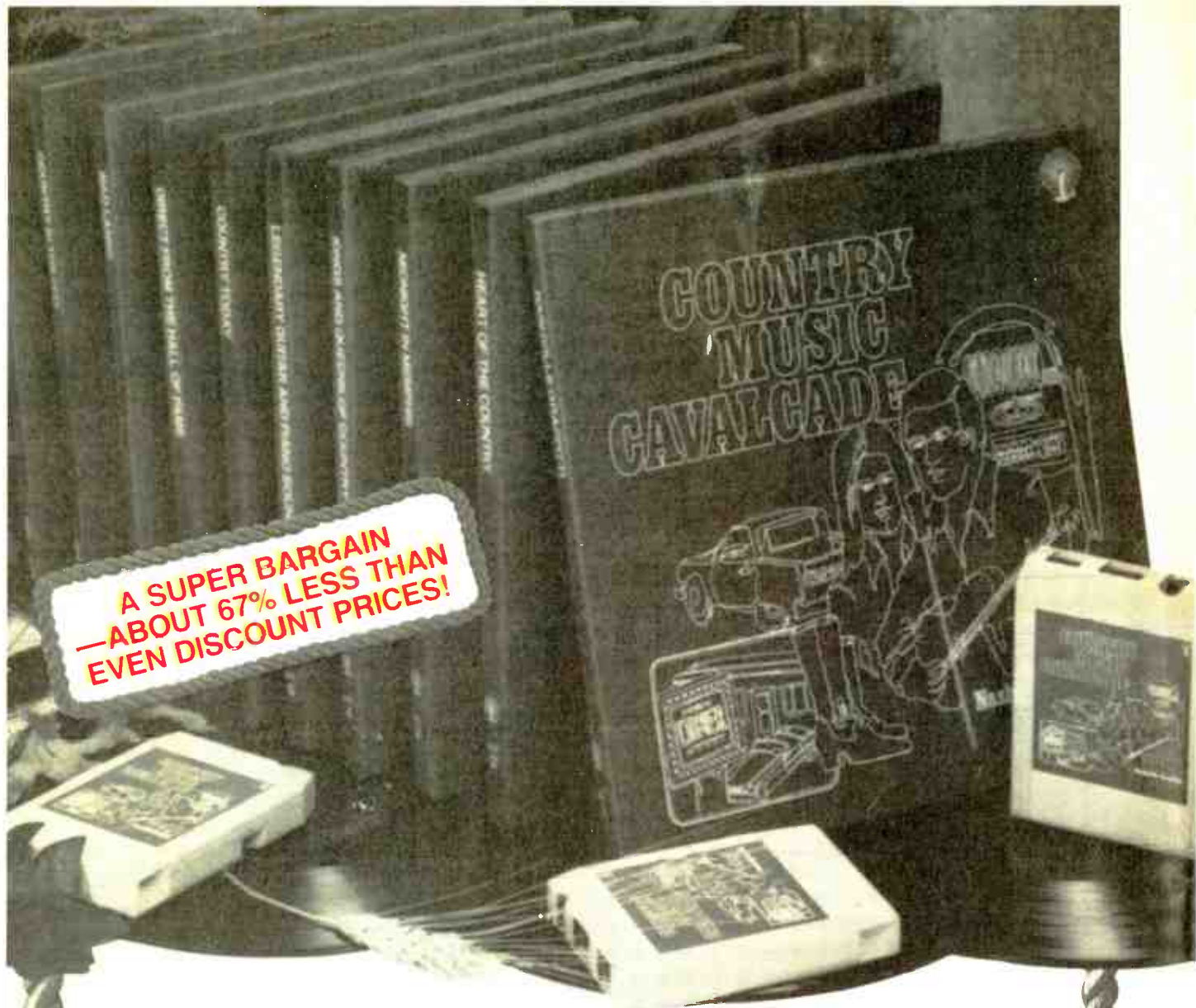
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Country Scene

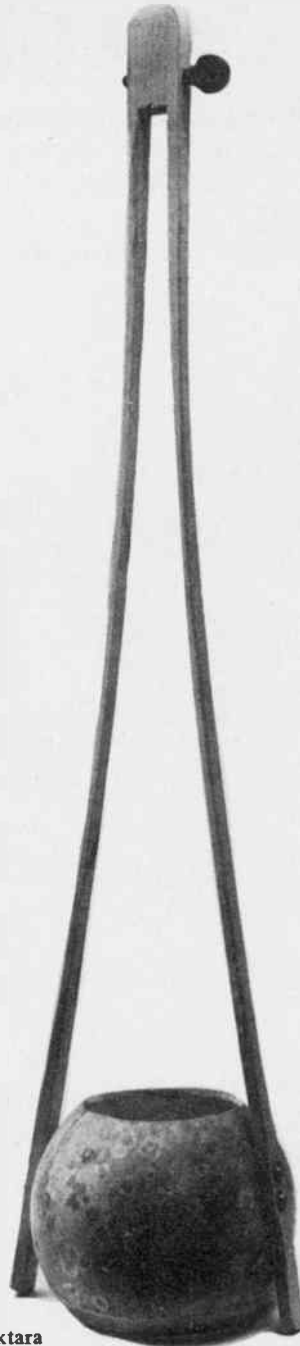
The Harmonious Craft— American Musical Instruments

Everyone knows that making music is an art, but, how many of us country music fans ever realized that making the instruments, which makes that great music, is a veritable art too. "In Celebration of Musical Instruments and Their Makers," the current show at the American Craft Museum in New York City is all about this other facet of music. "The banjos, guitars, harmonicas, fiddles and dulcimers to name just a few of the instruments on display are at least as beautiful as most modern sculpture," said one observer in a cowboy hat. "Collectors have appreciated the beauty and craftsmanship of musical instruments for a long time," said a museum spokesman.

The 88 instruments exhibited were chosen after a nationwide search that began in 1977 by the Division of Musical Instruments of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. Visual appearance as well as audio performance were the criteria for the competition.

The judges found that the sounds of "these works of art" were often at the same level of excellence as their good looks. A lot of the participating craftsmen were really musicians who wanted to custom-make their own instruments to improve their tone, alter their size or decorate them their own way. Others like Stanley Hess of Des Moines, Iowa had a yen to play very old cittern (an Old English Lute) music. Since he couldn't find one, he replicated arcane 18th century cittern patterns from old paintings.

There are entries in the show that are slight modification of traditional instruments, like the exquisitely crafted electric guitar by Colin Butler of Durham, Pennsylvania with brass and ivory trimmings and a tiger's eye as big as the first three frets. While some bear little resemblance to the instruments they are modeled after like the single-string stainless steel cello (which is nothing more than a giant, architectural scale sculpture made of a slightly bent sheet of steel with a cable running along the length of it), by Robert Rutman of Cambridge, Massachusetts or the "Wrench



Ektara

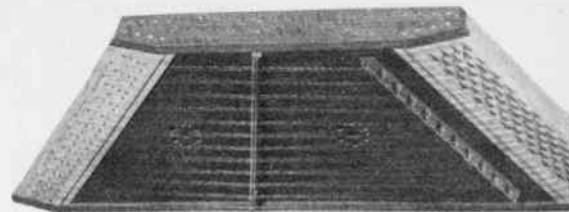
Harp" by Jim Turner of Boulder, Colorado which replaces the typical angel voice harp strings with steel wrenches of varying sizes mounted on pine two by fours, that sound celestial when you beat them. Conceptual art—pieces in which the idea is more impor-

tant than the craftsmanship, also were included like "Echo Chasers" by Norman Turnheim of Newport Beach, California which are glass tubes like gargantuan eye droppers topped with weird ceramic sculptures that were made to whistle beautifully when thrown down a cliff.

The "life" of the show is William and Mary Buchen—two vibrant Artists-In-Residence who explain and show how to play the instruments they make out of natural objects like, "cow horns from my Uncle Lonnie's ranch in North Dakota, gourds from our garden in Minnesota and elk and deer horns from Montana," said Mary who grew up on a dairy farm in Ottertail City, Minnesota and didn't know there was anything other than country, polka and church music until her parents got a television. "I grew up with the radio on and it was always playing country music," she said. Mary was a bar maid at country music bars like the Launching Pad in Minnesota and used to ask her pet clients to bring her animal bones. "They hauled them in by the truckload. Since I was a country girl, I had an appreciation for natural objects and I used them to make sculptures. My husband Billy is a musician and he played at the local country music bars like the Hofbrau and The King of Hearts. It was only natural that we merge our occupations and get into making our own musical instruments, out of things from nature, that sound as good as they look."

"Of course I like country music more than classical. It's less restrictive and you're able to get more interesting sounds from the instruments. Country music devices and techniques are experimental because they are "folk" in the true sense of the word. Some unconventional country music techniques we use on our instruments include sliding, plucking, yodeling and good old country fiddling tricks," said Billy. "You don't find them in classical, or for that matter—rock."

Billy showed me how to get a sliding sound like from a steel guitar on his



Hammered Dulcimer

Country Scene

Montana elk harp. Mary made the strange but beautiful instrument by tying five strings on the elk horns from tip to tip. Its capable of a wide variety of sounds.

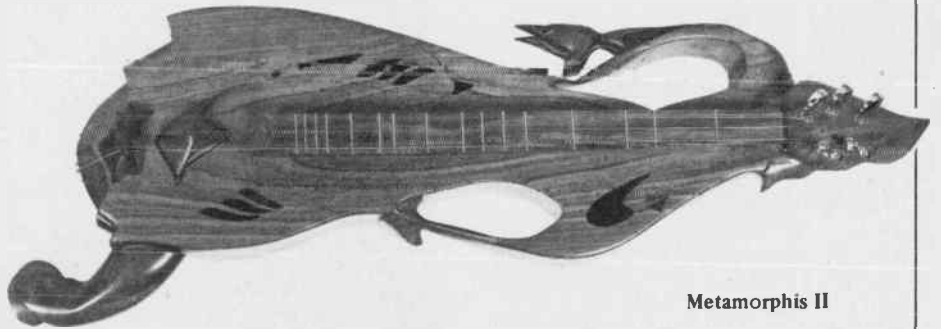
A country musician who had recently stomped in insisted that the *ektara*, a one string guitar-like instrument, whose body is home grown Japanese bird house gourd, was an early country music maker. The Buchens had actually modeled it after an instrument played by the Bauls of Bengal. "By plucking it you get shotgun sounds like in some of Johnny Cash's best," said Billy, "or pick the harmonic half way down the string for heavenlike sounds."

"My mother is the yodeling champ. I'm still learning," said Mary. "She and my aunt Stella, who plays the guitar, used to perform old Red Foley tunes. Their favorite song was *I Wanna Be A Cowboy's Sweetheart*.

"Billy is the worst yodeler and hummer. I never understood why I couldn't figure out what he was humming until I realized he hums like a drummer—the rhythmic patterns not the melody. But, he sure is generous. He sold blood, literally, for \$15 a quart to buy my mother a ukele," said Mary. "Every once in a while we play together." The Buchens have their own performing group called "Bone Works." They made all the instruments they play including marimbas, skullimbas, bullroarers and flying beaver turtle rattles.

Instruments made from objects found on the street are the comedians of the show. But, don't underestimate their sound. In many cases it's comparable to conventional instruments. Bob Hanson from New York made a slew of instruments out of mannequin legs, skis, golf clubs, can openers, sewing machine pedals, etc. He made an instrument out of a crutch called "For Lame Musicians" and one with a shovel called "For Those Who Dig Music." His performing group called "The Junk Band" produces country music that he feels is influenced by his idol Willie Murphy, that has a "funky junky flavor."

Traditional instruments are not neglected in the show. Perhaps the shiniest entry is a banjo designed after Bacon Company's Professional Model by Kathryn Spencer and Mark Surgies of Greenfield, Massachusetts. The banjo originated in Africa and was brought to America by the slaves. Popular throughout the United States in the 19th



Metamorphosis II

century as an instrument for country music and minstrel shows, today it is used around the world. There are several in the show including a fretless variety.

Throughout their history, guitars have been used in classical and popular music and to this day are a mainstay of country music. There are more guitars in the show than any other single instrument. Every kind from baroque to electric are on exhibit.

Appalachian dulcimers, drums, gourd

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World Radio History

Country Scene

Rounder Records Signs Riders in the Sky

"Say, feller, I musta got some dust in my eye!" said Too Slim. "What's this here chicken scratchin' all about?"

"Why Slim, that there is a recordin' contract from Rounder Records!" replied Doug Green. "Why all we got to do is sign that thing and we'll start makin' our own record."

"Yep," said Woody Paul, known from border to border and coast to coast as the King of the Cowboy Fiddlers, "why before long you'll be able to play our own records on them fancy Victrolas you seen in the Sears catalogue!"

"Yuh mean to say," said the bespectacled bass player and lead singer, still frowning, "that these folks come all the way down to the ole Triple X Ranch to record us doin' our songs of the old west in three part harmony?"

"Yep."

"Do y'mean to say that they're gonna let us record a bunch of them new tunes we've wrote here in the bunkhouse after the doggies was kinda tucked in for the night?"

"Yep."

"And are they gonna let ole Ranger Doug, the big fella, do some purty singin' and fancy yodelin'?"

"Yep."

"And Woody, are they gonna let you do some of that fancy fiddling that made you known from border to border and coast to coast as the King of the Cowboy Fiddlers?"

"Yep, and what's more, we're gonna do an episode of 'Riders Theater' on this here album, bringin' folks the dramatic presentation what has become something of a legend in the west. Plus, our ole trail boss, Russ Miller, is gonna produce the darn thing!"

"Waaaal tumblin' tenderloin! Gimme that pen! Why let's sign this thing and git about the business of bringin' folks all over America the best in Western music. Uh . . . say there, boys, I ain't quite got that dust outa my eyes. . . . ah, why don't I just put a X down there now, and, ah, why I'll just fill in m' name later. . . ."

DOUGLAS B. GREEN



WRITER IN THE SKY: Famous Country Music Magazine writer and contributing editor Douglas B. Green (above right) must still meet his deadlines, even though he and his band, Riders In The Sky, have signed a recording contract.

Exit/Inn Sold to Charlie Daniels and Partners

Charlie Daniels has been involved in all sorts of activities lately: winning CMA Awards, getting platinum albums, getting into the movies. . . . Recently, he was even called upon to serve as the Grand Marshall of Nashville's annual Christmas Parade. And he did it in style: dressed in a Confederate officer's uniform, riding a quarter horse.

But now Daniels has added another dimension to his lists of pursuits. Along with his manager, Joe Sullivan of the highly successful Sound-Seventy Production and Management Company, and some other partners, he has become an

owner of the Exit/Inn, one of Nashville's most popular and celebrated night spots.

The Exit/Inn has always been distinguished from other Nashville clubs by its reputation as a "listening room"—a place where the format was designed to focus attention strictly on the performers and their music, rather than drawing it away. Dancing, or even loud talking were neither encouraged or permitted at the "Exit".

As such, the club has come to play a key role in Nashville's music industry. It has long served as a format where the record labels could carefully and tasteful-

Country Scene

ly present new talent—or old talent with new songs—to the rest of the music industry and test them in front of live audiences. In this capacity, the Exit/Inn has become nationally reknown, and has served as the location for scenes from at least one feature film, Robert Altman's *Nashville*. Practically everyone who has passed through Nashville on their way to fame, from Kris Kristofferson to Joe Blow, has appeared on its stage at least once.

Unfortunately the Exit/Inn's profitability has never kept up with the nobility of its reputation. Since it was opened in 1971, it has undergone four changes of ownership, and gone into one "Chapter 11" bankruptcy. A small club with limited seating capacity, its previous owners were often caught between a rock and a hard place when breaking even meant passing entertainers' high performance fees on to customers as unpleasantly high ticket prices.

Daniels' and Sullivan's other partners in the recent acquisition are Steve Greil, also of Sound-Seventy, Henry Hillenmeyer, and Wayne Oldham, a noted Nashville restaurateur. Oldham, before this transaction, was the club's sole owner. Under present agreement, Daniels, Sullivan and Greil now hold between them equal shares of 50 percent ownership of the club.

Daniels and the Exit/Inn's other new owners have announced that the club will soon undergo \$250,000 worth of expansion and renovation, and that 75-125 additional seats will be added.

Even though Charlie Daniels is now a part owner, he insists that there are no plans for him to perform there (normally, his band fills much much bigger auditoriums and coliseums anyhow), and that he is just a silent partner in this venture.

"Joe Sullivan ran across this deal and called me and asked me if I wanted to get involved in it," says Charlie. "I said, 'Can I afford to?' and he said, 'Yeh.' So I said, 'Let's go ahead.'

"That's what got me into it," he adds. "It wasn't nothing to do with my business *acumen*, because if I have one, it certainly don't manifest itself in that way. And I certainly don't care nothin' about bein' in the nightclub business. It's just an investment."

BOB ALLEN

Tommy Jackson, Noted Fiddler, Dies at 53

Tommy Jackson, one of country music's most respected and influential fiddlers, died after a long illness in his Nashville, Tennessee home last December 9. Jackson, born in Birmingham, Alabama, on March 31, 1926, played in Birmingham and at WLW in Cincinnati before moving to Nashville in the late 1940's, where he became the cream of the crop of the recording-session fiddlers, a staff fiddler on the Grand Ole Opry, and a recording artist, cutting numerous albums of mainly square dance material for Dot, Mercury, and Decca.

He was responsible, among many other things, for the lovely swooping fid-

dle behind Ray Price in his honky-tonk years, and his *Tennessee Shuffle* with his bow hand is among the most widely known fiddle sounds in the country. The last ten years, however, had been discouraging: fewer and fewer sessions called for fiddles any more, and those that did often used the jazzier styles of Buddy Spicher or Johnny Gimble. Tommy Jackson had drifted into semi-retirement at his south Nashville home, depressed and increasingly ill, existing on royalties, residuals, and the occasional record session until his death. Still, he was one of the great ones, and will be missed.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

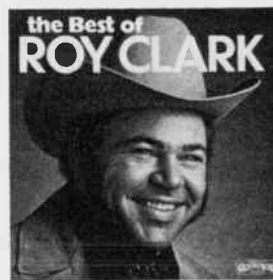
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8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-83 \$4.98

Country Scene

"The Cultural Phenomenon of Elvis Presley: The Making of a Folk Hero"

Elvis remembered ... and studied, analyzed and GRADED. For students at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, a course entitled "The Cultural Phenomenon of Elvis Presley: The Making of a Folk Hero" transforms the life of the legendary singer into a reality of their college curriculum.

The 3-credit class was first offered to a limited number of honors students in the Fall of 1977, just weeks after the singer's untimely death on August 16. It was an unfortunate coincidence, remembers College of Liberal Arts associate dean, Charles Jackson. "A lot of people thought we were capitalizing on his death," while in actuality the idea for such a course had been conceived at least two years earlier.

It was created as an evaluation of the Elvis phenomenon, concentrating on the American experience and his influence on contemporary society. Explains Jackson, "The focus of the course is not so much on Elvis as an entertainer, but on his role as an American cultural symbol." Instructor Patsy Hammertree had begun her study of the iconic entertainer while Elvis was still very much alive and glistening in the public eye. Limited financial assistance from the University's English and American Studies departments enabled her to research Elvis beyond the information available in the pages of a book; bringing her to the quintessence of his personal and professional life and getting to know him by speaking with those who were closest to him. Her frequent visits to Memphis lead to a close personal relationship with Elvis' father, Vernon Presley, in which he became not only a valuable source, but a dear friend.

When first introduced, the class elicited overwhelming response, but selective enrollment policies qualified no more than 15 students to partake in the special program. It has since been offered twice as a less restrictive elective in the American Studies department.

Jackson believes that the course's popularity is due to its relevance to the lives and backgrounds of the students. It is certainly not an easy class, especially when compared with other 3-credit electives. "Patsy is a very difficult grader," he insists, "And

those students work hard, I can assure you of that." All aspects of the late performer, from his on-stage personality and élat to the media's treatment of his career is examined in lectures, class discussions, extensive individual reading assignments and research papers.

Equally impressive was the attention this unusual college course received from Elvis fans, educators and the media. "I was astounded," remarked Jackson referring to

the enormous positive feedback. Aside from local media coverage, Hammertree has also appeared on the English BBC television station. As was her original intention, Hammertree's expertise will eventually be put into words on paper and bound into a book that could give the world a whole new understanding of the living institution that was Elvis and an American culture he helped create.

SUZAN CRANE

ROY ROGERS DALE EVANS

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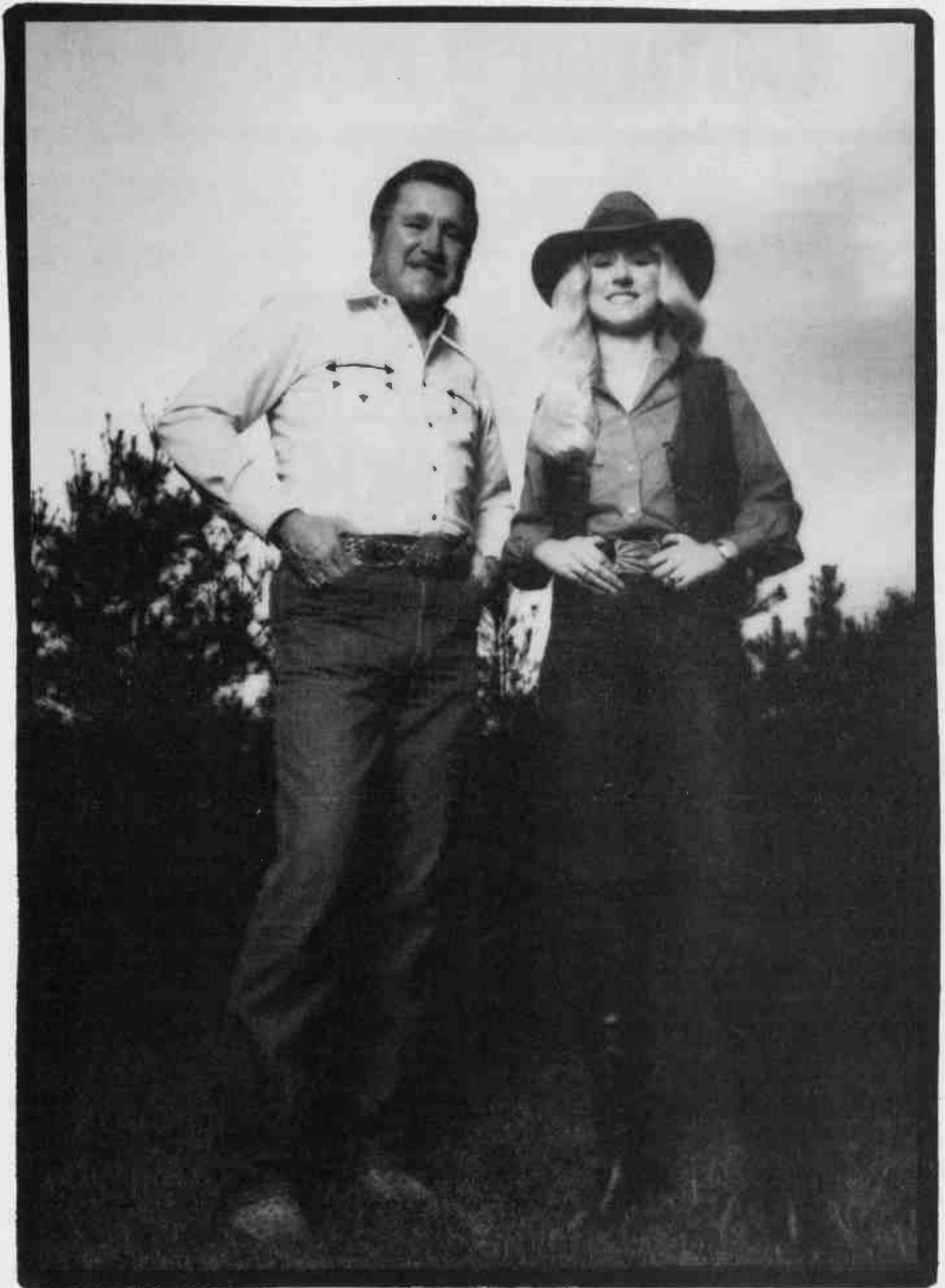
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An Interview With THE KENDALLS

by Dolly Carlisle

The Kendalls live a simple life they say. They sing, record, conduct their music business and that's about it. Their leisure hours are few, and even they are interrupted with last minute tour changes and business decisions. But when the free hours do happen, father Royce and daughter Jeannie take separate paths to their respective homes that are just a stone's throw away from each other in Hendersonville, Tennessee. Royce joins his wife Melba, a former beautician and Jeannie goes home to her new husband, Mack Watkins, who is also the group's lead guitarist.

It was at the father's house I found them—father, mother and daughter. Their home is a sprawling split-level brown trimmed brick contemporary with traditional furnishings. We sat at the kitchen table, sipped coffee and started talking about—what else—their careers.

*Their new album **The Heart of the Matter** had just been released on Ovation Records label and they were discussing the slow ascent of its first single release, **You'd Make An Angel Wanna Sin**.*

*The Kendalls are friendly people, warm but at the same time hard-edged. They openly admit that they have been surprised at their success. And they acknowledge that if their blockbuster hit **Heaven's Just A Sin Away** hadn't happened, they may have packed their bags and gone back to St. Louis and their beauty and barber shops. But that's not the way it happened.*

So, Jeannie attired in her customary snug-fitting blue jeans and blue jean jacket with western styled boots and hat sat across the table from her polyester suited father and together, they discussed their lives, loves and careers.

Country Music: When did the two of you start singing together?

Jeannie: Daddy used to sing with his brother a long time ago, so he'd sit down in the house and play the guitar, and we just started singing together when I was about 16 years old for our own enjoyment. Neighbors, friends would say you ought to go cut a record.

Royce: Well, I'd been playing ever since I was about eight, me and my brother. For a long time I didn't do anything with it, didn't even pick up a guitar for several

years. You don't ever get it out of your system, and then when Jeannie grew up, we just started singing. Then we came down to Nashville and paid for our own custom session.

Country Music: Had you tried to sing professionally with your brother?

Royce: Yeah, we did a T.V. show in California a couple of years with Cal Smith, and Hank Cockran. That was before Hank wrote any songs and before Cal had anything—in the late 50s.

Country Music: Did you and your brother record?

Royce: No. We didn't stick together very long. We went back to St. Louis, and he stayed in California. Then I didn't do anything in music for a long time.

Country Music: Did your brother stay in the music business?

Royce: No.

Country Music: What did you do when you went back to St. Louis?

Royce: Just settled down. That's when I went to barber school and became a barber. At that time, I was busy raising a kid, with my family and trying to be happy. But like I said, you never get music out of your system. It comes back. In the 60's and late 50's country wasn't that hot—people would sneer, "You play a guitar?" Now they all want to play a guitar.

Country Music: Jeannie, when did you become interested in music?

Jeannie: Oh, I was always interested in music because, I guess, Daddy sang. I remembered some of that, and maybe seeing him on T.V. a couple of times when I was little and stayed up late, but I always liked it. I guess it was an inherited thing. I listened to a lot of music. I like all kinds. I really like folk music. I'd spend a lot of hours listening to records and stuff like that.

Royce: She didn't listen to girls' songs. She listened to Glen Campbell, John Denver and Jerry Reed.

Country Music: Why did you do that?

Jeannie: Well, I didn't want to sound like anybody else if I could help it. It would be easy to sound like someone else, which is fine, unless you want to have a record career.

Royce: I remember I told her to just be yourself.

Country Music: Whose idea was it to go professional?

Royce: We'd been on vacation one time, down to Florida and came back through Nashville. A friend was with us, and when we went to the Opry, he said why don't you cut a record. So we went back home and got some money together.

Country Music: How much?

Royce: \$1300 or so.

Country Music: Was that a lot of money to you at the time?

Royce: Well, it was a lot compared to now. Jeannie: Both mom and dad were doing well in their own business.

Royce: I was a barber, she was a beautician. We had our own shop. We were making good money.

Country Music: Did people, friends, neighbors think you were crazy?

Royce: No, they liked it.

Jeannie: They probably think like everybody else—a lot of people do things like that but they are never really successful at it.

Royce: When we first started recording we mailed a lot of our own records, and even after all those years went by and after we'd been down here all this time, we mailed a bunch of records with our own little hands.

Jeannie: Yes sir, so we have always from the very beginning of records done a lot of things ourselves. We haven't just waited for someone to do things for us.

Royce: Kind of jump in there and help.

Jeannie: We figure if we don't do it, nobody else will, which probably keeps Daddy too busy.

Royce: We're still that way.

Jeannie: He does a little too much, I think.

Royce: I'm always out there pushing them about it because nobody is as interested in your career as you are.

Country Music: Who's the more aggressive?

Royce: I am, I guess.

Jeannie: Yeah, I imagine. I'm not the kind of person who is going to say, "Well, here I am." I would never have done what I am doing if I had to do it by myself.

Royce: She would never go out to anybody's office.

Jeannie: No, I'm not real big on going to people's offices now. I really don't like to do that. I don't like the business part. I like the singing and recording, but I don't like a lot of things that go with it.

Country Music: Jeannie, are you more like your mother or your father?

Jeannie: I don't think I'm like either one. I might be a combination of both. I might have been more like mom in the earlier years than I am now. I think I have changed—I have become a little more outgoing than I was. That's not a lot. But for me, it's a whole lot. So, I guess I'm probably more like mom. Mom is a little more shy with people she doesn't know. It takes her a little while to get to know people.

Royce: We were both very shy really. Of course, success helps that. I'm more outward now.

Country Music: **How does success help to overcome shyness?**

Royce: You try to work at it, I guess. It's not easy. I used to not talk much at all, still don't do much talking on stage. Jeannie does that.

Jeannie: Yeah, but if you sit him next to someone on a plane, he will talk their arm off. He'll talk more to an individual than he will as far as the show is concerned. He won't talk much on stage. I might talk a little less to an individual, but I'll talk more on stage.

Country Music: **I thought you said you were the shy one?**

Jeannie: Well, I think you compensate for each other's weaknesses. When you are a duet, both have to do what they think they have to do. I had to start talking because I didn't think Dad was going to talk.

Country Music: **Are you pushing as hard now as you were?**

Jeannie: This year I think we've sort of relaxed a little bit too much and not done as much as we should. I haven't been as well, and I've had a lot of things to do. I have just been married, and I have been sort of side-tracked a little bit, but I think we're getting back on track.

Country Music: **Jeannie, was it difficult to date and have a social life while traveling on the bus?**

Jeannie: Probably so. I think a lot of years I just completely set aside that part of my life. I was more interested in music and a career and making it. I just thought whatever was to be, is to be. If I was going to find somebody, I would if I was supposed to.

Country Music: **Do the two of you believe in fate?**

Jeannie: Yeah, I believe it was meant to be. God knows what's best for you. I sort of had given up on ever having success. Then came *Heaven's Just A Sin Away*. I think when you get to the rock bottom, those things happen. Not that I hadn't cried, hoped and prayed for it for a long time.

Royce: That's paying your dues as they say.

Country Music: **Are you both religious?**

Royce: We are, but we don't get to practice it much.

Jeannie: We are usually gone on Sunday.

Country Music: **What religion?**

Royce: Church of Christ.

Country Music: **What would the two of you have done if you hadn't started singing?**

Jeannie: I would have been a beautician. I went to beauty school before I was even out of high school, during the summers. So I had a career I could do if I wanted to.

Royce: I'd still be a barber.

Country Music: **What do you do in you off time?**

Royce: Watch TV, take care of business, catch up on the mail, talk on the phone, go to the cleaners, all of the regular things you have to do.

Country Music: **Do either of you read music?**

Jeannie: I play the guitar a little bit, but I didn't learn to play until recently.

Country Music: **Royce, did you teach her to play?**

Royce: I probably just showed her the chords.

Jeannie: I'm still not very good at it. Oh well, I'll just let Mack play the guitar.

Country Music: **Did either of you write music?**

Royce: Oh some, but I haven't had time.

Jeannie: Yes, I've written a lot of songs. I just try to write, whatever I write, as good as I can. I'm not one of these people who writes 300 songs. What I do is very easy, I don't have that much trouble with it.

Royce: Most of them she writes are pretty good songs. They are quality, quality instead of quantity. She won't play you a bad one.

Jeannie: I have a lot of unfinished songs. I never even write them down. They are just in the trashcan before they even get on paper.

Country Music: **In a typical year, how many dates do you do on the road?**

Royce: 150-200. But I also take care of business. We don't have no manager. I like to do what I want. Don't want no manager telling us what to do.

Country Music: **Do you hang out with anyone else in the industry?**

Royce: No, we're not "Hanging arounders." I like a lot of them, but as far as being really close with any of the artists,



I don't guess we really are. We see Brien Fisher (their producer), the folks at Top Billing (their press relations firm) and the Brokaws (their TV and radio press relations).

Country Music: Who are your idols?

Royce: As far as being a great singer I guess it's George Jones. Even before George, I like Eddy Arnold. I liked all the old ones, used to listen to the Grand Ole Opry. All we had was the radio.

Jeannie: I like Glen Campbell, Jerry Reed and folk music, especially Peter, Paul and Mary.

Country Music: What happens when you disagree?

Jeannie: We are dependent upon each other. It's not like someone who is an individual singer or artist. Even though I'm grown and married, it's still probably a different relationship than other people because I'm still the little girl, and he's still basically the boss. I'll yell at him if there's something I don't want to do. But it still is sort of the same role as it always has been. I'm used to him bossing me around.

Royce: I never really thought about it and never really talked about it, but we don't have any problems in that respect. Of course, we usually agree.

Country Music: Tell me about your new husband.

Jeannie: Well, I've known Mack for about five years or so. He used to work will Del Reeves, and we played shows together.

Royce: He was the first one we had in our band. He used to call me all the time back when we weren't doing any good, and said he wanted to go to work for us. So he was the first one I hired.

Country Music: How old is he?

Jeannie: 32.

Country Music: Where did you get married?

Jeannie: Charleston, South Carolina. It was a very simple wedding. Then we went to Florida for a few days.

Country Music: How will you balance family and career?

Jeannie: I really don't know. We are not planning on any kids in the near future. We are pretty busy. I imagine when our careers slacken up—but it's kind of an undiscussed thing. It just hasn't really been important in our lives so far. We've only been married a year.

Country Music: Does he sing?

Jeannie: Yeah, I think he has aspirations of doing some things. He sometimes sings on our show.

Country Music: What is the key to your success?

Royce: Persistence probably.

Jeannie: I think you have to have talent, but at least half of it is just sticking with it. Because I've known a lot of people who were a lot more talented than we were that gave up long before we did.

Royce: There's probably a lot of them still in town now.



Country Music: But didn't you have it relatively easy. After all, you struck pay dirt with you second record, Leaving on a Plane.

Jeannie: I think we were lucky in some respects. We kept having chart records, not monsters. Enough to make a living.

Royce: Fortunately Melba worked in a beauty shop. If it weren't for her, we probably wouldn't have made it.

Country Music: I understand that one time ABC Dot Records started recording Jeannie as a single artist. Why did you go back as a duet?

Jeannie: Well, I didn't think that was the answer to hit records.

Royce: They thought I was too old. But the thing she didn't like about it was they put her in a studio with six background singers.

Jeannie: It was totally useless. I wasn't really allowed to sing in my own style. They were trying to make me a female Tommy Overstreet. By the time they got finished with my voice, it wasn't me at all. They were trying to make something out of me that they thought the folks would like. But everybody had a different opinion. I think there are lots of people making a million dollars who don't really have a great voice. And I don't think we've got great voices. But I think you've got to take whatever you've got and make the best of it.

Royce: Whatever you've got, make it shine. ■

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Where Does Your

A survey by a leading music industry trade magazine revealed that the average sale price of a current album (\$7.98 list) is \$5.90. The actual disc-shaped hunk of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) that the record is made of, and the jacket and sleeve that cover it, are worth a total of *under 65c*. Any record buyer being squeezed by the recent rash of record retail price hikes has a right to wonder what happens to the remainder of the \$5.90 cash investment.

Ask a record company president (he's probably hoarse already from defending his pricing policies), and the answer you'll get is that the rest of the money goes to "merchandising," "marketing," "artist development," and "production." Ask what all that means, and you'll probably get another answer that will be even more nebulous. The following, then, is an attempt to put some sense into where the dollars and cents go in the \$3 billion American record business.

* * *

The starting point for this discussion of high finance must be the artist himself (or herself). Let's consider an imaginary performer, Orange Blossom, a top country singer whose recent success on the pop charts has brought her into the world of big bucks. First, she has a "production deal" with Larry Lendo, a producer who has been credited with turning her career around. Every 12-18 months, when it's time to record a new Orange Blossom album, the two are given an "advance," or a "production allowance" by Blossom's record company. Out of that allowance of, say, \$100,000, the artist and her producer must pay all their recording costs.

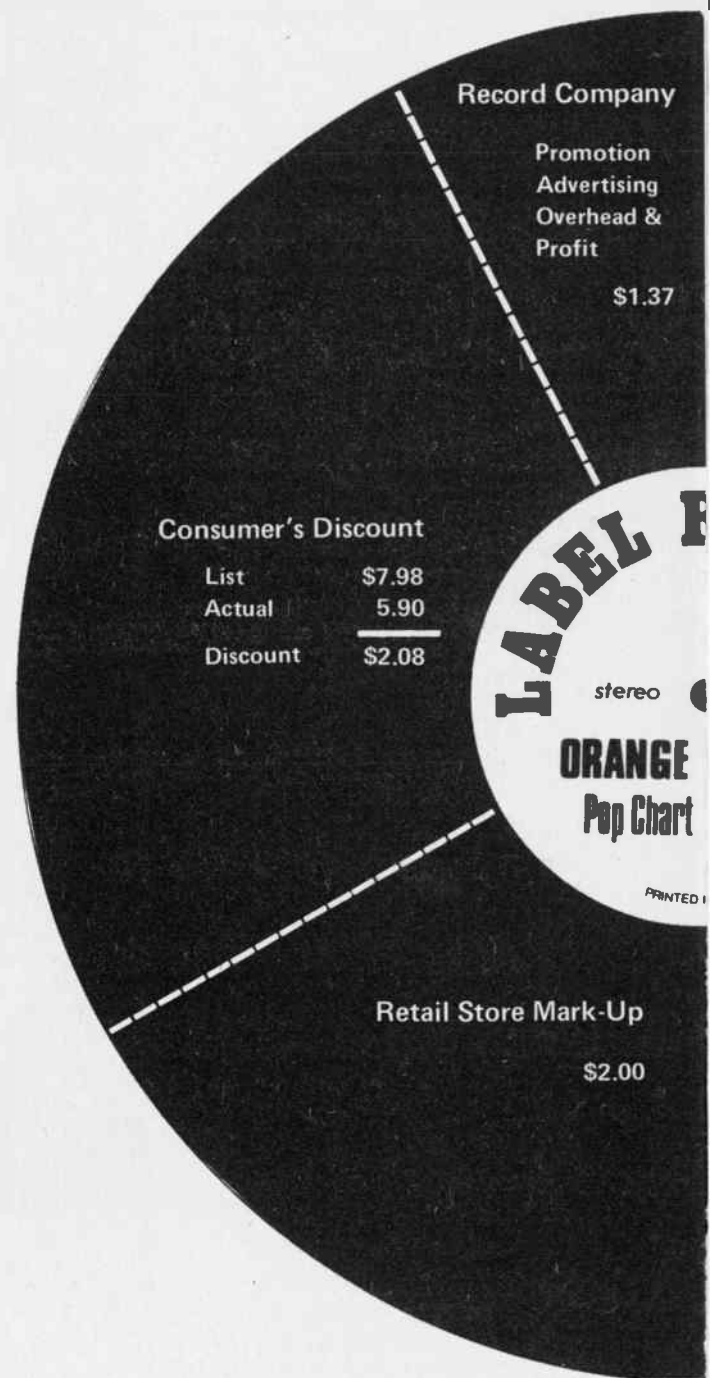
These include studio rental averaging \$150 to \$200 per hour, union wages for studio musicians ("sessionmen"), raw equipment costs, mixing and remixing expenses, and hotel and food bills for the crew while recording sessions are underway.

Hopefully, out of that \$100,000, the two will pay the excess out of their own pockets. (Since Orange is a superstar, the record label will pay the overrun).

Under terms of their deal with the record label, Orange and Lendo are to be paid an artist "royalty." This is figured as a percentage of the list price of every record sold over the counter. (A 10% 'container charge' is usually deducted off the top, meaning the \$7.98 list price is actually computed at about \$7.20). A superstar like Orange is getting 12% (8% for her, 4% for Lendo), or 87c for every record purchased.

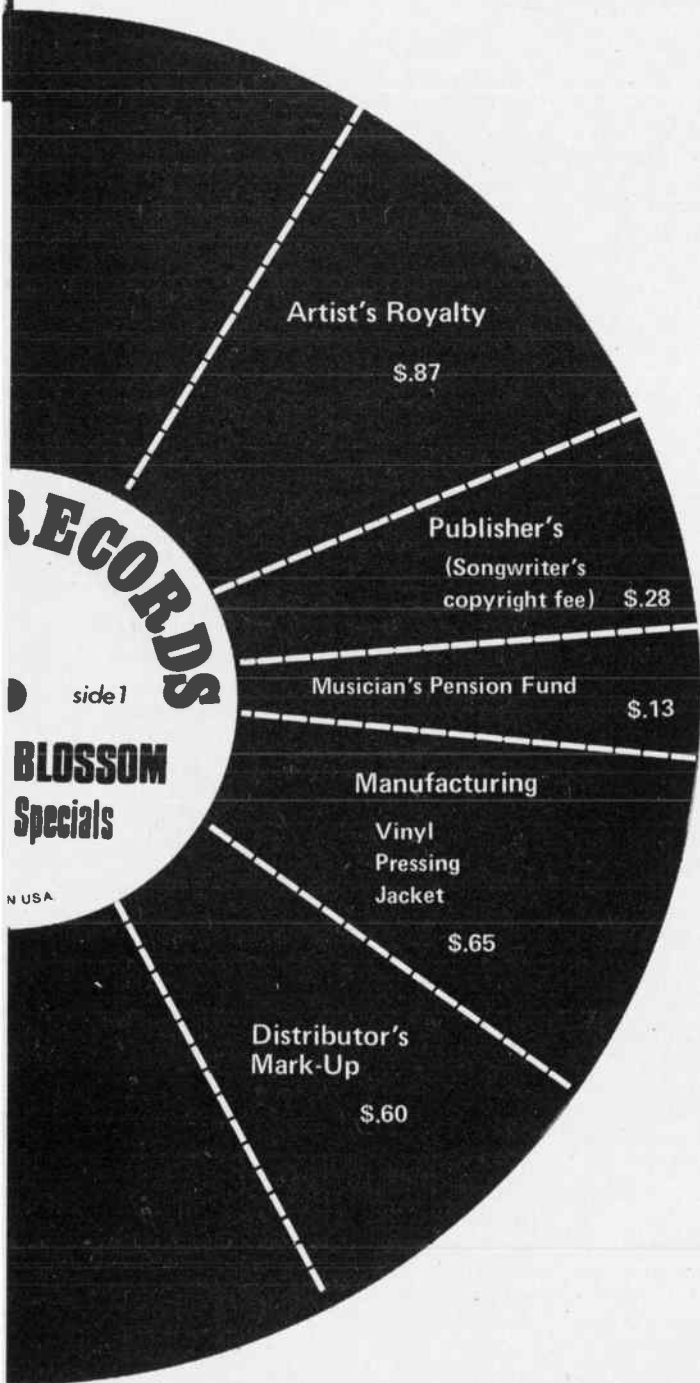
There is, however, one snag. Orange and Lendo collect not one penny of that royalty until the \$100,000 advance is repaid to the label. In other words, at 87c per copy, Orange Blossom must peddle about 115,000 LPs *before* reaping the fruits of superstardom. Of course, superstars generally sell 500,000 to 2,000,000 copies every time. If Orange's LP goes "gold" (500,000), she will net a total royalty of \$334,500 (385,000 LPs X 87c).

Other royalties are also paid on every American album. The authors of the songs and their publishers are paid a legal rate of 2.75c per song (if Orange had written her own material, she could have supplemented her income nicely). Figuring an average of 10 songs per LP, about 28c in total writing royalties are distributed on every album. Finally, add about



Money Go?

by Mark Mehler



13c in total royalties per LP for the pension funds of the musicians' unions.

All together, royalty payments on the Blossom disc amount to \$1.28 (87c + 28c + 13c) of the \$5.90.

Once the record has been mastered in the studio, it must be pressed into vinyl discs and stuffed into a sleeve (sometimes called "inner sleeve") and jacket. Prior to 1970, these factory costs amounted to less than 40c per disc. However, the three major raw material ingredients that go into the manufacture of a record have skyrocketed in cost. First, there's labor, then utilities to run the pressing machines (remember the Arabs?); second, there's the vinyl itself; and third, there's paper (cardboard) for the jackets and sleeves. Today, total manufacturing costs run about 65c per disc, and continue rising with the falling of each tree and the gushing of each oil well.

The next major cost of getting a record from the musician's mind to your stereo is the middleman's cost of distributing the LP from factory to store. The distributor generally works on a 15% profit markup. He will pay about \$3.45 for the new Orange Blossom LP and sell it to a chain of record retail stores for about \$3.90. Tiny "mom and pop" record stores will have to buy the Blossom album from a "one stop," a middleman who caters to low volume operations, and charges about \$4.25 per disc. Assuming that you, the consumer, purchase the Blossom LP from a large retailer, figure that 60c of your \$5.90 goes to distribution expense. And assume that another \$2 of your investment goes to the retailer's "gross profit" (the difference between

the \$5.90 retail price and \$3.90 wholesale cost). A \$2 profit may seem like a lot, but considering the high cost of the retail business today (salaries, rent, utilities, etc.) that 35% gross margin is just about enough to keep his store afloat.

So far, then, we've accounted for roughly \$4.53 of the retail price. The rest of the \$5.90, or about \$1.37, goes to the father of it all, Blossom's record company. Out of that \$1.37 comes funds for advertising (radio, TV, and print), promotion (the people who visit radio stations to get the record played), press parties, in-store merchandising tools (murals, posters), and a host of other in-house costs.

Perhaps, when all is said and done, the record company will realize a net profit-to-sales-margin of 10% (60c to 70c per disc). In the case of Orange Blossom, the money expended for advertising, promotion, and press parties will yield returns at the cash register. However, lesser lights who don't sell big numbers, will not even recoup the initial production costs. Clearly, at a unit profit of only about 60c an LP, the record company must rely on Orange Blossom and the rest of its "monster" sellers to balance the failures and make its corporate balance sheet read pleasantly at year end.

Already, industry executives and retailers are predicting a \$1 increase in list price (and sale price) in the next year. They cite rising royalties, production costs, and advertising rates as the prime culprits. As these cost hikes are well documented, the buyer is better off pondering his own pockets than crying "thief" at the record labels. If you, the buyer, decide that \$5.90 or \$6.90 is a reasonable price for a record, at least you'll know who's getting what. ■

Everyday People

by John Pugh

What Becomes of the Broken-Hearted

All names in the following narrative are fictitious to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

About the only thing that keeps Bob Arnold going is the hope that someday he will see Jan again. He feels it, he believes it, he knows it. His life would hardly be worth it if somehow, sometime their respective roads of life didn't intersect once more. Bob still loves Jan. Even after all these years. Even though she married someone else. Even though he has no real idea where she is, what she's doing, or if he's even once crossed her mind in all this time. It doesn't matter. The book just can't be closed on a love like that.

*I don't know who you're with
I don't even know where you've gone
My only hope is that someday you
might*

*hear this song
And you'll know that I wrote it
especially for you
And I love you. Wherever you are*

(Still—Bill Anderson)

"I first saw Jan early in my freshman year at college," Bob began. "She was just walking across the campus when I caught sight of her. My heart nearly leaped through my chest. I had never seen any other woman that beautiful before in my life. To me she was like a goddess who had descended upon us mere mortals. I hurried to catch up with her. I knew anyone that breathtaking had to have another boyfriend, but I felt I just couldn't let her get away without learning who she was and finding out something about her. When I caught up with her I just started talking like any awestruck freshman: 'Hi, my name's Bob. What's yours? Jan? Gee, that's a pretty name. May I walk you to your next class?' That sort of thing. I thought surely I was falling flat on my face, but when we got ready to part ways, I impulsively asked her out for that weekend, and to my utter astonishment, she accepted. That first date when I kissed her the sensation was so ecstatic, so other-worldly that I thought, 'My God, one kiss from this girl is like a dozen bedroom sessions with any other.' I was only 18 so I hadn't been to bed that much. But I knew enough to make a comparison. And

nothing had ever compared with that first kiss. From that time on I saw her almost every night. When I wasn't with her, I was constantly thinking of her, daydreaming of her, lost in beautiful thoughts of her. I couldn't believe my life could have turned out so wonderful. I was in heaven."

*When I was young
And dreams were new
I loved a girl
Who looked like you
I saw her face
In mountain streams
I lingered there
And lost myself in dreams*

(When I Was Young—The Kingston Trio)

"Looking back on it, I guess you could say that it was just too good to be true. Even today I'm really not sure what happened. I don't think either one of us wanted it to end. I know I didn't. But somehow it just slipped away, without either one of us really knowing how or why. We were just two kids in love for the first time, fumbling our way through our first relationship ever. Neither of us really knew how to act, what to say, how to express our feelings and our love for each other. One day several months later I got a letter from her. She had transferred to an all-girls school in another town. I never knew why."

*If you knew just how I feel
Then you might return. And yet
There are so many, many times
When we must love. And then forget*
(It's Over—Jimmie Rodgers)

"After that my life was as dolorous without her as it had been happy with her. I'd be crossing campus and pass by someplace where we had shared some special memory and tears would just well up in my eyes and roll down my cheeks. People would be looking at me, but I just couldn't stop. My grades plummeted way down. I kept being called in for counseling. My professors would say, 'You're much too bright to be doing this kind of work. Is there something bothering you?' I'd just say, 'No, I'm fine. I just need to study harder.' Then as soon as they'd let me go, I'd have to go to the restroom to pull myself together. I left after one more semester and joined the army.

"I put in my hitch with Uncle Sam and then came to Nashville to be a songwriter. I saw myself as another Hank Williams, pouring all my grief and heartache into my songs and achieving immortality because of my broken heart. As I got into songwriting and got some hits and as time went by, Jan's memory gradually receded in my mind. I had lots of other women over the years: everybody from a former Miss Tennessee to a nightclub stripper. I was even close to marriage twice. But somehow none of them could ever make me completely forget Jan.

"One day 13 years later I happened to be passing through Jan's old hometown. I went by her parents' home and asked her mother about her. After all this time I was going to contact Jan and see if she still remembered and if she would see me again. Then her mother told me she had married last year. Thirteen years and I was one year too late. I asked her mother for a picture and she gave me one of Jan's freshman year pictures. Just from looking at her picture, my heart began pounding the same way it had when I first saw her in the flesh. I thought of that line from the Statler Brothers song *Pictures* that goes, 'That's the picture that I carry in my heart.'

"Ever since then not a day goes by that I don't think about her, wonder where she is, how she's doing, if she's happy. Her mother told me that she and her husband had moved to a town about 350 miles from her hometown and about 500 miles from Nashville. I don't know if she's still living there or not. But even after all this time and all that distance, somehow I just can't believe I won't see her again, even if only for 15 minutes, even if only to say, I'm sorry. Sorry for being so young and stupid. And that next time it won't be the way it was before. Because next time will probably be up in heaven. I know I'll see her up there. And next time it'll be forever."

*When we meet again up yonder
We'll stroll hand in hand again
In the land that knows no parting
Blue eyes crying in the rain.*

(Blue Eyes Crying In the Rain—Willie Nelson) ■

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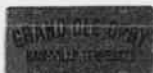
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- 2 **What Goes Around Comes Around**
Waylon Jennings
- 3 **Greatest Hits**
Waylon Jennings
- 4 **I'll Always Love You**
Anne Murray
- 5 **Let's Keep It That Way**
Anne Murray
- 6 **Miss The Mississippi**
Crystal Gayle
- 7 **The Gambler**
Kenny Rogers
- 8 **The Originals**
Statler Brothers
- 9 **When I Dream**
Crystal Gayle
- 10 **Straight Ahead**
Larry Gatlin And The Gatlin Brothers Band
- 11 **Y'All Come Back Saloon**
Oak Ridge Boys
- 12 **The Best Of Eddie Rabbitt**
Eddie Rabbitt
- 13 **The Best Of Barbara Mandrell**
Barbara Mandrell
- 14 **Larry Gatlin's Greatest Hits**
Larry Gatlin
- 15 **Pretty Paper**
Willie Nelson
- 16 **Classic Crystal**
Crystal Gayle
- 17 **A Christmas Together**
John Denver & The Muppets
- 18 **Compass Point**
David Allan Coe
- 19 **Ten Years Of Gold**
Kenny Rogers
- 20 **Portrait**
Don Williams
- 21 **One Of A Kind**
Moe Bandy
- 22 **Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound**
Hank Williams, Jr.
- 23 **A Believer Sings The Truth**
Johnny Cash
- 24 **Million Mile Reflections**
Charlie Daniels Band
- 25 **Stardust**
Willie Nelson
- 26 **Rose Colored Glasses**
John Conlee
- 27 **Right Or Wrong**
Roseanne Cash
- 28 **Just Good Ol' Boys**
Moe Bandy & Joe Stampley
- 29 **Our Memories Of Elvis**
Vol. 2
- 30 **The Best Of Don Williams**
Vol. II
- 31 **Banded Together**
Various Artists
- 32 **Shot Through The Heart**
Jennifer Warnes
- 33 **¾ Lonely**
T.G. Sheppard
- 34 **Simple Little Words**
Cristy Lane
- 35 **Ol T's In Town**
Tom T. Hall
- 36 **Classics**
Kenny Rogers & Dottie West
- 37 **The Oak Ridge Boys Have Arrived**
The Oak Ridge Boys
- 38 **A Rusty Old Halo**
Hoyt Axton
- 39 **The Best Of The Statler Brothers**
The Statler Brothers
- 40 **The Oak Ridge Boys Have Arrived**
The Oak Ridge Boys
- 41 **Just For The Record**
Barbara Mandrell
- 42 **Family Tradition**
Hank Williams, Jr.
- 43 **One For The Road**
Willie Nelson and Leon Russell
- 44 **Willie And Family Live**
Willie Nelson
- 45 **My Very Special Guests**
George Jones
- 46 **The Legend And The Legacy**
Ernest Tubb
- 47 **Heart Of The Matter**
The Kendalls
- 48 **Should I Come Home**
Gene Watson
- 49 **Images**
Ronnie Milsap
- 50 **The Statler Brothers Christmas Card**
The Statler Brothers

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Charley Pride *There's A Little Bit Of Hank In Me*

His latest is a tribute to one of Country Music's proudest heritage, Hank Williams and his songs. "A Little Bit of Hank In Me" features Charley's hit single, "Honky-Tonk Blues" and "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," along with "Mansion on the Hill," "I Can't Help It If I'm Still In Love With You," "My Son Calls Another Man Daddy," "You Win Again." It's Charley and Hank at their best.



AHLI-3549

Danny Davis & Willie Nelson

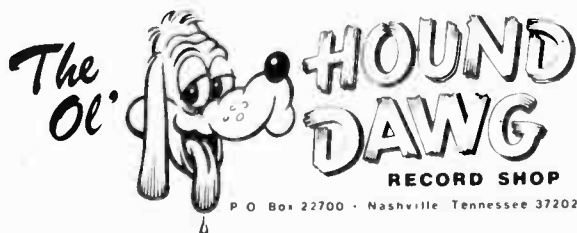
Danny Davis and his Nashville Brass play and Willie Nelson sings some of Willie's all-time greatest songs, such as the single, "Night Life," as well as "Good Hearted Woman," "Bloody Merry Morning," "Funny How Time Slips Away," and "Hello Walls."

Jim Reeves *Don't Let Me Cross Over*

Though it's been over 15 years since the "Country Gentleman," Jim Reeves, died, he's lived on through his timeless recordings. On "Don't Let Me Cross Over" the album that includes both hit singles, "Don't Let Me Cross Over" and "Oh How I Miss You Tonight." Jim does some of his favorites like "Guilty," and "Have You Ever Been Lonely (Have You Ever Been Blue)". "Don't Let Me Cross Over" proudly takes it's spot in one of Country Music's most glowing collections—Jim Reeves!



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Nashville Insider

Oh, the pains and joys of stardom. First, we hear that **Dolly Parton** has reached a multi-million dollar agreement with the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas that is supposed to be one of the most lucrative entertainment deals in the history of Las Vegas. Um, not bad. Then there's the news that Dolly has signed a three-picture deal with 20th Century-

Fox. (She's already started filming the first *9 to 5* with **Jane Fonda** and **Lily Tomlin**). Her next new album will be released on her own White Diamond label and distributed by RCA. So much for the good times. Now for the bad. First, dear ole Dolly was sued by her ex-mentor and supposed long-time friend, **Porter Wagoner** for a cool and rather lof-

ty \$3 million. He said she cheated him right out of some money. Dolly allegedly breached a long-term management and production contract that supposedly meant a lot of money to Porter. Porter said Dolly removed 130 songs from their mutually owned Owepar Publishing Co. without his permission. She said no, that Wagoner had "intimidated" her into signing that contract he was trying to enforce. Besides, she said, she had given him his 49 percent share only as a Christmas present. (An Indian giver, perhaps?). Well, everything was settled out of court and Porter has dropped his nasty \$3 million suit against our sweet Dolly. Reportedly, they have divided the businesses they have jointly operated for the last 12 years. There is also the charge that they may release a duct album within the next year. The only question left unresolved is will they go to the recording room separately or together. My guess is that with Dolly's schedule, the better bet is on the former.

Well, guess who's back together? **Jim Ed and Helen**. First, they announced their professional separation. "On to new horizons" was their reasoning. Then there were rumors they would stay together amid remarks they couldn't make it as solos. Then rumor had it they were separated again. Well, at last, we now get the public report that they are back together. "He just couldn't find anyone who made coffee as well as I did," she reportedly twittered. "I really found a 2 x 4 large enough to convince her to stay." big Jim ho-hoed. Now I wonder which one gave the real reason.

Tom T. Hall seems to be doing well these days. First his book "The Storyteller's Nashville" gets a raving review in none other than *The New York Times*. "The book has none of the saccharine piety that often mars country music," says Tom. Then Tom T. is appearing on one network special after another. He recently hosted a bluegrass special on Public Broadcasting Network and then turned right around and was a guest on the **Johnny Cash Christmas Special**.

New Yorkers will be New Yorkers. The other day, just before **Charlie Daniels** took off on his latest European tour, he stopped off at New York's **Lone Star Cafe** for a few gulps of beer. The story goes that the club's doorman refused to let him enter. "You're not Charlie Daniels," was the doorman's supposed response. Charlie Daniels, of

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course, insisted that he was who he was. "No," so goes the overly confident doorman. "I'm a personal friend of Charlie's and you are not him." Understanding the way of the north, Charlie nodded and went elsewhere.

Tammy's done it, Tom T.'s done it, Johnny Cash has and so has his wife June Carter. Now Minnie is going to take her turn. Scheduled for release sometime later this year is Minnie Pearl's autobiography coauthored with writer Joan Dew. "Nothing really shocking, but a few little informative things," is what the reader will find in the book according to Minnie. "You don't spend six years on the road with the Sewell Company and 39 years on the Grand Ole Opry without at least seeing a few seamy things, even if they didn't happen to you." But Minnie claims most of the book is funny. If it's half as funny as she is on stage, it's bound to be a winner.

Just when George Jones' career seemed to be back on track, he has landed in the hospital, reportedly in bad shape and reportedly to dry out. Lately Jones had resumed scheduling personal appearances, and with his new album, **George Jones: My Very Special Friends**, riding high on the charts, everyone hoped that George was on the road to recovery from his problems. Its gotten to be an over-used cliché, but nonetheless true, that Jones is everyone's favorite country singer. I'm sure that all his fans, both professional and public, hope that this latest hospitalization is a blessing in disguise and that George will emerge from it on his feet and running.

Just when we all thought country music of old was dying along came Kitty Wells and Ernest Tubb with two of the best albums going. Kitty recorded **Hall of Fame, Vol. 1** and Ernest has come out with **The Legend and the Legacy**. Both albums got good reviews from *People Magazine* with the comment that the two still sing so well that their voices on these two new LPs barely show a trace of age. That's what good country living does for you.

What Eddie Rabbitt wants, he usually gets. He wanted his upcoming TV Special (featured in our Jan./Feb. issue) to air St. Patrick's Day but NBC bigwigs weren't seeing it that way. So what did he do? The first generation American-Irishman sent them cases of Irish whisky and then was planning to send them some corned-beef and cabbage. The executives reportedly got the whisky, we don't know about the cabbage. But anyway, Eddie got his wish. If spirits and food had failed? "I know a gang of leprechauns back in my home town of Brooklyn who could punch their keen-caps out." The show's line-up includes **Stockard Channing, Emmylou Harris, Jerry Lee Lewis, Henny Youngman** and newcomer **Wendy Holcombe**. **Dolly Carlisle** ■

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CRYSTAL

by Laura Eipper

She stands surrounded by a group of attentive courtiers, a tiny, beautiful princess in an oddly incongruous outfit of leggings and disco tunic.

The courtiers flutter around: one brushes her curtain of brown silky hair, another primps at her costume, another dusts her face with a small brush. She turns from the mirror to leave the room. Voila: Crystal Gayle.

That scene took place last fall, during the taping of Crystal's first network television special, and though it was the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, the moment was Hollywood in its finest flower. Famed fashion photographer Francesco Scavullo, who had just done her latest album cover, was on hand to co-produce and direct. Makeup ace Way Bandy was on the scene. So was Cher's hairdresser. And a host of yes-men, publicists and expensive technical specialists.

In the whirlwind that day, it seemed a long way from a meeting two and a half years before, in a gloomily delapidated dressing cubbyhole in Cincinnati, fresh after a night on the bus. At the time Crystal munched on cold popcorn, drank a warm coke, steamed the wrinkles over of her own costumes and wondered whether people would ever stop asking her how it felt to be Loretta Lynn's sister.

Clearly, a lot has happened in those few years. At 28, Crystal has become one of the most popular entertainers in the country. A country music queen who has captured the pop audience with breakneck speed. A dazzler who leaves Johnny Carson and Joe Namath open-mouthed during a *Tonight* show appearance.

If the past year was an exciting one for Crystal, perhaps the highlight came with her visit to China—the first American woman entertainer to perform in that country since the re-establishment of U.S.—China relations.

“Very very exciting, and very interest-

ing,” she dubbed the trip, a two week stint last June and July in Peking, Shanghai and along China's historic Great Wall.

American audiences saw the public aspects of her visit when *Bob Hope on The Road To China*, a three hour variety special featuring Mikhail Baryshnikov, Peaches and Herb, Big Bird, Hope and Crystal aired last September.

But, like any other kid from Wabash, Ind. Crystal's private recollections of her trip are the most vivid.

“I think the little things are what I'll remember most. It wasn't quite the way I thought it would be at first. Like, I thought it would be more military, people with guns and that kind of thing, but they don't even carry guns over there,” she recalled.

“There were so many interesting things. Like electricity. Most of the homes over there do not have electricity. We noticed people sitting under street lights, reading or playing games at night. I didn't know what they were doing in the beginning. And we noticed that in the shops, where they do have electricity, if there were no customers they kept the lights down. They only turned them on when you went into the place. They were trying to save, I guess.”

Her favorite of the two cities she visited was Shanghai.

“It's a warmer city than Peking, a little more open,” she said. “You could actually see couples holding hands in Shanghai, something you'd never see in Peking. I don't know why Peking seems a little colder. Maybe because the government is located there.”

Performing for non-English speaking audience was no particular problem, Crystal said, since she'd confronted the same situation in Europe.

But, though she's used to people staring at her, even in the United States, she was unprepared for the sensation she caused in China. “When we walked down the street

—and this goes for everyone who's foreign certainly not just me—people followed us. They'd come right up to us and stare, but if you would gesture to them they'd run away. We had a difficult time taking pictures because people kept running away. In a way, I could kind of understand that, though,” she laughed.

Oddly enough the one thing Crystal is most often asked about everywhere else wasn't even noticed in China: her hair. “It was great, because the thing is, most of the girls over there wear their hair just as long as mine. Lots of them wear it in a braid down their backs, exactly the way I wore mine the whole time I was growing up. They didn't think mine was anything special at all.”

She's looking forward to visiting China again one day but at the moment Crystal is still recovering from a mild case of culture shock. “It's hard for me to go to a Chinese restaurant at this point,” she joked. “I had two whole weeks of it, morning, noon and night almost. That's a lot of cabbage and a lot of peas.”

If the pace of her career recently has impressed most people, there is one person who takes it all pretty much in stride, untouched by all the hoopla. Crystal herself.

“I look at myself, and I can't really see myself as big. I really feel that I am not,” she said recently, her forehead wrinkling, as if underscoring the importance of her words. “I feel like I have a long way to go. I don't know why, but my body feels that way. Maybe my goal in life is a little bigger than everyone else's. There are not very many superstars. Elvis Presley, The Rolling Stones are superstars, but that word is overused. I don't know if I'll ever be one. But so far I have been lucky. I have a lot of good people behind me. And I really think that being in the right place at the right time in this business is important.”

If there's a grain of false modesty there, you'd be hard put to find it. When the



cameras and the makeup men and the publicists have packed up and gone back to New York and Los Angeles, Crystal turns up at her offices in an old Music Row building looking like she'd never seen the inside of a studio.

Hair streaming down her back, face scrubbed clean of makeup, the toast of the *Tonight* show is wearing jeans, a plain sweatshirt and sneakers. There are no courtiers, just an affable brown mutt that belongs to a band member following her around. The budding superstar has turned back into the kid next door, and it seems to be a relief.

Maybe the reason she's not more impressed by the success of the past few years, she says, is that she has been preparing for it such a long time.

"Looking at it, I think my career has taken its time. No way has it been an overnight success. I grew up knowing I was going to be a singer. I don't know if I ever thought I was going to be a star, though I guess when you're a kid you always dream of being a movie star or something. But when I looked at myself I always saw—a singer."

Though she was the sister of a successful singer, it was not Loretta who was Crystal's most important musical influence in the beginning.

The youngest of eight children, Crystal grew up in Wabash, Ind., after her family had moved away from Butcher Holler, Ky. Loretta had married and had two children before Crystal was born.

"I never really got to know her well when I was little. I don't really recall her until Dad died in 1959 and we all went out to Washington, where she and Mooney were living. She had just started singing professionally around then," Crystal remembers.

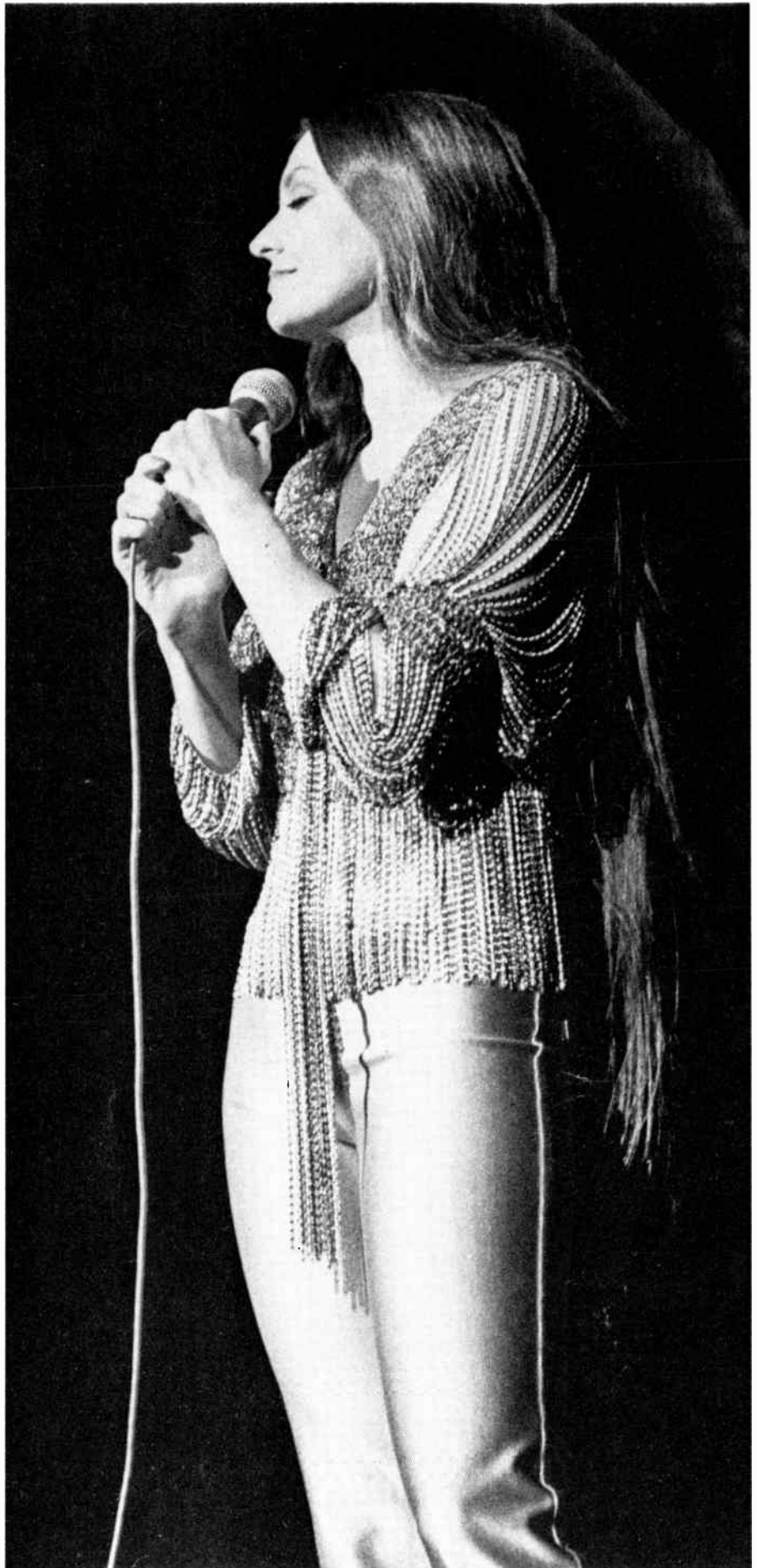
As a child, it was her banjo-playing father, and a mother and aunt who sang in the church choir, who pointed her toward music. With three of her brothers, she sang for church charities and civic groups, and developed a voracious appetite for all kinds of music.

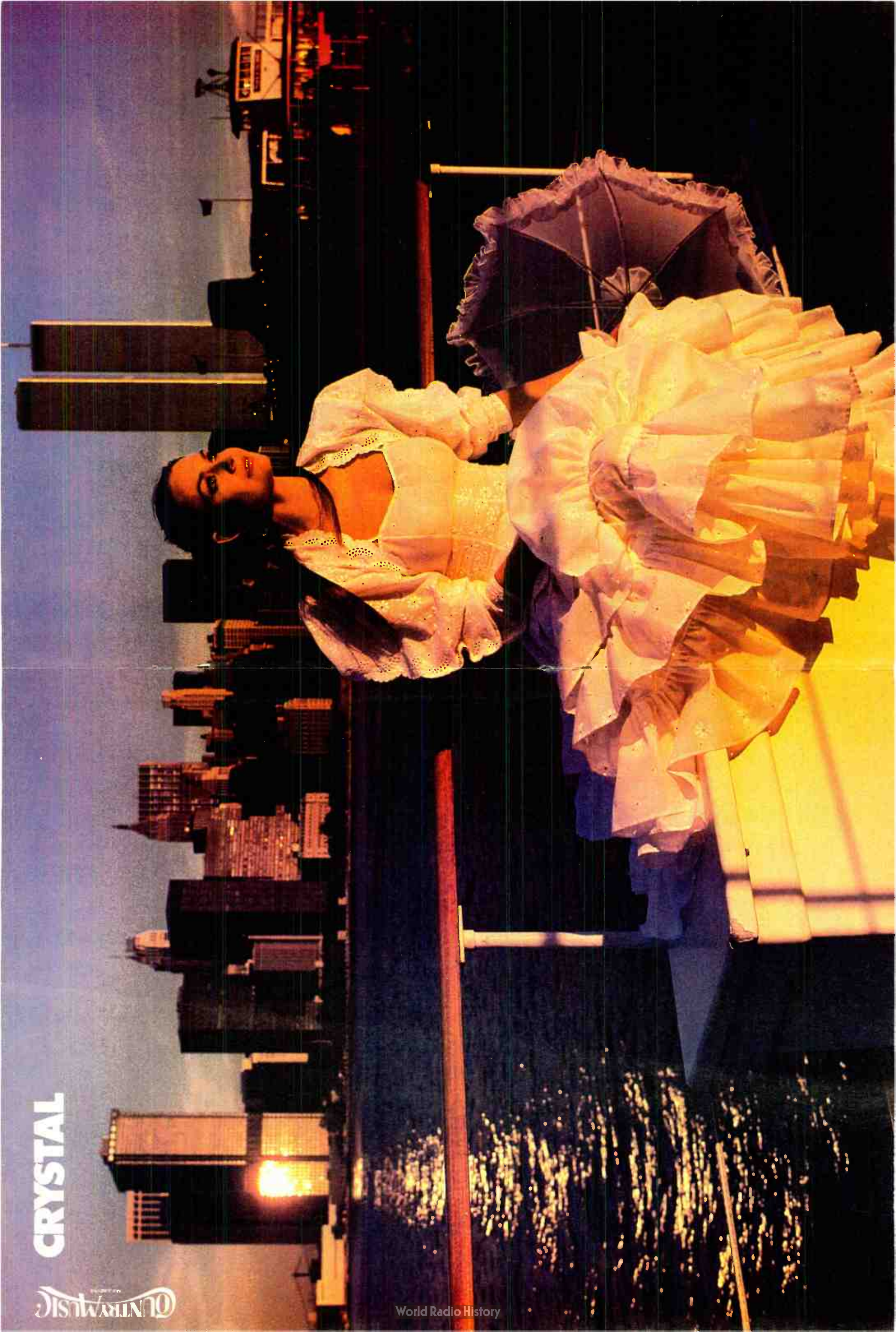
During high school vacations, Crystal joined Loretta on the road, an experience she sees as invaluable for her training, although in time the "little sister act," as she calls it, began to have its limitations.

Immediately after high school graduation, Crystal signed her first recording contract, with Decca Records (now MCA).

If the label was Loretta's, and her first single was written by Loretta, Crystal nevertheless began to establish her own identity in short order. Her first single, *I've Cried the Blue Right Out of My Eyes*, quickly reached the top 20 in the charts.

In 1973, she signed with United Artists, and had what she considers a major piece of luck: she was teamed with producer Allen Reynolds. Six years later, they are still a team, with one of the best track records in the business.





CRYSTAL

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Crystal Gayle, her first album, provided her with three solid hits, including *Wrong Road Again* and *This Is My Year for Mexico*, which she co-wrote. *Somebody Loves You* (her second album) included her first number one country song, *I'll Get Over You*, and the title cut.

With *Crystal*, the third Reynolds/Gayle collaboration, she had her first impact on the pop charts. When her fourth album arrived, *We Must Believe in Magic*, Crystal hit the big time.

Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blues swept the charts—number one in country, pop and easy listening charts, a million and a half seller, her first platinum album. *When I Dream* followed, also platinum, with the single, *Talkin' In Your Sleep*, a top 20 pop hit.

With the hit records came the awards: *Female Vocalist of the Year* in 1977 and 1978 from both the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music. In 1978, her first Grammy.

In April, 1979, Crystal signed with Columbia Records, a deal that was rumored in the music industry to be one of the biggest in recent years.

The pace quickened again. She toured China with Bob Hope for the television special. She did her own first special. The movie scripts began to pour in for consideration. Her first Columbia album, *Miss the Mississippi*, and her first single for the label, *Half the Way*, were immediate successes. They are, she feels, her best work to date, and she attributes their success, and much of hers all the way along, to Allen Reynolds.

"I think Allen and I have combined something together, his tastes with mine. We've combined our styles. He gives me a lot of freedom in the studio and not many producers do that. I've grown with Allen."

She is also aware that there has been some criticism recently, especially within the music industry, that Reynolds has created a formulaic "Crystal Gayle sound," which some find pleasant enough, but redundant.

"My new album is totally different from my last album and the last album is different from the one before. Of course, there are going to be songs on each album that are similar to the previous ones, but *Half the Way* doesn't compare to anything I've ever done before. People that tend to criticize Allen, I think, are jealous of what he has done. Allen has succeeded without compromising. I know that when he first came to this town there were people who told him he could not do it his own way. He's proved that you can do things your own way."

Reynolds' approach, she adds, is her own: an emphasis on quality, not on potential record sales.

"We never go looking for a hit song. We record things we like, things we know we can be happy with. There's a lot of difference between just going into a studio
(Continued on page 68)

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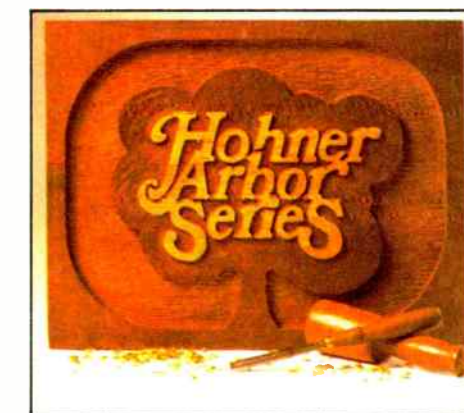
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The Movie Coal Miner's Daughter



Loretta, stunningly
played by award
winning actress
Sissy Spacek.

This month the long awaited movie, Coal Miner's Daughter, based on Loretta Lynn's best selling autobiography, opens in theatres across the country. For country music fans, this is a major event not to be missed. The movie sets a very high standard for the rash of country music based movies currently in production, including Honeysuckle Rose starring Willie Nelson and 9 to 5 starring Dolly Parton along with Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin.

The first half of *Coal Miner's Daughter* covers a brief period of Loretta Lynn's life in Butcher Holler, Kentucky . . . from the day she first lays eyes on husband-to-be Oliver Vanetta "Doolittle" "Doo" "Mooney" Lynn until she leaves home at age fourteen, pregnant for the first time. It is brilliant. As near perfect as a movie can be made. Definitely Academy Award winning calibre.

The casting, the acting, the locations, the story and the photography conspire and take your breath away. The setting is the bleak coal mining regions of Kentucky at the end of World War II. In the opening scene Loretta, played stunningly by Texas-born, award-winning Sissy Spacek, accompanies her father and the family mule to the mine to pick up the paycheck and supplies at the company store. The brash and cocky Doolittle Lynn, portrayed by the also-Texas-born Tommy Lee Jones, is holding court for the assembled miners, taking bets on whether his army surplus, four wheel drive jeep can climb to the top of a nearby slag heap.

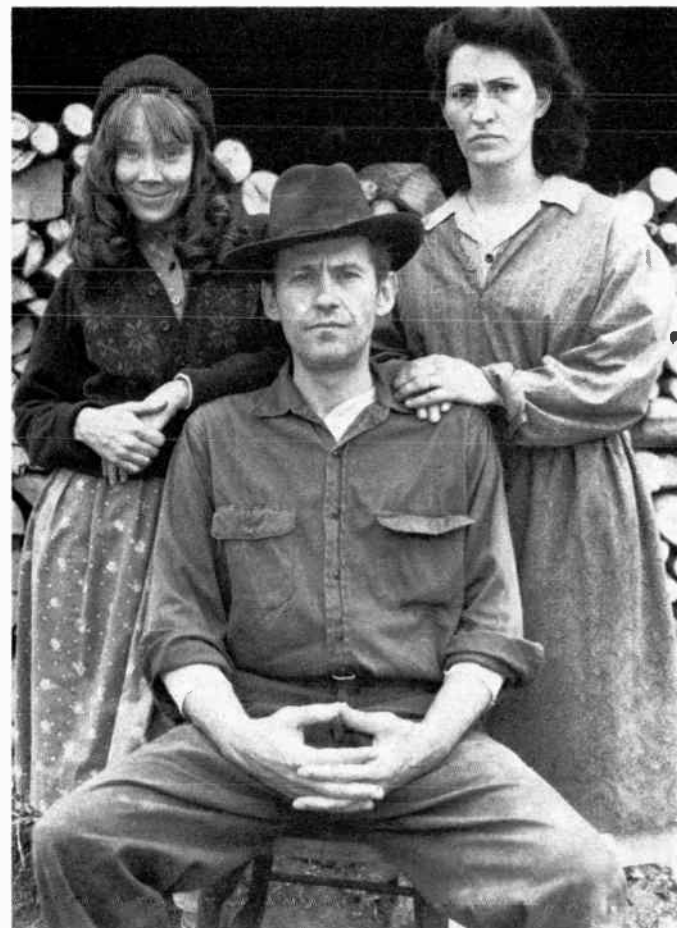
He wins the bet and Loretta's heart. When their eyes meet, Loretta looks on Doolittle as though he were charming a snake . . . and charm he certainly has. From that instant the audience knows this is *it*. Loretta and Doolittle *are* the story.

The tension and heart-wrenching emotion build rapidly as the intimate relationships are developed between Loretta and her family, particularly with her father, and the way they live.

You don't have to be a country music fan to be riveted to your seat by this stuff. It is very good. My first tear rolled out in the scene in the family home when the annual package arrived from Sears Roebuck. New shoes are passed out to each of the seven Webb children . . . and then, something special for Loretta . . . a laced-trimmed, blue, floral print dress. One of Loretta's



From the first moment Loretta (Sissy Spacek) lays eyes (above) on Doolittle (Tommy Lee Jones) the outcome is never in doubt. Below: Loretta (Sissy with her father (Levon Helm) and mother (Phyllis Boyens.) The casting is superb.



brothers wants to know why she got something extra, and the father's love stricken reply is, "Loretta is a woman now. she needs a woman's dress."

While the casting is outstanding throughout and probably the most successful single factor in the movie, the father and mother are truly exceptional. Levon Helm plays the part of Loretta's daddy, Ted Webb. Helm is well known as a founder and drummer in "The Band" which became famous when backing up Bob Dylan. Helm appeared on the screen in the highly acclaimed documentary about the group, *The Last Waltz*. His portrayal of Webb is understated and shows sensitivity and understanding that goes beyond what could be expected from an amateur with just good direction which, by the way, he obviously had here. His face could have been carved from a chunk of coal. Helm's own background certainly gave him a leg up in understanding his role. He grew up in rural Arkansas and has a life-long connection to country music. The selection of Helm for this part is unusual since he has no previous acting experience. According to Universal Studios, Tommy Lee Jones suggested Helm for the part to director Michael Apted, who studied Helm's appearance in *The Last Waltz* and then made the decision to use him as Loretta's father.

Although the role of Loretta's mother, Clara, is not as central as the father's, the selection of Phyllis Boyens for the part and her performance in it are equally good. Boyens is a native of the coal mining regions of West Virginia and also a daughter of a coal miner, Nimrod Workman, who in addition was a nationally known folk-singer. Boyens, herself, is a folk-singer and song writer. And, she appeared in the Academy Award winning documentary *Harlan County, U.S.A.* She has been active in union politics in the coal mines and textile mills of Appalachia.



The movie family. Don't look for Crystal. She was born later.

So, like Helm, her own background may have been better preparation for this film than any professional acting experience could have been. Plus, she looks enough like Clara Webb to be her daughter. Says Boyens, "I keep thinking that soon Loretta's mother will see me in the movie, and I want her to be happy with what she sees."

The roles of Ted and Clara Webb are critical to the power of the first half of the movie. They are the forces pulling to keep Loretta away from the fascination of that "wild boy."

This part of the story is probably, in one way or another, typical of every family's story... when the deep love of parents for the child is finally challenged by the child's love for an outsider. Loretta's parents only want to protect their daughter. She is too young, at thirteen, to be getting married. And, in any case, they are certain that Doolittle is too wild and irresponsible to be a likely husband... and, he is a man of the world. But the power of the attraction is too much even for the strong family bond, and the audience knows from the be-

ginning the inevitable outcome.

Even though this poignant story is told with power and emotion, it is also full of laughs. I don't know whether Loretta and Mooney are able to look back at these times and laugh, but the audience certainly will. Like the time during the courtship when Doolittle successfully bids over five dollars for Loretta's chocolate pie at the baking contest. The aggressiveness of his bidding makes it clear to all that he is interested in more than satisfying his sweet tooth. It's a good thing he is, too, because it turns out that Loretta used salt where the recipe called for sugar.

And, on the night Doolittle proposes to Loretta we are treated to a very funny scene which might be described as Appalachian shuttle diplomacy. Loretta has managed to chase all her brothers and sisters away from the front room so she and Doolittle can be alone. Daddy is on the porch and Mommy is in the kitchen. After Doolittle pops the question Loretta says, "Ask Daddy." Doolittle goes to the porch. Mr. Webb listens to his story in silence, then responds with, "Ask Clarey." Doolittle marches back through the front room to the kitchen as Loretta whispers, "What did he say?" "Ask Clarey," says Doolittle. The mother, too, listens in si-

lence to Doolittle's plea, then says, "Ask Ted." Marching back toward the porch, Doolittle is stopped by Loretta who tells him to wait till they go to bed and ask them together. "Or else, they'll have you running back and forth all night." Amazingly Doolittle does just that, and after pledging never to hit Loretta nor to take her away from home, Doolittle receives the reluctant permission.

Throughout these early



Loretta is married at age fourteen in her

Part Of This Movie Belongs

Authenticity. I hardly see much of it on the silver screen these days. Yet here I am in New York City, sunk in a seat in a movie theatre, and what I see up there makes me feel like it's really Kentucky and coal mines, moonshine and the Opry on the radio. "We were poor but we had love," Loretta Lynn sings in *Coal Miner's Daughter*. They got it. We're in Butcher Holler. There's newspaper for wallpaper in the bedroom. There's an abandoned mine in which Loretta's daddy digs up some coal and there's a lot of kids running around. There's an upright and loving daddy who doesn't want his little girl to get married at fourteen, but yields, telling the fella who's going to marry her his requirements: never raise a hand to Loretta and don't take her away from home.

There's Saturday night in the cabin. From Nashville, *Blue Moon of Kentucky* comes over the radio and mama, who is usually restrained and over-worked, gets

up to dance. Mama's smile could melt your heart. Daddy's got brown lung and the mines are treacherous, but that part of things doesn't dominate the picture. Loretta does. Sissy Spacek is wearing a sweater and long underwear, minding the kids, singing along with the radio and falling in love with Tommy Lee Jones as Mooney, who comes back to the Holler in a uniform, with the smell of the world on him.

He's right too. Here's a guy with spunk who doesn't want the life of his daddy before him. I believe he loves the Loretta on the screen. He tries to be patient on their wedding night when Loretta crawls into bed with her new nightgown on over all her clothes. He gets mad because she can't cook and won't read a sex manual, but his better part gets the better of him and they work things out. It all rings out. Jones is probably going to be a new national heart-throb.

Loretta keeps singing, for her own

pleasure. Several years and several kids later, Mooney gets her a guitar for a wedding present. (she wants a wedding ring; she hasn't got one yet.) He takes her to the local honky-tonk and makes her get up and sing. Spacek is wonderful. She really looks—and *sounds*—like a girl singer from a holler in Kentucky. Mooney urges her on. One of the things I like best in the movie is the sequence in which—if you know Loretta's story, this is the most famous part—they cut a demo record, take a picture of Loretta (with a bedspread for background) and send it out to country stations, and then go out on the road, sleeping in the car, eating bologna sandwiches, hitting every one of those stations. Loretta gets into her only dress—a red and white cowgirl dress—and they descend on disc jockey after disc jockey.

You know the rest. *Honky Tonk Girl*, her demo record, which she wrote herself, climbs on the country charts and Loretta

scenes. Tommy Lee Jones who plays the part of Doolittle, is very convincing as the rough-edged suitor who wants Loretta as much as he wants to escape the life of the mines. Later in the movie, when Doolittle seems to be the dominant force in pushing Loretta's career, he is less sympathetic, but equally convincing. Coupling his good performance with his good looks, we'll surely be seeing a lot more of him.

The early days of marriage are



Sears Roebuck dress.

full of trials and tribulations and more funny scenes. Like Loretta's refusing to go to the restaurant the morning after the wedding night. "Because they'll know what we've been doing in here." You might say that Loretta's sex education was limited. She now says, "My Daddy used to tell me they got me by turning over a cabbage leaf — and I believed it." Doolittle tells her that it's a normal part of marriage, but she says it isn't normal for "you to be sweatin' over me like a hog."

Within a year Doolittle's promise not to take Loretta away from home was broken. Seeking to escape the mines and find a better living, he had gone to Custer, Washington, found work on a ranch and summoned Loretta, now seven months pregnant, to join him. The goodbye scene between Loretta and her daddy at the train station is a real tear-jerker and, no doubt, everyone has experienced something like it in his or her own life.

"I'll never see my little girl again," says the father.

"But, Daddy, I'll be back," pleads Loretta.

"Yes," nods her father, "but you won't be a little girl."

If you were trying to win an Academy Award, you could give some serious thought to ending the movie right here.



Saying goodbye to Daddy. A heart-wrencher.

But, of course, this story isn't about just any coal miner's daughter. It's about Loretta Lynn, one of the greats of country music. So it *can't* end here.

The rest of the movie is the chronicle of how the coal miner's daughter became a queen of country music. Given that task, the second half, is very good . . . better than any previous Hollywood attempt at a similar thing . . . but it does not measure up to the power and excellence of the first half. Perhaps this is inevitable considering that the story is still contemporary. Any bio-

graphy or autobiography needs a little distance in time. The documentary may be a better form for this kind of story — and the second half of *Coal Miner's Daughter* is more like a documentary.

There is plenty of accuracy and authenticity in the second half. The scenes of the Grand Ole Opry recreated at the Ryman Auditorium are terrific, for example. But the personal intimacy and convincing emotional tone of the first half is missing. George Vecsey, the New York Times reporter who helped

In A Museum

makes it to the Grand Ole Opry. This part of the picture belongs in a museum. It's Ryman Auditorium, beautifully reconstructed, absolutely authentic. Minnie Pearl is standing there with a price tag dangling from her hat. Roy Acuff is smiling. Ernest Tubb introduces Loretta and she breaks everyone's heart. If you never saw what I still think of as the "real" Opry, here's your chance. The stage is crowded, casual, full of people milling around. You can hardly tell who it is that's singing. Loretta gets invited back again. And again.

She does something a person could get murdered for—"covers" a song recorded by the most famous star of her day—sings Patsy Cline's hit *I Fall To Pieces* on the Opry while Patsy lies in a hospital recovering from an automobile accident. But Loretta means it as a tribute and Patsy hears it that way. They meet. They become friends. The third big "find" of this movie

is Beverly D'Angelo as Patsy Cline. She looks like Patsy and she sounds like her. I

That's half the movie. The second half is Loretta's climb as a country star, her arrival as "The First Lady of Country Music," the endless hours in the bus on the road, the show-stops, the big auditoriums and the dinky carnivals, the pressing on. Mooney doesn't have a place any more. Loretta travels without him. She shows the strain, gets headaches, can't remember the words to a new song, gets Mooney back on the road with her, breaks down, goes back home for a long rest.

This part isn't as good. There's an awful lot missing. You never see any interaction between Loretta and her band, for example. She doesn't have any relationship with the band, except that they stand behind her and play while she's onstage. The movie begins to look like a television special. There are more production numbers and they sound real good, but the depth and

detail of the first part is gone. There is nothing comparable to the newspaper on the wall in her family's shack, the jars of moonshine, the talk among the miners, all the really authentic details of Loretta's life in Butcher Holler. Maybe the climb is more interesting to the film-makers than the arrival. Maybe the roots are more alive than the tree.

Still, I'm sitting in a movie theatre tapping my toes. I cry when Patsy Cline dies in a plane crash. I feel bad for Mooney. And I love Loretta. I'm amazed at how good Sissy Spacek sounds and how she can get that wide-eyed look of Loretta's, that sincerity. I feel, most of the way through, like I got back to the honky tonks, back to the twang of the pedal steel, back to the crowd in Tootsie's Orchid Lounge. It makes me sad that this part of the past is really gone, but at least I can see the picture through again and bring it back, still tapping my toes. —LOUISE BERNIKOW



Beverly D'Angelo (right) is generally fabulous as Loretta's close personal and professional friend, Patsy Cline.

Loretta write the bestselling book, says that he found a similar problem as the story unfolded in the book, and that Loretta may not yet be as comfortable in revealing the same intimacy about this part of her story as she was with her childhood. If so, that is certainly natural.

If the first half of the movie was not so exceptional, these deficiencies would not be so noticeable.

Nevertheless, country music fans will find great satisfaction in the last part of the movie.

It starts almost by accident when Doolittle gave Loretta a seventeen dollar Sears Roebuck guitar for her eighteenth birthday. She wanted a wedding ring, which she had never had, but she got the guitar. She didn't even know how to play. She taught herself to play and, with Doolittle's prodding, eventually six years later in 1960, she tried out as a singer with a band at a local honky tonk. She was a local success immediately. Later, after winning a talent contest, she made her first record at a Los

Angeles studio.

One of the most interesting sequences in the movie follows when Doolittle and Loretta, after mailing letters and records to thousands of radio stations, set out in their car to promote the record. They traveled from town to town, eating and sleeping in the car, talking to disc jockeys, persuading them to play *Honky Tonk Girl*. Unknown to them, in the wake of their travels, the record was becoming a hit. By the time someone told them, it was already number fourteen on the *Billboard* chart. And the rest, as they say, is history. With a hit record, naturally, they quickly end up in Nashville and a debut on the Grand Ole Opry. Later on Ernest Tubb's radio show, Loretta sang *I Fall to Pieces*, Patsy Cline's number one record at the time, as a tribute to Patsy who was in the hospital recovering from a car accident. Cline heard the performance, and invited Loretta to visit her in her hospital room, beginning a close personal and professional friendship between country music's top

female star and its "most promising female singer."

This part of the movie is dominated by the music, and calls attention to the movie makers' wise decision to let the actress sing in their own voices. Sissy Spacek is no Loretta Lynn. But she is a good singer with the right accent and a good feel for the music. When the time comes in the movie where she has to sing Loretta's hits, we are convinced by the excellence of her performance that she *is* Loretta, so it would have been a real distraction to suddenly hear the "real" Loretta's voice coming out of Spacek's mouth.

Also, Beverly D'Angelo, who is generally fabulous in the role of Patsy Cline, is a professional singer in her own right, having had a starring role in the movie version of the rock musical *Hair*. She sounds so much like Patsy Cline that it's spooky . . . looks like her, too.

So, the great hits come across well: Loretta's *Honky Tonk Girl*, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, *Your Lookin' at Country*, *Don't Come*

Home a Drinkin' with Lovin' on Your Mind and others; and Patsy's *Crazy* (written by Willie Nelson), *I Fall to Pieces*, *Sweet Dreams of You*, and *Walking After Midnight*. The only flaw I noticed was one Patsy Cline number on the Ryman stage where we hear enough violins to fill the New York Philharmonic, and I doubt that was ever heard at an Opry performance.

The final scenes covering Loretta's rise to stardom and the pressures, conflicts, exhaustion of staying on top and ultimate breakdown are covered quickly, with lots of good music, but without much depth or feeling.

For country music fans, however, whatever imperfections this movie may have, they are minor compared with what it does for country music and one of its greatest stars. Put it on your list as a "must see."

One last observation: if Gloria Steinem's life said as much for women's liberation as Loretta Lynn's does through this movie, she would be President by now.

— RUSSELL D. BARNARD

Record Reviews

Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn
Diamond Duet (Our Tenth Anniversary Album)
MCA-3190

About once a year or so, Conway and Loretta trot into the studio and knock out another duet album. Some of these LP's have admittedly sounded pretty rushed—as if a dozen or so songs were hurriedly chosen, and then laid down on tape during a couple of nights in the studio.

But this is not the case with **Diamond Duet**. In fact, this is about the best I've ever heard these two sound together. They sound absolutely ... *inspired* for a change.

This time around, Conway and Loretta—with the assistance of David Barnes—have done their own producing. The arrangements on **Diamond Duet** are far more subtle and contemporary than usual, and the material has been much more carefully chosen. Contained on **Diamond Duet** are gems like Randy Goodrum's *True Love*, and *Even A Fool*



Would Let Go, by Kerry Charter and Tom Snow. Though Conway and Loretta don't come across quite as convincingly on familiar tunes like *Hit The Road Jack* and *Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me*, they still turn in strong vocal performances. All and all, it

makes for some fine listening.

It's too bad Conway and Loretta don't let it all out like they do on **Diamond Duet** more often. When they do, it just reminds us once again just how they got where they are today—by singing their hearts out.

BOB ALLEN

Hank Snow and Kelly Foxton
Lovingly Yours
RCA AHLI 3496

In retrospect, one realizes that Hank Snow has recorded relatively few duets in his 45 year career on record. There are a few, most memorably the 1951 hit with Anita Carter called *Bluebird Island*, but they are relatively rare, although he has counted Chet Atkins among his vocal duet partners.

His latest album comes as something of a pleasant surprise, then, for although Hank Snow's voice is one of the most distinctive in country music, it blends well and he harmonizes

quite gracefully. Ms. Foxton's voice is soft and pleasant, though not particularly memorable, though this works well in combination with Hank's extremely distinctive one.

The material is contemporary love songs, contemporary in feel as well as lyric, and though Hank Snow has often been viewed as a pillar of musical conservatism, this record shows his willingness to move with the musical times without losing the distinctive character of his records.

The songs are generally slow-paced and romantic, and effectively display both voices to advantage. It should appeal to



Hank Snow's legion of fans and to the contemporary listener as well.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

The Kendalls
Heart of the Matter

Ovation OV 1746

Some sophisticates in the music business have a bit of trouble understanding the continued success of the Kendalls, but truly it is not so very hard to understand: they present attractive, understandable music with restraint and feeling and a thoroughly charming lack of the pretention which runs rampant in country music these days.

Heart of the Matter displays the same ingredients. There are tinkling pianos and modern flourishes enough to reassure the listener that these folks are not atavistic throwbacks to an earlier country music, but their unique feel and Jeannie's unique voice (admittedly an acquired taste) are in the forefront—and properly so.



The selections are a nice balance between good to average new songs (Don Schlitz' title song the best among them) and a couple of haunting old-timers which were first hits as duets: Dolly Parton's *Put It Off Until Tomorrow*, and the Louvin Brothers' *I'll Take The Chance*.

Jeannie's in fine voice, the production is tasteful, the album's attractive—the only real drawback is that it is just too short. There are only 24 minutes and 15 seconds of music here, and with what albums cost today that's just not enough.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Record Reviews

David Grisman Hot Dawg

A & M/Horizon SP 731

David Grisman began his mandolin career playing with bluegrass bands back in the early sixties, and became known for his abilities as a traditional Monroe-styled player with groups like Red Allen and His Kentuckians. Yet he was also a part of the folk music of the mid-sixties when he and former Bill Monroe guitarist/vocalist Pete Rowan formed Earth Opera, a shortlived Boston rock band. But in the mid-seventies, Grisman began to pursue his own musical vision—a vision no less awesome than Bill Monroe's: a strange but entrancing combination of bluegrass, jazz, classical and various ethnic music he calls "Dawg" music.

Were Grisman calling his music bluegrass, he would be inviting flak from the traditionalists that scream every time they see an electric



bass in a bluegrass group. But he doesn't, and has garnered a following that can only be called "crossover." His quintet, a two-mandolin/guitar/bass/fiddle combination gives him

ample textures and variety to pursue his music. *Hot Dawg*, which follows his first LP, continues to explore some of the most fascinating acoustic music to come along in years. *Dawg's*

Bull combines standard bluegrass sounds in a way that takes them far beyond their mountain origins. *Devlin* is a relaxed, delicate jazz waltz while *Dawgology* combines Kentucky mountain harmonies with a dark, swirling minor-keyed gypsy sound. *Minor Swing*, originally recorded by the great gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt (one of Chet Atkins' biggest heroes), features Grisman jamming with Stephanie Grapelli, Reinhardt's original fiddle partner (and an influence on Johnny Gimble and other swing fiddlers), as does Grisman's original tune, *16/16*.

Don't fear that Grisman hypes his music with special effects; his touch is light and the impeccable musicianship of his group (see *Buried Treasures*) assures a sound that's anything but boring. Even if Bill Monroe and Jim and Jesse are as far as you go, the music here is as honest—and brilliant—as any being made today.

RICH KIENZLE



Dottie West
Special Delivery
United Artists LT 1000

Dottie West's latest is being marketed, and will be perceived, as a pop record, her breakthrough into the lush greenery of the crossover and

indeed the pure pop market.

On one hand one might wonder why—Ms. West remains one of country music's best singers, with an impressive set of hit records behind her, and an impassioned voice that has made quite a few records extremely memorable.

On the other hand, there is more than the financial greener grass, and more than her association with Kenny Rogers working on her. This move seems to come at a point in her career where she had done all she could do in country. Though a couple of major awards have eluded her, she has been recipient of most of the awards given to female singers, and has proved she can sing and write with the best—and has proved it for the better part of two decades. Her recent records, often in a more "country-politan" vein, did little to advance that standing, and in fact often seemed to squander

her talents on second rate songs.

So if this is indeed a move to pop it seems as though it occurred as a challenge, to spread her wings and fly as best she can in new territory, and one must applaud her courage in that venture.

Thanks to a very good batch of new material and contemporary yet sensitive production on the part of Randy Goodrum and Brent Maher, the venture itself must be applauded too. *Special Delivery* is fine from front to back, and has Ms. West convincing where she could have looked awkward, compelling in what, in less skillful hands, could have been an embarrassment.

If careful and sensitive recording of country artists singing a variety of excellent new tunes is going pop, perhaps a few others should try it: to my great surprise and delight it works wonders for Dottie West.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

Record Reviews

Jeanne Pruett Encore

IBC Records IBC 1001

Like the passing of the countryside, cotton fields, tarpaper shacks, and unpolluted air, there are fewer solidly unmistakable country music albums recorded each year. The reason is simply and sadly economical. The potential sale of a few hundred thousand albums doesn't mean much in the shadows of a pop album which sells millions. As an audience dwindles or as another audience becomes larger, the smaller is eventually consumed.

Well, along comes IBC Records, a small independent label, which apparently is content with a smaller share of the profit pie. And darned if the first album it releases—Jeanne Pruett's *Encore*—ain't as country as my ol' Uncle John's farmhouse with live ducks in the kitchen and chickens roosting on the windowsills.

Although there has been a lapse in Pruett's recording career, she's a gritty lady who doesn't know the word quit. She must have a strong constitution, for as one Nashville recording artist after another

falls victim to the bubonic crossover plague, Pruett continues to record pure, unadulterated country music. In the face of inevitable musical amalgamation, *Encore* is a proud, strong statement of country music.

There is not one turkey among the ten selections and Walter Haynes' production is



so traditional it is like a breath of fresh air. It is produced with the ears of a seasoned pro who not only knows how to get the most out of each musician and instrument, but also knows what to do with it once it's on tape. Haynes was (and probably still is) one of the top steel guitarists anywhere, and thus that instrument is

predominant, yet tastefully integrated into the total sound.

Pruett's vocals too are in the traditional vein. She is from the school of female country vocalists beginning with Kitty Wells and continuing through Emmylou Harris. The high-pitched tone of her voice and her lyrical pronunciation tell you she's not from Australia. Her voice personifies femininity—frail and lilting, yet with a core of strength beneath the soft petals.

The album contains her latest hit, and first in several years, *Please Sing Satin Sheets For Me*. The song, which she co-wrote with John Volinkaty, is a take-off of her signature tune, *Satin Sheets*. My first thought was, "Oh no, the 'Return of Satin Sheets' from an artist down to her last musical gasp!" But such is not the case. The song demonstrates there is plenty of life left in both the artist and the concept. There is a touch of irony here too in that *Satin Sheets*, undeniably a country song, was a crossover hit long before the term existed.

The fact that Sonny Throckmorton penned three of the songs and co-wrote a fourth

is indicative of the overall quality of the material. Throckmorton is perhaps the hottest writer presently living in Nashville. He contributes *Star Studded Nights*, *Waitin' For The Sun To Shine*, *Love Is A Fading Rose*, and *Temporarily Yours*, which he co-wrote with Bobby Fischer. The melodies are familiar, the topics not unusual, but the approach is fresh. That's what writing well-crafted commercial tunes is all about. Two other top selections are Rock Killough's *Now And Then*, which he co-wrote with Shayne Dolan, and T. Jae Christian's *Ain't We Sad Today*.

Also included is the Hank Thompson classic, *Wild Side Of Life*, which was written by William Warren and Arlie Carter. Pruett is also a songwriter and the album includes several selections she co-wrote: *Back To Back* with Jerry McBee, and *(I'm Gonna) Love All The Leavin' Out Of You*, with Hilka Maria Cornelius.

This is an album any true, blue country music fan should thoroughly enjoy. *Encore* is exactly what it implies. Hopefully there will be a second show.

KELLY DELANEY

Freda & The Firedogs Live From The Old Soap Creek Saloon

Big Wheel NR 10876

I don't think the best stereo system Hans Fantel could recommend would help this album. The sound is tinny, there are way too many highs and nothing approaching a real balance. I have tapes in my personal collection recorded in bars that sound just as bad as this. There are missed notes, and overdone instrumental solos that sounded great to the people playing them. I was

playing guitar on those tapes, and I still wince when I hear my mistakes.

But I wouldn't trade those tapes of mine for a mint collection of Ernest Tubb 78s, for they have an energy and drive that transcends the loudest sound. And thus it is with this set. A few years back Freda and The Firedogs were getting written up in music publications as one of Austin's great underground groups, back in the days when one didn't yawn at the mention of the word 'outlaw.' Their lead vocalist was Marcia Ball, who

later went solo, and was touted as One To Watch from Austin. Sadly, her brilliant 1978 LP for Capitol went unnoticed and she remained an Austin legend.

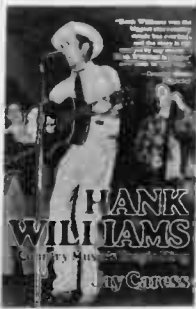
In January, '79 she was reunited with her Firedog compatriots for a special show in Austin which was taped for this album. And the energy is high as they tear through nine Firedogs favorites heavy on country, blues and rock and back Doug Sahm, another Austinite who never quite fulfilled his earlier promise, on his brilliant *Texas Me*. The remainder of the songs run the

gamut from Ian Tyson's *Somebody Soon* and Dallas Frazier's *Honky Tonk Downstairs* to Dylan's *You Ain't Goin' Nowhere*, the quintessential country-rock tune, *Eugene*, a reworking of Chuck Berry's *Nadine*, and a stomping version of *Got My Mojo Workin'*.

If you're a barband devotee, and play this album loud, after a few beers you should be able to hear the glasses clinking and smell the cigar smoke. There aren't many records you can do that with.

RICH KIENZLE

Hank Williams: Country Music's Tragic King



Complete with twenty-six memorable photos, this life story evokes not only the man, but the feeling for his era—the late 40's and early 50's in the South. From Alabama farmtown to the Grand Ole Opry and his subsequent plunge from the heights of glory, this privileged biography draws on eyewitness testimony from friends and associates laying bare more than has ever been told of Hank's personal and professional life—his upbringing, marriages, artistry, alcoholism and his tortured soul.

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Record Reviews

Janie Fricke
From The Heart
CBS JC36268

Interest in Janie Fricke has steadily increased through the release of her first two albums. Now with the release of her third effort **From The Heart**, that curiosity should turn into full-fledged appreciation for one extremely gifted songstress.

It is common knowledge in music circles that Fricke literally had to be coaxed from the background into the forefront. She was discovered by CBS Records executives while singing background vocals on a Johnny Duncan recording session. She was reluctant to give up her career as a background and jingle singer for the rigors and demands of a solo venture. Now that she's taken the plunge, it's doubtful her growing number of fans would settle for anything less than Fricke in the spotlight.

As was the case with her past albums, this one was produced by Billy Sherrill. Though Sherrill's production is sometimes criticized for its lack of inventiveness he has done a masterful job recording Fricke. She seems to have full reign to do what she wants vocally and the music is tailored around her voice. The result is a perfect fit.

Fricke's talent is so immense that in order to capture her on record an album must touch on various musical styles. While this album contains ten love songs, most of them positive, there are several nicely interwoven musical styles evident. One reason for this may be that the album was recorded in both Nashville and Muscle Shoals with basically different casts of session musicians.

The album exemplifies Fricke's diversities. She is equally comfortable singing a country tune such as the familiar *Pass Me By If You're Only Passing Through*, or the r&b tinged *My World Begins and Ends With You* or the

more adult contemporary *Cool September*. Her's is a limitless talent.

Throughout every song on the lp Fricke's bright, cheerful weltering voice rings true to the ears. While there are several songs which don't measure up lyrically or musically to the



album's finest moments, Fricke's fluid voice deems them acceptable.

Like cream rising to the top, her ability is too stunning to remain in the background. Janie Fricke is destined to soar with eagles.

KELLY DELANEY

BURIED TREASURES

by Rich Kienzle

Okay, I promised a second bluegrass column dealing with new recordings by contemporary and traditional artists, so here goes.

Fiddler Kenny Baker has been with Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys for what seems to be ages and has an understanding of his music that only a few others share. **Farmyard Swing** (County 775) is his latest solo venture, and features his warm, bluestinged fiddle backed by the Osborne Brothers, Charlie Collins and Butch Robins among others. Baker's feel and tone are at their peak here, and his interaction with the other musicians is impeccable, particularly on his twin-fiddle duet with Bobby Osborne on *My Old Kentucky Home*. His original *Chicken Under The Back Porch* is also a masterpiece.

Far younger, clawhammer banjoist—vocalist Mac Banford's **Backwoods Banjo** (Rounder 0115) evokes an older, pre-bluegrass sound of the sort that Uncle Dave Macon and Grandpa Jones have thrived on. Banford, one of the few old-timey singers whose nasality isn't contrived, has recreated 17 songs, largely taken from recordings of the late 20s and early 30s like *Sweet Bird* and *Cousin Sally Brown*, that have an uncluttered, delicate charm.

David Grisman (see record review) is becoming a major figure in both bluegrass and American music in general, and there have been some fine

albums in this vein, including some from his own sidemen. Texas guitarist Slim Richey, though not connected with Grisman, has captured much of his sparkle and verve with **Jazz Grass** (Ridge Runner 0009), which features his lead guitar, backed by greats like banjoist Alan Munde, mandolinist Sam Bush and fiddler Ricky Skaggs on a dozen jazz tunes in bluegrass style including *Gravy Waltz* and even the 40's bebop tune *Night In Tunisia*.

Tony Rice, Grisman's brilliant young guitarist, wanted to cut an album heavy on traditional favorites he played in his pre-Grisman days with bands like J.D. Crowe & The New South. **Manzanita** (Rounder 0092), recorded with Grisman, Ricky Skaggs, Sam Bush and others, sticks close to the roots with traditional tunes like *Blackberry Blossom*, *Little Sadie*, *Nine Pound Hammer* and *Blue Railroad Train*. Only *Manzanita* returns to the "Dawg" sound.

Grisman's fiddler, Darol Anger (as in "hanger"), on the other hand, has stayed closely to the "Dawg" sound with **Fiddlistics** (Kaleidoscope F-8). Anger, who combines a classical attack with solid bluegrass, swing and jazz overtones works here with his Grisman compatriots to create a compelling mix of original music like *Key Signator*, *Dysentery Stomp* (the titles are as great as the music. . .), *Ride The Wild Turkey*, a traditional bluegrass romp, a violin/piano

duet on *Brann St. Sonata*. The hot version of jazz sax great Charlie Parker's *Moose The Mooche*, assisted by ex-Texas Playboy mandolinist Tiny Moore nearly cuts Parker's original.

Another progressive bluegrass pioneer, guitarist/singer Wayne Stewart has returned to record after conquering some personal problems with **Aspen Skyline** (Sierra/Briar 4207), which features his cutting vocals on tunes by Stephen Stills, Bill Monroe, J.J. Cale, Dickie Betts and Greg Allman, all done in a slick, enjoyable style. As usual, Sierra/Briar's packaging is outstanding.

John Hartford has been pursuing his own musical visions for some time now. He and his friends, the mountainous fiddler Benny Martin and guitarist Pat Burton continue to do so on **Slumberin' On The Cumberland** (Flying Fish 095), with a full rhythm section Hartford and Martin lace everything with plenty of humor, so that even the sad songs are funny. The whole record is crazy—but it works.

The Kenny Baker LP is available from County Records, P.O. Box 191, Floyd, Virginia 24091; the Slim Richey LP can be obtained through Ridge Runner, 7121 W. Vickery # 118, Ft. Worth, Texas 76116. The Wayne Stewart set is available through Sierra/Briar P.O. Box 5853, Pasadena, Ca. 91107. Most larger stores carry the rest.

Ten Points for Bobby Bare

by Mary Ellen Moore

A good friend—a lover of country music who is sad that Nashville seems to rely so much on formula these days—has devised a point system for country artists.

Basically, it works like this: An artist loses points for things like calling himself a country *artist*; *singer* does nicely, thank you. He loses points for alluding in simpering terms to making love (Example: If I said you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?—minus ten points). He's down five more points for recording a duet with Janie Fricke (Janie's not the problem—but does *everybody* desperate for a hit have to rely on her for the necessary magic?)

It's not all negative; a singer can *earn* points. Moe Bandy and Joe Stampley came away with a resounding nine on a scale of ten for their good ole boys' duet (wiping out Moe's loss for recording with Janie).

Once you've got the knack, you can easily make up your own point system. It's especially satisfying when taking one of those long car trips where the similarity of the radio's country music begins gnawing at your brain like a rogue earwig.

Rules explained, let's proceed. . . .

* * *

Bobby Bare is rapidly beginning to re-earn the points lost when he signed with CBS Records a couple years back, leaving RCA to seek the fame and fortune that had eluded him because of RCA's handling of his albums—fame and fortune that Bare, and others really felt was due him.

Unfortunately, his move to CBS was followed by the release of two albums considered mediocre by music critics, neither anywhere near the originality and excellence of his classics such as *Bobby Bare Sings Lullabies, Legends and Lies* or *Hard Time Hungries*. His singles were also sink-

ing without a trace, unlike the earlier days when he had hits like *Detroit City*, *The Streets of Baltimore* and, more recently, *The Winner* and *Dropkick Me, Jesus, Through The Goalposts of Life*.

Was *The Winner* becoming a loser? Was what was designed as a move to improve things a disaster?

If the artist, er, singer, had been anyone else, panic might have been his undoing.



What Bobby Bare did, however, was to take time out to take stock, reach a few conclusions—and act on them.

The result was an immediate eight points—a very, very country duet, *No Memories Hangin' Round*, with Rosanne Cash, daughter of none other than, the very, very country John R. Cash.

Prior to this, his first real hit in awhile, Bare had discussed his music and himself over a glass of Perrier.

Perrier?

Minus five points.

* * *

Country Music: What do you think it takes to make a hit song today?

Bobby Bare: I wish I knew for sure, but I have my own theory. I feel that, being basically country, I have to have a good song and *then* work on the sound and get that to fit the song. But the one thing that *nobody* knows is the *one thing* it takes to make a hit record. And nobody knows that; I don't give a shit what they say—they don't know how to inject magic into a record. Hit records have magic that is so elusive nobody knows what it is. If anybody for sure knew how to make magic, then they could actually corner the market. But that's the one thing that's very elusive.

Every record has its own character, but the one thing that all hit records have is magic, and that's hard to come by. And sometimes it's hard to recognize even when it's there, because records take on their own personality once they're played on the air. You can play a record on your record player at home, or listen to it in the studio, and it just kind of lays there. But you put it on the radio, and then it takes on a personality all its own; it's a completely different record.

That's happened to me many times.

Most people are only exposed to records after they hear it on the radio and *then* they take it home and play it. But I'm exposed to records in the studio before it gets on the radio and I've heard—I don't know how many records of my *own*—the perfect example is *Detroit City*. I cut that, and in the studio, it just kinda laid there; there was nothing really important going on with it. I knew that it was a great song, that I personally loved it, but, boy when it hit the radio, it just came *alive*.

Country Music: Have you even been wrong about a song in reverse—thought something was really special, but nobody else picked up on it?

Bobby Bare: I've *never* been wrong about a song I really believed in—never. And that's saying a whole lot. I hear a song and file it in the back of my mind as a big hit—eventually it is. It may not be the record that I think is it, but then somebody else will come along and do it, and it's a big hit. A recent example: ask Kenny Rogers about *The Gambler*. I knew that was a hit, and I had it in my first album. I knew that was a hit, and then Kenny Rogers cut it—and it was. The same time last year, when I was doing an album, I heard another song that I knew for sure was a hit; it just blew me away. But I couldn't create any excitement with the producers. And when you can't do that, you might as well forget it, because you're not going to do a really good job on it. It was *She Believes In Me*

(another Kenny Rogers blockbuster).

Country Music: How much say do you have then in what singles are released? I've always heard that you were one of the people in Nashville responsible for artists getting more control.

Bobby Bare: Right. I have *total* control, *complete* control. But it's my belief that if you're going to hire a producer, well, then, let him produce. I usually produce my own.

Country Music: How do you feel when something happens like with *The Gambler*?

Bobby Bare: Well (laughs ruefully), I figure that's the way it is. (Clears throat loudly.) I don't know. When I was going to Europe once, Buddy Killen brought me a copy of *The Green, Green Grass of Home* to record, and I was going to Europe for three months and knew I couldn't. This friend of mine in Nashville was trying to get on record, so I gave it to him, and he cut it and got a record deal and put it out. He had a pretty good hit on it, and then it got covered (by Tom Jones, of course), and my friend wasn't big enough to pull it through. But that one got away from me, too. But if you do it so often . . . I'm sure big hits pass through everybody's hands; if you've been in the business any length of time at all, and have any name value, then you hear all the songs.

* * *

Bobby Bare has worked frequently and successfully with the extremely humorous Shel Silverstein. Silverstein wrote Bare's own favorite album, *Lullabies, Legends and Lies*, while Bare helps Silverstein sing.

"Y'know," Bare explains, "Shel can't sing, and nobody's really taken the time to get him in the right key . . . he can't sing, and he also can't play the guitar very good. He just likes for people to hear his songs."

Shel also wrote *The Winner*, Bare's 1976 hit, and acted as the screeching portion of his 1974 tale of *Marie Laveau* (he can't sing, but he's a *great* screecher).

With this sort of affinity for humorous people and humorous songs, it's natural that Bare immediately zeroes in on:

Country Music: What's wrong with country music today?

Bobby Bare: The comedy is missing . . . anything humorous. I just don't hear it on the radio. The Statler Brothers had something that's funny out, but that's about it.

Country Music: Since you're known as a Nashville trend-setter, do you also predict trends or do you even bother? What's tomorrow's big trend?

Bobby Bare: I don't know. I've always felt that the direction for the music in Nashville has always been controlled by whatever direction that the songwriters want to take it. I don't think that the producers or the artists have too much to



say about it. The trend usually goes the way the songwriter wants to take it and then the producer sort of injects his thing into it. Like for instance, when John Hartford wrote *Gentle on My Mind*, there was a biggggg bunch of songs where *mind* was the word, straight down the line (he laughs). Then Kris came in with his bedroom songs—skin and hair and stuff like that, so that created a trend for awhile—total honesty. Then Billy Joe Shaver came along with his kick-ass, cowboy, honky-tonk songs and that created another trend, which I feel I had alot to do with—that particular direction. I was working close with Billy Joe at the time, and sort of forced Waylon into doing that *Honky Tonk Heroes* album. It was kind of like pulling teeth, but he finally did it, and I think that helped him with his direction, too. It caused a movement, which I think has probably peaked out now.

Country Music: Do you spend a lot of time working on your own albums?

Bobby Bare: Yeah, I do. "Cuz I think that the albums that come out of Nashville, not much thought goes into them. They're getting into it a little more, but as a rule they cut 'til they get a hit single and then they wad up all the rejects and put them into an album. And I don't think that's fair: I think that's wrong.

Country Music: They put a lot of formula songs on albums today.

Bobby Bare: Yeah, I think the backlash on that is gonna be . . . well, I'm afraid to see, but I think—Jesus, I get hungry to hear a good, ass-kicking country song. Like . . . I would like to hear that thing Willie and Tracy (Nelson) did, *After The Fire is Gone*. Well, I'd kill to hear a record like that. To get away from all this, this intense crossover, whatever-it-is. It's all running together to me. I think the radio stations are so confused, man, they don't know what the hell is going on.

Country Music: We've noticed that rural country stations draw from the old country, like Jean Shepherd and Kitty Wells. . . .

Bobby Bare: Funny that you say that, because I was just in Toronto and the big station there, CFGM, it was the leader in this new wave country, and all other stations went that direction too. And now CFGM—it could be a mistake, I don't know—but now they're going the other direction; they're playing old country records. But there's a way to do it, surely. What I like is just ass-kicking country. If you've got a good country song, just do it.

Country Music: Do you plan to do that with your next album?

Bobby Bare: Probably. I'm gonna do what I like to do best, which is do an album with a certain direction, a concept that will allow me a wide range of things. I haven't arrived at the concept yet. I don't like to do a half-assed concept. I'd like to do a wide range of songs that still has one particular theme to it . . . Shel will probably

be involved with it (the aforementioned *Lullabies, Legends and Lies* is generally thought to be one of the first concept albums in country music), because I like what he does. I like Rodney Crowell; I think he's a good writer.

(Small world department: Bare's friendship with Crowell eventually resulted in a musical liaison with Crowell's wife—Rosanne Cash. That eight-point duet was written by Crowell.)

Country Music: But you don't have any idea for the concept yet?

Bobby Bare: No . . . you got any ideas? I'm looking. . .

Country Music: Just as long as it's not trains. . .

Bobby Bare: Yeah, trains have been over-used.

* * *

Whether he couldn't come up with a

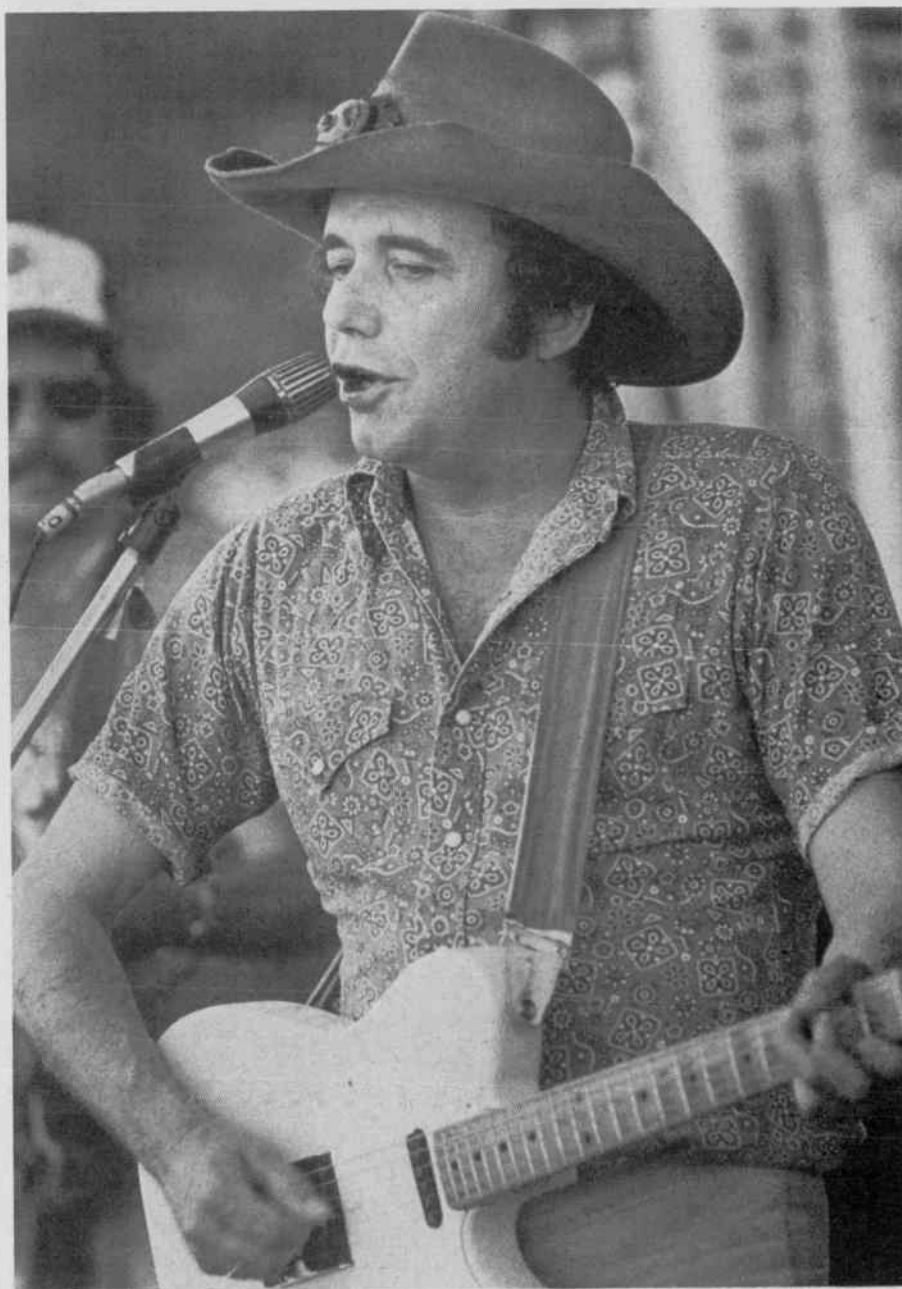
concept (how about something on friends, wives, daughters of friends, husbands or—if that proves too exhaustive—a whole concept album on the concept of the point system—are you listening Shel?), or whether he decided to put even more thought than usual into it, Bare's newest album *is* not what he likes to do best.

Instead, it's a live album, *Down and Dirty*, and although the concept may be missing, there's very possibly something else that he values just as highly—"good, ass-kicking country."

Meanwhile we have one more question: **Country Music: I've heard you called the nicest guy in Nashville. . .**

Bobby Bare: Gee, I probably am. I just stay outta the way. Naw—I just do what I want to do and let everybody else do what they want.

And that in itself, in Nashville, is worth ten points. ■



What's Too Soon About Good Music?

GATE-MOUTH BROWN

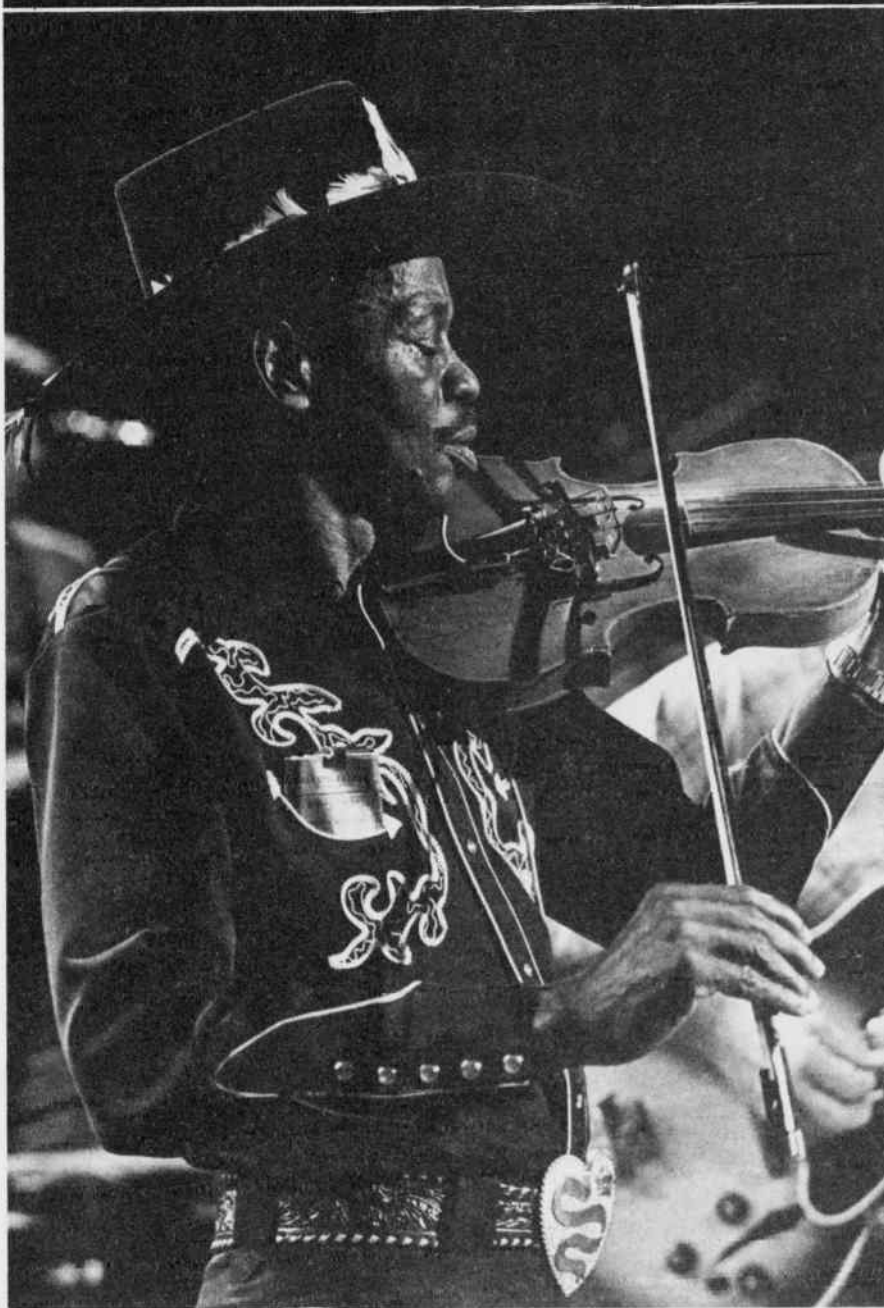
by John Morthland

"For years I have suffered because I am versatile," Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown declared with a characteristic mixture of defiance and defensiveness. The lanky black singer and multi-instrumentalist gazed around the TV studio dressing room, seeking confirmation from his wife/pianist Yvonne and the other four members of his all-white band, as he detailed the ups and downs of a most unlikely career in blues and country music.

Gate was back in his native Texas to tape a segment of *Austin City Limits* with Roy Clark, with whom he'd recently released an album of jumping country jazz and blues called *Makin' Music*. It was still early in a long, musician's workday consisting of a 10 a.m. light and sound check, a couple hours off for an interview, a full rehearsal, a break for dinner, and then a 90-minute show (to be edited down to an hour) before a live audience. It was past 11 that night when Gate left the building for his motel room, and the next morning he had a 6 o'clock flight to Vegas, where he was appearing for two weeks with Clark.

Now 55 and a professional musician for 40 years, Gatemouth claims that for the first time in his life, he is making exactly the music he wants to—a mixture of country, blues, jazz and ballads that showcases his abilities on guitar, fiddle, harp and mandolin (a much bigger version of mandolin that plays five octaves lower), with banjo still to come. Gatemouth rose to fame in the late-Forties as the hottest exponent of Texas blues guitar, virtually disappeared for close to a decade beginning in the mid-Sixties and is now making a comeback that emphasizes his country roots. Virtually unknown to country fans a scant few years ago, he can now share a spotlight with Clark, country's highest paid entertainer; he recently toured Africa for the State Department, and Russia under the auspices of his manager Jim Halsey (who also handles Clark).

Gatemouth and Clark go back a long ways; Gate remembers Roy from his scuffling days in San Antonio. Clark is the godfather of Gate and Yvonne's daughter Rene, who was born on the road in Reno and was a day short of six months old at



the time of this interview. When Gate, Yvonne and I walked into the TV studio earlier in the day, there was Clark, rearranging some papers and a .38 in his briefcase, and Gate immediately handed the little girl to Yvonne and rushed over to greet him.

"Roy!" he exclaimed, "Where you been?"

"I just come back from a huntin' trip," Clark replied, slapping Gate on the back.

"What you hunt?"

"Elk."

"Elk? What you do with elk?"

"I eat it."

Gate doesn't hunt anymore ("too many drunks out there in the woods with them guns"), but for the next twenty minutes he and Clark exchanged hunting and gun stories, frequently stopping to coo at Rene, who was stretched out on a bleacher next to her mom. Finally, the crew at KLRN, the PBS station that shoots *Austin City Limits* got them onstage for their sound check. That task completed, they retired to the dressing room to work out a song list.

Clark took off his brown cowboy hat, requested more coffee, and responded to a suggestion that perhaps he'd like to do "more Roy Clark-type stuff."

"I don't wanna do too many of the things I usually do because I'm afraid of falling into it and being . . . too straight." *Austin City Limits* is noted, after all, for its hip audience and unstructured shows. Gate has done the show three times in its five seasons, but this was Clark's first appearance. He was clearly cautious about his slick image; like Gate, he went onstage that night in the same casual slacks and western shirt he'd been wearing all day.

A few more rocking tunes were added to the list, and then Gate cut in. "C'mon, Roy, you wanna do a banjo tune here? I got a tune called *Six Levels Below Plant Life*, he said as everyone else in the room cracked up. "Don't worry about it; just play what you feel. That's the way I do everything, I can't stand to play nothin' more than once even when I'm recordin'. It's a bluegrass tune and you can just play anything to it."

"I don't wanna do too many of the things I usually do because I'm afraid of falling into it and being . . . too straight."

But Clark was paying no attention to him; he was looking at Rene, sticking out his tongue and rolling his eyeballs.

"You starin' at the baby! You didn't hear a word I said," Gatemouth laughed, obviously pleased. "That girl's a ham! Look at her: she starin' right back at you!" Rene, cuddled in Yvonne's arms, curled up her nose and made a face at Clark; Roy curled up his nose and made a face back.

Gate was still beaming a few minutes later when, the song list completed, he bounced the baby on his knee as Clark retired to another dressing room. "This girl already been to Russia with me, she goes on all the trips," Gate said. "This gonna be the greatest experience of her life, travellin' all 'round the world."

Gatemouth himself was the oldest of seven kids. He was born in 1924 in Vinton, La., but when he was a week old, his family moved just across the state line to Orange, Texas. His father was a railroad man with the Southern Pacific. His mother, a Creole woman from the bayou country, had some American Indian blood, so Gate figures he's a mixture of French, Indian and Negro.

It was a musical family; his father played all stringed instruments, and nearby relatives were also amateur musicians. They'd jam together all weekend; Gate learned guitar from his father when he was five, and fiddle when he was 10. The music the family always played was Cajun, country and bluegrass.

"I didn't know nothin' 'bout blues or jazz til years later," Gate explained. "That's why I always tell people I was a country musician first. All my life I was hangin' out with nothin' but Caucasian kids and playin' nothin' but country. We'd get in our houses on Saturdays and I'd be the only Negro kid there. We'd be fiddlin' and guitarin' all night long, then when we got tired we'd all just go to sleep, right there in their house. And the Caucasians would do the same thing at our house."

He picked up his nickname in school when a microphone went out and he kept on singing, prompting a classmate to tell him he had "a mouth big as a gate." His first professional experience came when he was 15 and went on the road as a drummer

/singer with the Brown Skin Models, a variety show out of Indianapolis. The troupe ran out of money and left him stranded in Norfolk, Va. Gate got a job there at the El Dorado Ballroom and made enough money to send home the other eight stranded kids, one or two at a time, over a period of several months. He himself was still in Norfolk the day Pearl Harbor was bombed.

He returned to Texas to join the Army, but was honorably discharged after five months by a sympathetic commanding officer who agreed that Gate was better suited to the music world than to the military. He went immediately to San Antonio, where he began drumming at the old Keyhole Club with the Hoyt Huge Orchestra; he was the 23-piece band's only black member. While there, he was discovered by the late Don Robey.

Robey, who was frequently reported to have mobster connections, is one of the legendary shadow figures in black American music. His Duke Records in Houston was the first black-owned independent record company in the South. He handled such artists as Johnny Ace, "Big Mama" Willie Mae Thornton, Junior Parker and Bobby "Blue" Bland, and he handled them right down to the smallest detail, from recording them to booking them to taking credit for the songs they wrote. He created the Peacock label specifically for Gatemouth Brown, but that's a story Gate tells much better.

"I had been wantin' to develop my guitar style for some time, and Robey gave me a card and said, 'Boy, if you ever get a chance, come to Houston.' And he had one of the finest clubs you ever saw, called the Bronze Peacock. T-Bone Walker was the big blues player throughout the country at this time. So I hitchhiked from San An-



On an *Austin City Limits* TV show which aired early this year, Roy Clark joined his old friend Gatemouth Brown for Gate's fourth appearance on the show.

tone to Houston and I walked into this club and there was about 800 people there. This is 1947, say 1946, let's put it that way. They was all Negroes in there. So I went in, I didn't have no clothes on, I was kinda raggedy, you know, and I sit down right beside the bandstand. And the stage was real long. People would get up there and dance and the band would be on another little rising.

"Country and blues is one and the same. Only the phrasin' is different."

"Anyway, T-Bone Walker had ... a sickness, let's put it that way. He laid his guitar down and ran to the dressing room cuz everything was hittin' him. What made me do this I'll never know: I got up and picked up his guitar, had no idea in the world what I was gonna play, I turned back at the band and I had a lotta nerve. I didn't even know the key, and all these 800 people was lookin' at me. And I started off a boogie woogie and just created as I went. I developed in my mind what I wanted to do, and the band was so good, they fell right in on it and I had just enough to know how to make my changes so everything was together. And I sang: 'My name is Gatemouh Brown/I just got in your town /If you don't like my style/I will not hang around.' All this was just comin' out of my head without plannin'. Later recorded it as *Gatemouh's Boogie* and it was my first big hit.

"I made about \$600 in 15 minutes, tips. T-Bone Walker came out of the dressing room with about 800 people screaming, took his guitar away from me, and told me long as I live to never pick up his guitar again. By that time Don Robey come up to the stage—he'd had a gambling deal goin' on up front, roulette wheel and all that, it was wide open—he come up to me and says, 'Come to my office.' He says, 'Where you livin'?' and I says, 'No place.' He got me a room and said, 'Be ready at 10 o'clock next mornin' and I'll pick you up.' He drove big Cadillacs and had diamonds all over; he was a bigshot, you know.

"He picked me up next mornin' and took me down to Plas Smith, clothes-maker, a Negro tailor; he's dead now, wonderful guy. He had me 12 tails made, those beautiful trousers with the tails. Then he took me down to the biggest music store in Houston and bought me a \$750 Gibson L-5 and an amplifier to go with it. I made my debut that night. T-Bone Walker didn't like it at all. And what happened then, I got to be the biggest rhythm and blues guitarist in this whole entire America. That's right. That's why all the guitar players today and yesterday and back the day before that are copying me: they know. Robey released a single on me every six weeks, and the biggest single in history, from any guitar player

anywhere, I'm not braggin' but it's the truth, was mine: *Okie Dokie Stomp*. It went all over the globe."

That marked the beginning of a long rivalry between Gatemouh and Walker, one that remains fresh in Gate's mind to this day even though T-Bone died in 1975. The two waged many a fierce cutting contest against each other, but between them, they pretty much defined modern Texas blues guitar.

Walker had popularized the electric guitar about a decade before first meeting Gate. He developed the Texas shuffle rhythm (Ray Price later adapted it to country), and his jazzy guitar lines with their horn-like phrasing marked the advent of a more harmonically complex blues. But in Gate's mind, he took T-Bone one step further.

"What I was doin', even unbeknownst to myself at the time, I wasn't patternin' myself after no guitar players. I played horn lines on my guitar rather than guitar lines, still do, but I didn't realize it for years. I suppose T-Bone set up the real Texas blues, I'll give him that, but I set the pace for all swing guitar. Cuz T-Bone could never play the speed I played at. Because he just kept a certain speed, but me, I'll go right on upstairs to jazz. We got to be friends, not close friends but friends, because he always held that against me. Cuz he once said on the radio I would never make it, that I was a Johnny-come-lately. But that's my whole secret of why nobody could ever imitate me, my speed and playin' them horn lines."

Once Robey took him over, Gate spent the next 17 years criss-crossing the country, usually in front of a 17-piece blues orchestra, headlining dates or waging Battles of the Bands against Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton and countless others. With a more streamlined jump blues band, he recorded such classics as *She Walk Right In*, *Just Before Dawn*, *Boogie Uproar*, *Dirty Work at the Crossroads*, and *She Winked Her Eye*. For his efforts, he received a salary of "\$50 a day or whatever."

"I figured it out once," he said matter-of-factly, nodding his head as he spoke, "And I figure I got cheated out of \$2½ million in my career. But that's just the way it was. Whatever Robey said for me to do, I would do it. I mean, let's face it. I was an artist and I had enough confidence in him that he knew what he was doing, and he did. He was one smart operator. For the Negro, I feel like Don Robey was a great man in his time. He certainly was."

But even back then, Gatemouh will insist, he wanted to play at least a little country music and was thwarted. "I used to ask Robey, and this is the words he said: 'It's too soon.' I'd say, 'What's too soon about good music?' Maybe he didn't like country or maybe he was thinkin' that me being a Negro, the times wasn't ready for it. I never felt that way, but I guess I couldn't

do much 'bout it."

At this point, Gate's story became more diffuse. That's partly because it was almost time for the rehearsal and sidemen began ambling back into the dressing room to tune up. Rene was getting restless, and Yvonne had to go to the convenience store to pick up more supplies for her. But it's also because once those 17 big years were over, Gate's career began breaking down; the gaps are there because nothing was happening then worth remembering.

By the mid-Sixties, there was no longer any demand for either him or any other big blues orchestras. Throughout the decade, he bounced around the Southwest—from Houston to El Paso to Denver to New Mexico. He couldn't get record deals, he says, because he wouldn't play rock 'n' roll. He wanted to do the kind of wide-ranging material he does today. Finally, he



resolved to pick the fiddle back up and get seriously into country music again.

"They wanted me to get a set pattern and play just one thing. But I can't stand to hear even country all night," he fumed. "So I decided to stick to small clubs where I had a free hand to do what I wanted, and I developed my fiddle style back."

His wife at the time demanded that he quit music entirely in favor of an eight-hour-a-day job. When he proposed instead that she and their little girl go on the road with him, she disappeared. He hasn't seen her or the child since. But slowly, using makeshift country bands, he was building a following in the cowboy bars of Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming.

"See, Charley Pride, they sneaked him in on it. But I just went right ahead on. I went the hard way. They hid Charley Pride out, nobody knew he was a Negro at first,

but I didn't hide myself out. I went right in and played some of the roughest spots in the world. And the Caucasians thought it was the most gifted thing could ever happen to a person, a Negro playing country music. It was only the record companies that thought it shouldn't happen."

In the early Seventies, a French label brought him overseas to make some albums with expatriate American blues and jazz musicians. He gave them the blues they wanted and then some. Gate was still playing guitar, but he was playing a lot more fiddle, and while it was definitely bluesy, he was also playing some bluegrass and country.

"I still like blues occasionally, depending on the mood of the people I'm working for. But there's so many styles of blues," he explained. "The average person think you gotta be playin' this Mississippi blues in order for it to be real blues, and that's not so. That's the style I won't play, because it's an ignorant form of music. The Mississippi Delta blues is based on hardship and mistreating, being mistreated all the time by the Caucasian. And that's not so, at least not for me. Maybe some of them lived that life, but I wouldn't want no one to know I'd lived that life if I had. Why make everything around you sad? And I'll tell you something else about that kind of music: you play it all night, you'll have fights."

Quite simply, Gatemouth associates blues with another time and place—he always has, and as the years have passed, his attitude has hardened. He refuses to play a date if he thinks he will be expected to stick to blues.

"But you see, country and blues is one and the same. Only the phrasin' is different, that's all. Both are based on life itself," he continued. "Now I heard all kind of blues growin' up, and I called it gutbucket blues. In my mind, I saw what kind of people appreciated those blues and I wanted something better. There's different elements. You get old country *country* people and it's just like Delta blues, same thing. And the kind of

people you draw is the real hostile clientele.

"Then there's another kind of country. See, where I get my Texas swing is from the pedal steel. You can play country music without a pedal steel, but it's hard to be really country music without it. And that one instrument changes everything in the music."

Gate's own old blues records are consistent with his remarks to the extent that they are the lighter, looser novelty blues of Louisiana and east Texas, all sly, upbeat party songs. That's what he's continued to emphasize in the blues segments of his current show, which began falling into place around 1977 when he moved to New Orleans (which is also where he met Yvonne, who was studying music therapy there).

When he went before the cameras with Clark later that night, their blues would be mostly along the lines of *Caldonia* ("What makes your big head so hard?"), Gate would prove himself every bit Clark's match as a ham. Clark would switch from guitar to banjo as they moved into breakdowns and fiddle tunes, while Gate would jump from guitar to harp to fiddle. But a few moments before the show, Gate was hunkered down in a corner of his dressing room, picking a shaky version of *John Henry* on a gold-plated banjo. It seems he'd always wanted to learn banjo, but had been unable to find one he liked. Someone had shown him this one the week before in Toronto, and he snapped it right up.

"Uh-oh, Gate's got himself a banjo now," chided Garland, the Oak Ridge Boys Band's hulking pianist, who'd been brought in for this date because he'd previously played on the album. "Look out, Earl Scruggs!"

"He got nothin' to worry 'bout; I only wish someday I could play good as him," Gate jived right back. "But, just wait til I learn myself the positions on this thing. I won't play with no pick; I'll play with my fingers and I'll be real fast."

He probably will, too. ■



A family man, Gatemouth's wife Yvonne travels with him to his many dates around the world.

WILLIE

Goes To The Movies

1979 was a big year for Willie Nelson, full of platinum albums, and winning the CMA's Entertainer of the Year award. But 1980 shows another side of Ole Willie as he co-stars in *The Electric Horseman*, a major motion picture with Robert Redford and Jane Fonda, and stars in his own, *Honeysuckle Rose*, with Dyan Cannon and Amy Irving, a fictional story about a country singer's life on the road which is currently in production.

ELECTRIC HORSEMAN



In the last several years Hollywood has turned out an average of one outstanding film a year built around the theme of a total nobody who, through one climactic action, becomes a hero. *Walking Tall*, *Rocky*, *Breaking Away*: all featured the dead end loser who seized his one chance to be somebody and emerged so triumphant that the audience was left cheering his transformation. Now comes

The Electric Horseman, the latest of this type and this time with a cowboy protagonist.

Sonny Steele is his name (played by Robert Redford) and once, when he was five-time rodeo champion, the name meant something. As the movie opens, however, his given name is a mere afterthought, as he is now known as the Ranch Breakfast Cowboy, and is reduced

to plugging breakfast cereal in a Porter Wagoner-like suit that shines twinkling lights instead of rhinestones. (Hence, the title.) The absurdity of his station in life has thus caused Steele to become a hopeless drunk.

And suddenly he is set atop Rising Star, a multi-million dollar racehorse, for his part in a big Las Vegas spectacular for AMPCO, the company who



has recently purchased the horse for its corporate symbol. Steele immediately sees that the horse is being systematically drugged, neglected and abused. He con-

fronts the head of AMPCO in his outrage, but is rebuffed. So in the middle of the show he rides *Rising Star* right off the stage, through the casino, out the door and into the desert night.

Steele intends to let the horse go back to the wild, but as he makes his journey to mustang country, it is *he* who actually finds his freedom. He becomes once again self-reliant, close to his roots and at peace with himself. As a powerful corporation and hundreds of law enforcement officials attempt to track him down, he becomes ruggedly defiant, quick thinking and physically strong, recapturing all the qualities that once made him five-time rodeo champion. He also wins the gradual admiration of Hallie Martin (Jane Fonda), a New York TV reporter who intrepidly locates him after using all her journalistic wiles and then, sensing the controversial hero he has become, joins forces with him. As the dragnet closes in, Steele and Martin race to the predetermined place where they will release *Rising Star*. The ending leaves the audience almost breathlessly ecstatic, and Steele joins the pantheon of up-from-the-muck heroes.

The movie does have some glaring weak moments, though. Redford is

abysmally poor in some scenes, particularly when he faces AMPCO's president (John Saxon.) And it misses a few chances to make a much stronger impression. The most notable of these comes when Redford discovers a jar of booze in his saddlebag and realizes he has not needed a drink since his dramatic disappearance. Instead of using this as a time to reflect on the changes he has undergone in the last fortnight, he merely offers a sip to Fonda. But these failings do not significantly detract from the script's overall quality.

The film is also the debut vehicle for Willie Nelson, who plays Steele's more-or-less manager. After Sonny moseys off, we don't see much of Willie, so it's hard to judge his acting abilities.

He does, however, provide an excellent, if somewhat anticipatory, soundtrack with his songs about cowboys, loners and don't-give-a-damn individualists.

All in all, *The Electric Horseman* puts together some outstanding talents, a strong script and a good dose of soulful country music to take its place as the next celebration of Man Victorious. What better way for Hollywood to start the 80's?

JOHN PUGH

HONEYSUCKLE ROSE

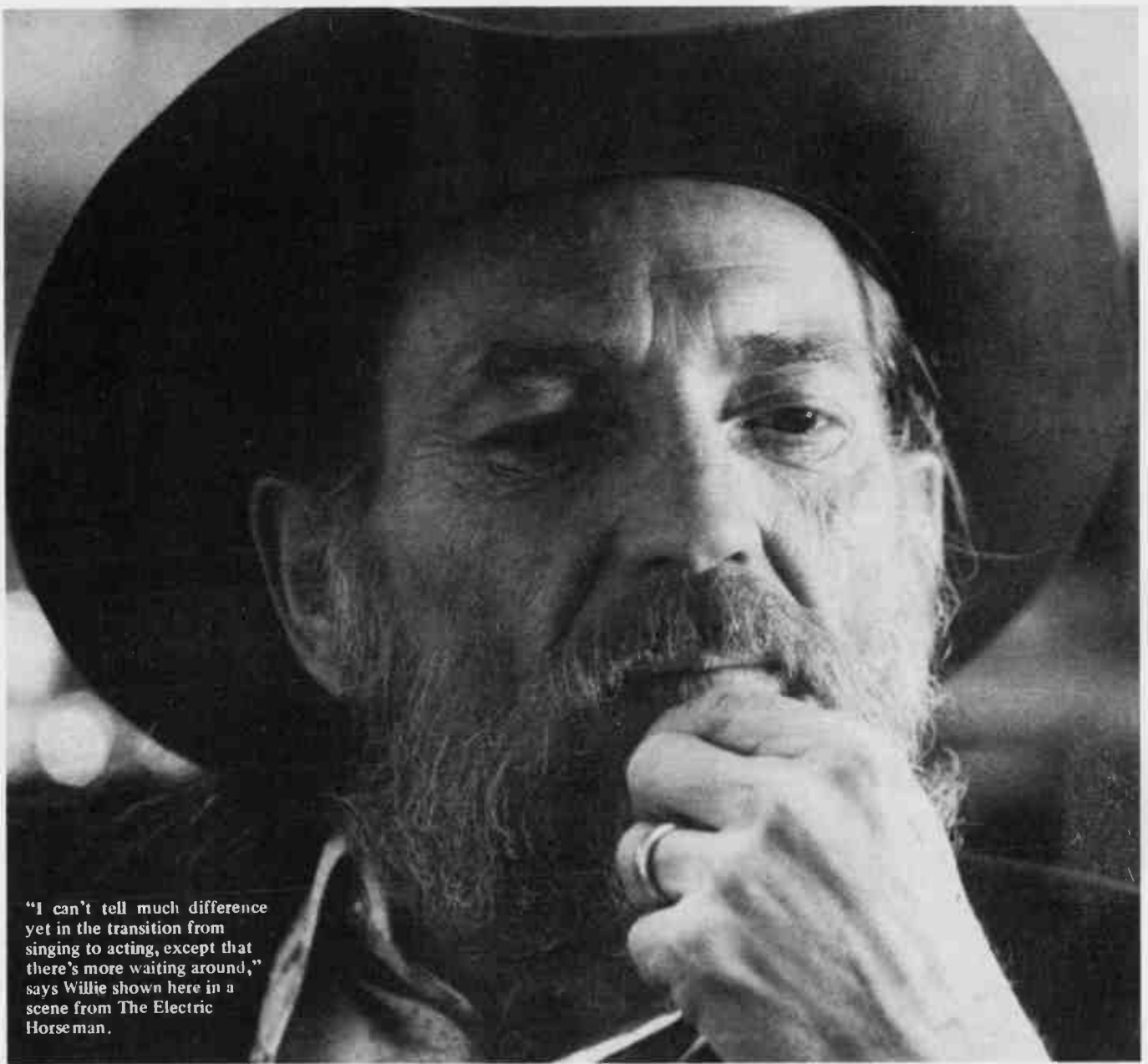
Dressed more stylishly "western" than usual, Willie and his band went through several takes of a new song, *On the Road Again*. The scene was intended to be a chic New York honky tonk, with plenty of smoke provided by a portable spraying

machine. In reality, Willie and family were downstairs at Crazy Bob's Saloon, next door to the Greyhound Bus station in Austin, Texas. They were filming part of a sequence of concert scenes for *Honeysuckle Rose*, Willie's first movie as

a leading actor.

The plot centers around a country singer on the road, who strays from his wife (Dyan Cannon) and falls for a younger singer (Amy Irving). Ms. Irving is also the daughter of Willie's best friend in the





"I can't tell much difference yet in the transition from singing to acting, except that there's more waiting around," says Willie shown here in a scene from *The Electric Horseman*.

script, played by Slim Pickens.

Although the story is fictional, Willie reports that "the musical part of my character's life certainly parallels mine. Everything he goes through, I've been through at one time or another. The movie covers thirty days in the life of a bandleader. I can't tell much difference yet in the transition from singing to acting, except that there's a lot more waiting around. Sometimes it takes two or three hours to change sets."

"I surprised myself in writing several new songs for the movie. We hadn't planned on that at first, but once we got into it, some ideas came to me. There will be four or five new ones, which will be included on the soundtrack album." Much of the concert footage was shot in the San

Antonio-Austin area. In addition to established night spots, such as the Soap Creek Saloon, there is a Willie Nelson Picnic scene.

Willie explained that the discovery of Amy Irving as a singer took place during the film casting. "She submitted her resume for acting only. We had planned on using somebody else's voice, but when she sang at one of the rehearsals, we found that she was good enough to do it herself. She will be included on the soundtrack album. Mickey Rooney Jr., Hank Cochran, Johnny Gimble and his band, and Emmylou Harris will also perform in the movie and on the soundtrack. Ray Price was at the picnic, and he may be included too. By the way, he and I are doing an album together."

There is so much going on with Willie these days that it is easy to see why he would have to adjust to the slower pace of making movies. *Honeysuckle Rose*, scheduled to be released this summer, will follow *The Electric Horseman*, in which he had a small part.

Folks in Austin unfamiliar with moviemaking got quite a taste of it in October and November. The Warner Brothers film crew put out call after call for extras. Close to five-hundred in all were chosen. For thirty bucks a day they stood or sat in their assigned spots and hollered for Willie. Of course, some of those days were pretty long, but it was fun. When it was over, you can be sure that Willie was glad to be *On the Road Again*.

BILL OAKLEY

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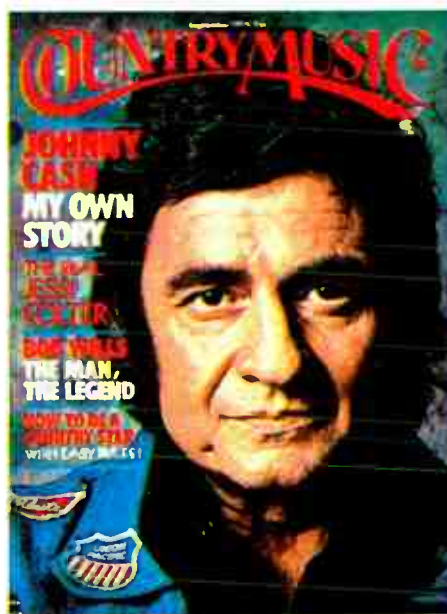
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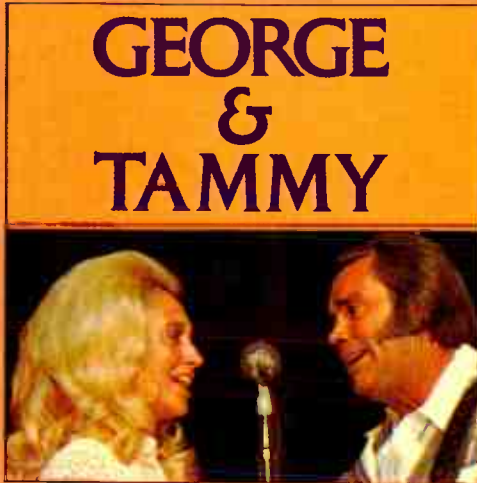
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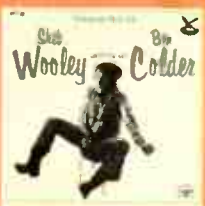


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Letters

Donna Fargo

I've read *Country Music Magazine* since its conception, and been a loyal subscriber since its first anniversary. I've read the trials and tribulations of George Jones and the bottle, of Tammy and her husbands, of Tanya Tucker and her crossover to pop. I've enjoyed the stories on Ronnie Milsap and his blindness, of Hank Williams Jr. and his brush with death. But has anyone at *Country Music Magazine* stopped to realize that they are sitting on a story of hope and inspiration to thousands of readers? I'm referring to Donna Fargo's story and her bout with M.S. There must be thousands of people every year who are stricken by a severely handicapping disease. Some have the inner strength to fight back, and unfortunately some don't. Perhaps if you would talk to Donna, run a story on how severe her illness was, and how she made the climb back, it would serve as a guide to others facing the same situation.

As a subscriber I have scoured the magazine each month looking for a story on her illness and comeback. Listening to each of her albums I marvel at her strength — especially her latest *Just For You*.

Haven't you questioned her absence from TV. Are you so busy with all the accolades you're giving Kenny Rogers and Willie Nelson that you forget about the less fortunate and less popular?

I wonder if some of the big names of 1979 had to face the fear of M.S. like Donna has, if they could be as popular in your magazine. I thought the coverage of her story got in *People* magazine was so superior to yours, and I subscribe to *Country Music* to find out what's current in Country music artists' lives. How about it?

DENNIS FLYNN
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA.

We at Country Music were saddened when we heard of Donna's plight with M.S. We are happy that she is on the road to recovery and we do have an interview lined up with Donna as soon as her schedule allows it. Keep checking Country Music; we are as anxious to run a story on Donna as you are to read it. Ed.

History of The Oaks

In the December issue a reader commented about the origin of the name the "Oak Ridge Boys." Here is the history of how the boys got their name:

The Oak Ridge Boys trace their musical roots back some 35 years to a then-sleepy little region in East central Tennessee and

a struggling band of gospel singers.

Until 1942 the place was a quiet rural community of marginal farmland supporting three small villages, and certainly no national reputation. One year later that two-country tract was bursting with 75,000 busy people and Oak Ridge Tennessee, was forever marked in the annals of American history.

In 1942 the United States Army Manhattan Engineering District selected tiny Oak Ridge as the site to construct a top secret nuclear energy center. Now referred to as the Manhattan Project, those four plants refined uranium for the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, August 6, 1945.

That former wide spot in the road became high priority, and one of the best kept secrets of World War II. As the powerful facility opened, security was so stringent that the entire city of Oak Ridge was surrounded by a well-guarded fence. The nuclear sites themselves were separately fenced inside that perimeter, and non-residents traveling to Oak Ridge were required to pass high level scrutiny and clearance before entering or leaving the city.

Times were hard and spirits low as the war years wore on. Production at the top secret plants was a steady effort round the clock, with shifts coming and going at all hours. But the people found numerous outlets for their fun.

The Army had built several recreational facilities nearby where workers could see movies, play ball and tennis, and enjoy some hand-clapping entertainment.

Out of neighboring Knoxville came the country/gospel quartet known as the Country Cut-Ups, four singers and a piano accompanist. The group traveled repeatedly to perform for the folks at Oak Ridge, and perhaps because of the times, they found that gospel numbers headed their audience request lists. They gradually built their entire repertoire around southern style gospel music and became one of the most sought-after acts in the area. Local fans took them to heart and began calling the performers the Oak Ridge Quartet.

As the war ended the foursome disbanded. But soon after, four other singers took up the name and settled in Nashville as the gospel Oak Ridge Quartet.

Singing spots changed periodically, but a group act held together and about 20 years ago began billing themselves as the Oak Ridge Boys.

Personnel continued to be replaced as one member after another dropped out to pursue other ventures. But gospel

remained their musical direction for some time.

Bill Golden joined the Oak Ridge Boys in 1964 and is the present day Oak with the longest tenure. Duane Allen was invited into the group in 1966; Richard Sterban in 1972; and Joe Bonsall in 1973.

Bill, Duane, Richard and Joe followed the gospel traditions of their predecessors until May of 1977 when the Oaks caught country music fever and launched their current country/pop style.

KATHY GANGWISCH/BROKAW
GANGWISCH COMPANY
KANSAS CITY, MO.

Although I think your magazine is the finest in its field, you're obviously hurting for good, open-minded record reviewers in the person of Nelson Allen. In his review of **The Oak Ridge Boys Have Arrived** (Sept. issue) he asks "where are all these women going?", referring to the song *Sometimes The Rain Won't Let Me Sleep*. In the song the words say "you never were as strong as your love was for me, and the night you traded life for life, it rained inside of me, and how I loved our little boy you trusted me to keep." Anyone with a reasonable amount of intelligence would understand that meant she died giving birth to the little boy. If *Dancing The Night Away* or any other songs on this LP aren't "cool enough" for Mr. Allen, then maybe he's so "deep in the well" he can't be reached! Yes, The Oaks are hot, and they are very popular, and I'm sure they'll be around for a long time. The Oak Ridge Boys have arrived and are here to stay! Even though I disagree with Mr. Allen, it hasn't changed my opinion of your magazine. Your article on The Oaks in the June issue was great. I loved the cover photo and all the others.

MARY McKITTRICK
GODLEY, TEXAS

Barbara Mandrell

WOW! Country Music Magazine and Barbara Mandrell, what a winning combination. Thank goodness the No. 1 magazine did a No. 1 article on the No. 1 Singer in the World—Barbara Mandrell.

Dolly Carlisle really did an outstanding job at capturing the real Barbara.

Barbara gives a lot through her singing and her love and devotion to her fans. She believes in giving, not 100% but 200%, just like your magazine.

There was only one thing that was missing in the article. Dolly did mention the Do-Rites, who are a super act themselves, but I think they deserve to have their names mentioned. The Do-Rites are: Gary Smith, Lonnie Webb, Dave Powelson, Mike Jones, Ben Brogden, Randy Wright, and I believe they should be voted "Band of the Year" in 1980. It is only natural that the No. 1 singer have a No. 1 band.

I don't know if Barbara has seen the article or not but I'm taking it with me to Tennessee this week-end, where I'll be spending a few days with her.

I know she'll be very proud of it.

Keep up the great work, you're No. 1 in my book.

DELORES WRIGHT
SHELBY, N.C.

Thank you very much Dolly Carlisle for your story about Barbara Mandrell in the November issue of *Country Music*.

I am one of her biggest fans and have been ever since I met her in New London, Conn. in August, 1976.

She is a super person all around. Barbara is an honest down to earth person, who treats everybody equally. So happy

for the many awards Barbara won this year.

Thanks so much again and I hope to read more about Barbara and her sister Louise in future issues.

JUDY VLEEK
NIANTIC, CONN.

Country Disco

I've read thru most of *Country Music's* November issue and, as usual it's very good.

It was interesting reading about the combination of country music and disco, in the Country Scene section. I do have a suggestion for another name of the union of country and disco. Call it "Crisco"!

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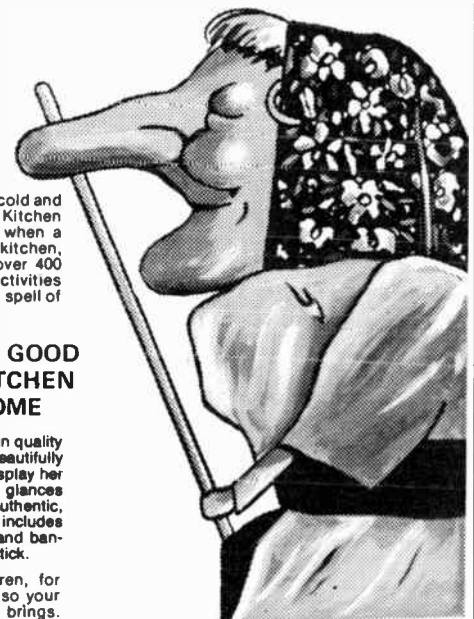
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CRYSTAL

(Continued from page 36)



and recording a song for it to be a hit, and recording what you like. There are some people who actually don't like the songs they've recorded. I don't want to have to go onstage and perform a song just because it was top ten."

Part of the creative freedom she and Reynolds demand includes choosing songs regardless of label. She likes country tunes, but she's just as likely to record a blues number, a standard or an outright rocker. Her eclectic tastes go back a long way, and she dismisses the idea that she has "gone pop" and moved away from her country roots.

"Going back in my music to the very beginning, anyone who was into it then would know that I've always recorded anything and everything. My voice has changed over the years. It's gotten better, I think. But as far as changing my music, I've always been right where I am now. It's just that now people are listening to me."

She has always been a country music fan and still is, she says. If she sees herself primarily as a crossover artist, she still feels there is—and should be—a place for more traditional country music.

"I looked at the CMA Awards show, for example, and there wasn't one really solid country act. Where was Moe Bandy, Joe Stampley? Where was Conway? They were all crossover acts, people that would appeal to more people. I can see that. I can understand the commercial reasons for it. But I would have gladly given my spot on the show, my song, to someone else. Where was Ernest Tubb? I'd have loved to see Bill Monroe on the show.

"I think it's about time they combined traditional and crossover artists. You can have both. There will always be real coun-

try, the hard country music, no matter what I do, no matter what anyone else does."

A calm and self-assured young woman, Crystal becomes heated when she discusses the crossover/country issue that has been the subject of so much discussion in Nashville the past few years. The words are just labels. They are meaningless, and for an artist, severely limiting both personally and professionally.

"I've had people say 'Well, I don't know how to label your music. It's not pop and it's not country.' I say, don't label it. You know, I had a really good compliment from a deejay in Los Angeles. He said that every time one of my records came out, he knew it was going to be good and he doesn't try to label it. He says, 'It's just Crystal.' I've never had anyone come up to me before and say that. But that's just what I've been trying to drum into their heads. It's just me."

"If I wanted to, I could just point my career in one direction and head for it. Say, 'This is the goal and I'm going after it.' I could do rather well that way, I think. I could combine all my efforts into one project and do it. But I don't want to head in just one direction. I know people who do that. They want one goal and they go after it really hard. Then, if they don't make it, they get really upset. That's not how I look at it."

The key, she feels, is in hanging on to her freedom. The freedom to record the way she wants, to pursue other career directions, to maintain a private life, to



look the way she wants. Success has a way of robbing a person of just those things, and it can be bewildering, she says. On the other hand, success has helped her realize the importance of holding on to her freedom.

"The only thing that maybe has changed about me in the past few years is that I've gotten more confidence. I think that confidence has given me the will to not care what people think. Even about little things, like how I wear my hair, or whether I wear tight pants. If I sit around worrying about what other people think—and sometimes I do—I wouldn't be myself. If they want to call me sweet, let them. If not, then not. But I'm going to dress and do things with myself that I want to."

Remarkably, it is in her private life that she has been most successful at resisting the limitations success brings. She has been happily married for eight years to her high school sweetheart, Bill Gatzimos, an intelligent and energetic law student, who has managed to be intimately involved in his wife's career while developing his own.

They have changed addresses several times in the past couple of years, preferring the country around Nashville to the city, and have so far avoided quarantining themselves to escape the onslaught of fans and the press. Their relationship is private. Not defensively private, but private nonetheless. And unlike many showbusiness marriages, both partners are of equal importance in the scheme of things.

"We might decide in a year to move. We never say 'This is going to be it.' As much as I travel, it doesn't matter really where I live. If Bill decided we needed to live somewhere else for his career, then we'd move. What needs to be will be," she says. "Bill has helped me with my career, but I wouldn't want to stand in his way. If I needed him to be with me on the road and his career needed him too much, I wouldn't push it. Because I feel that people should be able to do what they want in life. I'm doing what I like and I feel he should be able to do what he likes too."

The future, she thinks, will bring good things, perhaps even a career as a mother. But for now, both personally and professionally, Crystal is keeping her options open.

"You've got to look at it like this. You're only going to be in a place for so long. Then people's tastes change and someone else is going to come along. It's a question of trends, and I hope in the future that doesn't bother me. I don't think it will because I think by then I'll be doing other things. I don't see myself as just in the role of a performer. Maybe I'll be a mother, maybe a producer.

"You know, I really believe that doing the same things over and over again all the time can get boring. To liven it up, you've got to do things differently. I look at myself and, again, I don't want to put any labels on me."

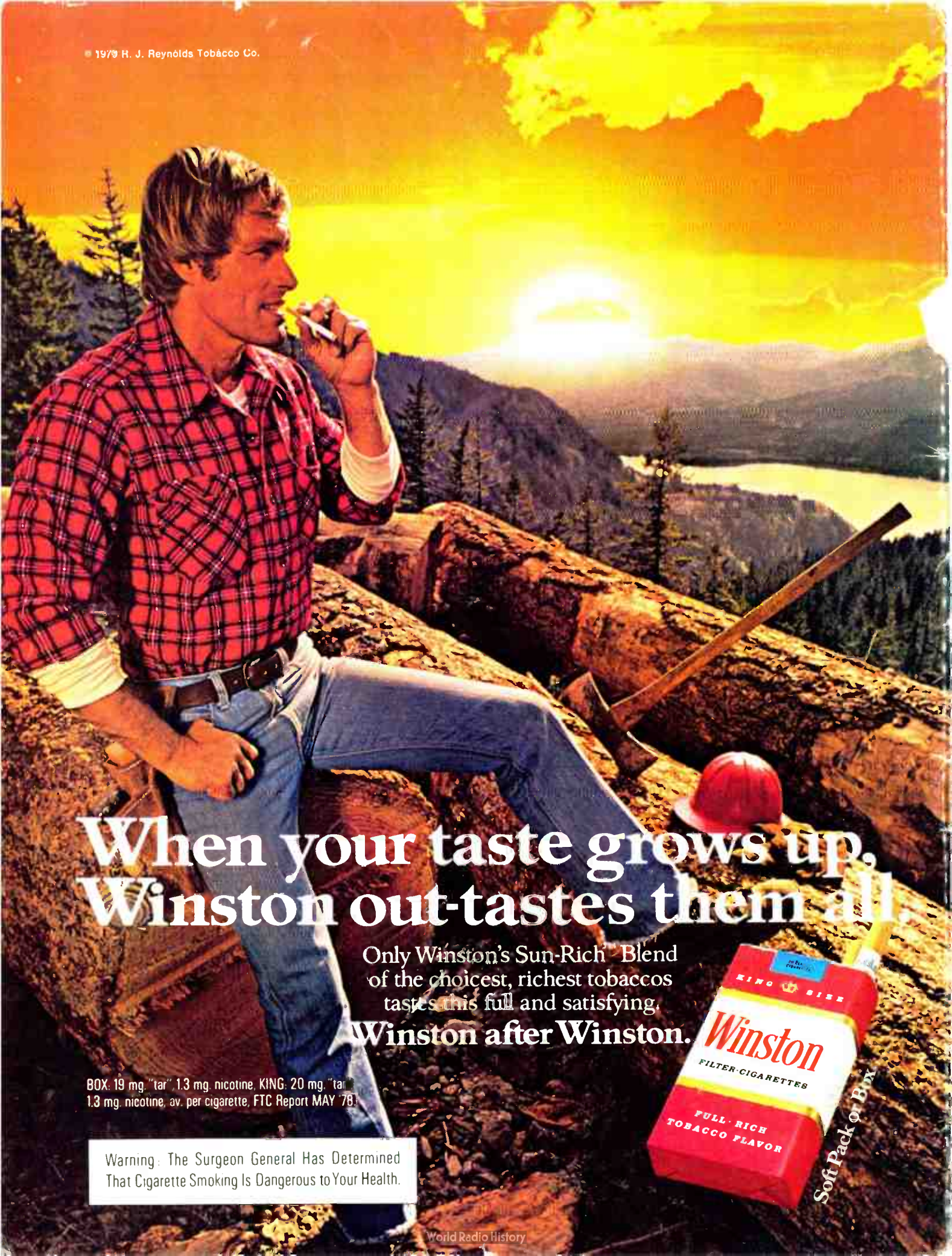
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