

COUNTRY MUSIC

P.37
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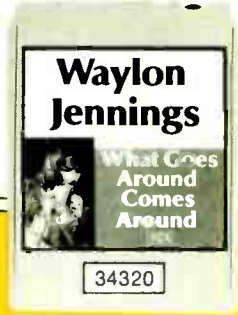
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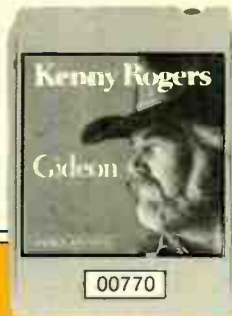
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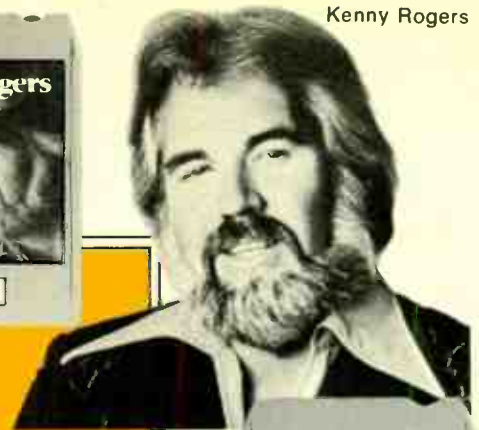
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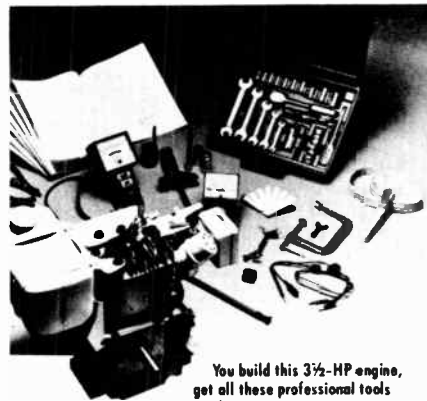
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Letters

Forever For Kitty

I bought your magazine for the first time in my life to read your long overdue story on Kitty Wells. To listen to her sing is to listen to the heart itself, and I have been her fan for the past 20 years.

Kitty Wells is country music, and it has been a disappointment to me to see her so often pushed aside and ignored by the "trendy" fans of today. Those of us who love her will never stop being her fans no matter what direction country music may take in the future.

PAUL I. FREET
CHAMBERSBURG, PA

Cowboy Music Misrepresented

I would like to make a comment concerning the movie *Urban Cowboy* and the accompanying soundtrack. The album is a poor representation of the Texas music scene and of the "urban cowboy scene."

I feel safe in saying that your average

crowd at Gilley's has never heard of 75 percent of the artists on the album. I'm equally sure that no more than three of the artists featured have ever played a "honky tonk."

There are many artists who performed in the "skull orchards" of the southwest for many years and have been instrumental in developing the phenomena of Texas music. It seems unfair that these acts were ignored in favor of rock 'n' roll.

RANDY JACKSON
DALLAS, TEXAS

Johnny Cash's Silver

The July/August 1980 issue is the first *Country Music Magazine* I've bought. I actually bought it to send to a Johnny Cash fan who is a pen pal in Czechoslovakia. However, it contains so many valuable and interesting items I decided to keep it and buy him another one.

I have been a Johnny Cash fan for at

least twenty years, and have attended many of his concerts in many different states. I can vouch that Johnny is a fine, kind, and concerned man as I've had a few occasions to have a few words with him as he arrived for his concerts.

Thanks so much for the pleasant hours of reading in *Country Music*.

CATHERINE HORNE
ROCKAWAY PARK, NEW YORK

My career as a disc jockey in Canada spans the same period as Johnny Cash's. On a couple of occasions us Johns have crossed paths, affording for me indelible memories. My first wife was a co-founder of Johnny's first Canadian fan club in Ottawa. Indeed, I met the lady in the first place as she used to call me to play Cash's records in the *Hey Porter, I Walk The Line* days. So, through him, albeit indirectly, I met her. Certainly, through her I was introduced to Johnny Cash.

ALABAMA

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A very clear memory, one that I will always treasure, followed a Cash performance in Ottawa a number of years ago. It was a late evening post-performance meal attended by John, Marshall, Luther, and a number of folks involved in that tour at a favorite restaurant of ours that specialized in Chinese dishes. Luther announced that he had never eaten Chinese food, and wasn't all that willing to try. I can recall assuring him that if he would only sample one or two dishes he would become a fan for life, and as I remember Johnny also put some pressure on Luther to at least try it. He finally did, and I believe that night made a convert, for better or for worse, out of Luther Perkins.

The last time I encountered Johnny Cash was a couple of years ago in Nashville when he was inducted into the Songwriter's Hall of Fame. It took the big man only a few seconds to recall who I was as I stepped up to add my handshake to all the congratulations he was receiving. I was impressed. It had been many years since we have met face to face, with only the odd telephone call and interview in the interim. Having read your special issue, I believe that my appreciation of this man is even greater.

May I just add that your publication is an excellent tool in programming my on-air assignments. Numerous times, when ideas have failed me completely, a quick

reference to one or another of your back issues has given me an idea on which I can build that day's show.

Thanks again to you and your entire staff for an exceptional effort on the Cash tribute issue. You can bet this deejay will keep that one handy as long as a listenable on-air performance requires even a small amount of inspiration.

JOHNNY MURPHY
MANITOBA, CANADA

I just finished reading the Johnny Cash tribute. Congratulations on the second best edition of *Country Music Magazine*, the first being the Elvis Presley tribute.

I would say that Johnny Cash has the advantage over Elvis in one way. His family and friends love and care for him as Johnny Cash, human being—not Johnny Cash, meal ticket. For this reason I believe he will continue to have a long and happy life unlike my favorite entertainer.

TINA GIBSON
COLUMBUS, OHIO

The July/August edition of your magazine must rate as your all-time best, and it is fitting that it should be the celebration issue for a first-rate individual: Johnny Cash. The opening page by Russell Barnard brought back many memories to me of first hearing the sound of the "Man

in Black" on the radio while milking cows on a Pennsylvania farm; continuing to listen to and see in person this man as I toiled through four years of classes at Michigan State; and hearing the familiar sound via the radio and records during another two years in the army. Johnny Cash's songs and music can always lift you up and help carry you along through the events of your life.

Thank you for this great addition to my 17 year collection of Johnny Cash records, articles, and other memorabilia.

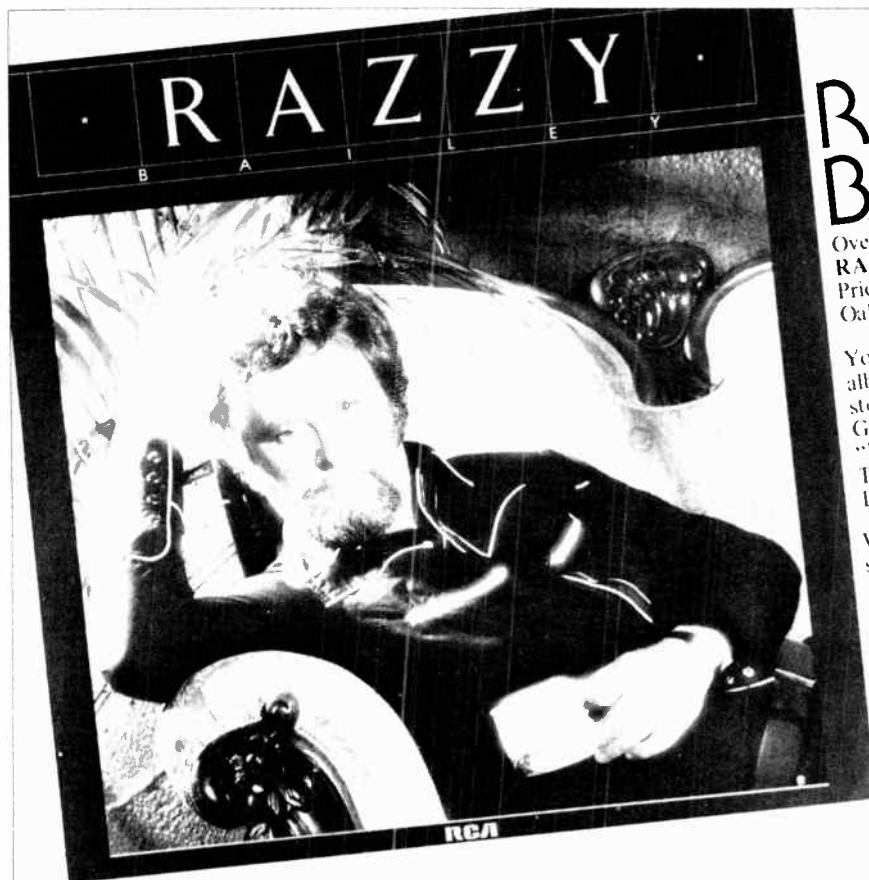
PAUL BRYAN, JR.
PERKASIE, PENNSYLVANIA

As a faithful reader and subscriber of *Country Music* since its inception, I've enjoyed reading about all the greats in country music. But none have quite the impact of Johnny Cash.

The Johnny Cash Silver Anniversary issue has to be truly a "collector's item." As I started through the big July/August issue I found each following page a bigger thrill than the preceding one. The J.C. photography pages were breathtakingly beautiful.

I hope the average reader is aware of the immense task of putting such a massive issue to press. A stupendous effort. Congratulations!

BILL J. WHITE
COLUMBIA, MISSOURI



RAZZY BAILEY

Over the last year you've seen RAZZY BAILEY in concert with Charley Pride, Mel Tillis, Conway Twitty, and the Oak Ridge Boys.

You got to know him through his first album, "If Love Had A Face", and the steady stream of hits that included "Ain't Got No Business Doing Business Today", "What Time Do You Have To Be Back To Heaven" and "Tonight She's Gonna Love Me".

With a stylistic range from funky to silky smooth, he's packed his second I.P. RAZZY with great hits like, "I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF YOU", "TOO OLD TO PLAY COWBOY" and "LOVIN' UP A STORM". RAZZY the new album from an old friend.

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A Gilley Fan and a Gilley Foe

I would like to take this opportunity to thank *Country Music* for a job well done. The story on Mickey Gilley was great, as well as informative. Mickey is a rare success story. He relates to his fans as few big name stars do today. I have heard him say "If I stayed and played the club (Gilley's) the average fan couldn't come to see me because of the cost of the trip to Pasadena. I go to my fans and I enjoy sharing my talent with my fans."

How many other stars of C&W would do this if they owned, and had named after them the world's largest nightclub?

I'm sure, also, that the movie *Urban Cowboy* will be a big box office hit and will give country music a big boost.

SUE HOBBS
VIRGINIA & WEST VIRGINIA
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
MICKEY GILLEY INTERNATIONAL
FAN CLUB

I just read the story on Mickey Gilley in the June issue of *Country Music*. I was absolutely astounded when I read that he charged five dollars to have a picture made with him. Who does he think he is? The very best artists don't do things like that, and he's far from the best. He's one of a million average country singers. This is cheap and in very bad taste. He should be

satisfied (even grateful) that his fans spend their money to buy his records, go to his concerts, wear his t-shirts, and go to his club.

It's great to have confidence in yourself, but there's a difference in having confidence and having delusions. Mickey Gilley must be a very greedy man. He may be earning a lot of money, but he sure isn't earning much respect.

BARBARA HAMILTON
BENTON, ILLINOIS

A Country Convert

I'm a 22-year-old American-born Japanese girl who can't get through the day without listening to the majestic sound of Nashville. I am permanently addicted to country music and the artists who make it great.

Although I was a rock 'n' roll fan at one time, I just got tired of the whole scene. It got boring. My rock trip started at age six when I jumped the Beatlemania bandwagon. After a while though, it started losing its appeal. Then I found a Lynn Anderson album that was lying around the house. *Rose Garden* was one of the songs on the album, and by the time the record was finished I was already convinced that country was the best sound on earth. Before long I had acquired quite a collection of records by various artists. It's the only kind of music I listen to now.

Your magazine has helped me to appreciate country music a lot more. There is much more to the people who give us the songs we love, and what they have given me through their music is priceless. I salute them!

JACKIE L. TAJIRI
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Haggard's Horn Man

I've been reading *Country Music Magazine* for the past five years and just have one quarrel with you. In your July/August issue Kelly Delaney reviewed Merle Haggard's album *The Way I Am*, and made reference to the great sax work by Donnie Sanders on *Remember Me (I'm The One Who Loves You)*. I don't know who Donnie Sanders is, but if Delaney had done any homework, he would know that Merle's horn man is none other than Don Markham. Markham has played with Merle for several years and is a superb musician. He also does some really fine trumpet work on the beginning of the same tune.

Give Markham the credit he so richly deserves. Thanks for an otherwise super magazine.

TERESA C. MILLS
PINE RIVER, MINNESOTA

Oops! A little checking proves you to be right. Thanks for the insight, and our apologies to Don Markham. Ed.

In Praise of Janie

I've been a subscriber to *Country Music* for several years and have enjoyed all the issues. I particularly loved your June 1980 issue because of the excellent article on my favorite, Janie Fricke. She sure is "ready for stardom" and at last receiving the recognition she deserves. I'm in full agreement with a statement in the article—Janie does have the best female voice in the country music industry!

Thank you, and keep the excellent issues coming.

BARBARA STEPENUCK
PEABODY, MASSACHUSETTS

Overseas Fan Seeks Country Connection

Having come across one of your rather belated issues of *Country Music*, I thought I'd grab hold of this lifeline in the hope that you can help me.

For a long while now, I have been trying to find some friends overseas who would be willing to correspond with me and exchange some information regarding country and western artists. We have a limited knowledge over here of what progress is made by each singer, so it would be tremendous to have some news of them all via some pen-friends. Believe me, I'll be most grateful for any assistance!

Also, even though my copy of *Country*

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Music is outdated, I must admit that the material was a pleasure to read. Everything is so foreign to me that it makes the reading even more exciting. Keep it up!

DIANA PUTNAM
FAMONA,
BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

Reader Doubts Dolly's Virtue

My father always said "Birds of a feather flock together," and "Show me the company you keep and I can tell what you are."

For a person who claims to have a religious background, the making of a movie, *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* shows Dolly Parton will do anything for a million dollars.

CHARLES PENNINGTON
CONNERSVILLE, IND.

Reader Defends Dolly's Virtue

I am 16 years old and I have a three year subscription to your magazine, so I thought I'd write in and express my opinion on what seems to be a very touchy subject in the country music field.

I personally am sick of hearing people say that Dolly Parton has turned her back on country music. If you look at the situation with an open mind, it seems to be the other way around. Country music has turned its back on Dolly Parton. The woman sings a few songs with a little beat to it, and everybody says she's gone rock. She makes a movie, and people say Dolly's gone Hollywood. Dolly Parton is no more rock than Mick Jagger is country.

Why is it that Linda Ronstadt (whom I also like) is considered the "Queen of Country-Rock" and nobody complains about the fact that she sings both styles? Dolly Parton has come a long way from the days of singing with Porter Wagoner; she now is known throughout the world for her unique style. Why then does everybody get so upset when she's only trying to better herself?

It is apparent that all this commotion and backstabbing is a clear sign of jealousy from those of her peers who don't have the ability, or at least don't realize they do, to do the same!

JAMES SANDERS
FT. WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA

To Err Or Not

Your Silver Anniversary issue on Johnny Cash is great, but I found a mistake I must correct. The section "Don't Forget Number Two" is one of the best, but in Johnny's listing of the CMA's *Male Vocalists* for the years 1939-1979, either John or you made a mistake about the year 1970. Merle Haggard *not* Conway Twitty won *Male Vocalist* that year, as well as *Entertainer of the Year*, *Album of the Year*, and *Single Record of the Year*. I even have a photo of Merle holding all four

awards with Roy Clark to his right, and Dolly and Porter on his left.

Conway Twitty should have won *Male Vocalist* in the years after 1970, but as my memory recalls Conway has only been so honored with such an award for his duets with Loretta Lynn.

MRS. JANN CHAMBERS
GRANTS PASS, OREGON

A Broad Overview From Abroad

Having received, in one batch, my subscription copies of *Country Music*, I'd like to comment on a variety of letters, topics and issues.

Firstly, as an Englishman, I enjoy all the stateside information and record reviews. I feel sure that the trend to crossover country will become slower shortly because country music buffs are demanding more steel, fiddles, etc. Perhaps we needed the crossover stuff to remind us of what we were missing, although in England it's fair to say that we've always gone more for artists retaining basic country instrumentation—the exceptions being those artists who've managed to cross over in the past and have gained a general non-country fan following (e.g. Whitman, Reeves, Cash, Billie Joe Spears, Wynette, and Parton, all of whom are popular with both country and pop fans). Here in England, most folks would not regard Nelson, Rogers and Parton as country singers, though country fans obviously do.

On my visit to the USA last summer, I marvelled at all the concerts, magazines, and radio/TV shows for the country fan. In seven weeks I had more country music than in my previous 19 years of interest. I was amazed also at the number of cheap record outlets in all the major cities.

One or two mistakes I noticed in the June issues if I may mention them: (1) Kitty Wells, if she married in 1938, would have been 20 not 16, or perhaps she was born in 1922 not 1918; (2) Tommy Overstreet says that George Jones' producer up till two three years ago was Pappy Daly. Well, he may receive credits for production on re-released LPs, but surely George moved to Epic/CBS in the early '70s, and Billy Sherrill became his producer. Both minor errors in an otherwise superb magazine.

I enjoy the letters page very much because it makes me think and sends me hurrying to past editions to discover exactly what the letters are commenting on. One or two general comments in support of letters written: I also wish that you could avoid printing swear words which surely doesn't prevent the artist from saying how he feels. He's entitled, like Willie, to say what he thinks, but not surely in an offensive way. I disagree with his viewpoint on hash, for example, but respect his right to express it. (While in Nashville I met Willie jogging and he allowed me to interrupt him for a chat. A very nice man to talk to, even

if I dislike his lifestyle.)

I am a born-again Christian who believes that all unbelievers lacking faith in Jesus' death and resurrection to save them, will go to hell. But I don't think Mrs. K.E. Boyd's threatening letter (June 1980) is the best way to convince you all that you need to know Jesus's saving power and forgiveness. While accepting some of her viewpoints, I respect the view of others to think differently. I commend you on your willingness to feature born-again Christian artists such as Johnny Cash and J.C. Riley, and welcome a policy of featuring a wide variety of artists, even if I disagree with their lifestyles.

So please Mrs. Boyd, pray, and commend Jesus to others in love. Pray that Christian artists will live in such a way as to win others to following Him.

A pity, also, that one of your letter writers felt that Jerry Lee Lewis was tearing the church, Bible, and God to pieces. It seems to me that he was expressing the truth about salvation, heaven and hell, yet was unwilling to do the necessary—repent, believe, and receive Jesus' forgiveness. Poor Jerry sounds so confused, or powerless to act on the Biblical truth—or is it just his unwillingness?

Thanks for letting me sound off.
MARTIN D. YOUNG
CHARLTON, LONDON, ENGLAND

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Vassar Clements

A Gentle Man With Music in his Soul

By Patrick Carr

Vassar Clements at New York City's Lone Star Cafe: It's a strange but human vision. Up there on a cramped little stage above the college students and old music professionals and expatriate Texans he looks like a country boy but plays like a prince.

The contrasts wheel around the place. A girl dressed "punk" does the *Twist* to Vassar's jazz-vamped version of the Allman Brothers' *Melissa* but admits to her heart that she'd really—really—go ape if only he'd fiddle up *Orange Blossom Special* and have done with it; a Texan hippie in shades and a ponytail figures from the depth of his experience in these waters that "Vassar's more stoned than the band" but boogies anyway and says "c'est la vie" when informed that the band has been with Vassar but a mere three gigs; the boys in the band look just like the Texan hippie—they're wild—while Vassar himself, sucking on his pipe like a satisfied daddy in Sears-like clothing and a haircut so flat atop that miniature F-14s could land on it, urges them to really get it on.

It is an odd but moving business, this affair between Vassar and the young.

Vassar took up the fiddle as a boy in Florida and learned to play it according to his deep interest in bluegrass music and the influence of the jazz-based big band and quintet music he heard on the radio. At the age of 14 he took himself to Nashville, determined, and was hired by Bill Monroe, then as now a crafty old fish with an almost supernatural sonar for willing talent of the inspired variety. Monroe taught him "everything," and thus equipped, Vassar graduated from the Monroe school and went more or less freelance. He supplied the fiddle work for countless studio sessions and Opry and road gigs for countless country stars—Faron Young and Jim & Jesse stood out—and although in those fifties and sixties years the fiddle was becoming almost unwanted in country music, he kept at it and earned a good living. A gentle soul, not at all given to fits of ego or unnecessary exhibitions of his talent, he displayed his mastery of the instrument only as and when called upon: grateful simply to play,

he was a superb side-man, as everyone he ever worked for will tell you.

Like many a shy person in such a situation, with heat inside but no ego through which to express it, Vassar became an alcoholic in his thirties. It didn't finish him, though. His skill was so great and his decorum so in place that even when blind and loaded he could still show up on time and turn in a performance which was at the very least more than adequate. Thus, unlike many burning musicians of that era, he was never cast aside by the singer-bosses and set out to pasture in the skull orchards as a fading blemish on country music's good name.

After a long time Vassar realized that booze was about to kill him, and he quit it.



The Dobrolic Plectral Society--Vassar, John Hartford, Earl Scruggs & Norman Blake.

Typically, he did not announce his decision; he just started to pass on the drink offers which swirled around him.

His side-man's career continued unabated then, but all of a sudden a brand-new ballgame appeared. John Hartford, the then-young writer of *Gentle On My Mind* and a prolific and enthusiastic picker of fretted instruments, came to Vassar with a proposition: Would Vassar care to join him in a picking band? It was a intriguing invitation—a band of *musicians*, with no star singer, a brotherhood of musical equals?—and Vassar jumped at it, and the *Dobrolic Plectral Society* came into being.

The *Society* stretched Vassar's horizons in more ways than one. Together, Hart-

ford and he and Norman Blake and Tut Taylor constructed an organization in which each player's urges, rather than some search for commerciality or boss's approval, were the main impulses. The band incorporated jazz and swing and bluegrass and the blues and all kinds of country music, but its central notion was the idea of group and individual improvisation: everybody was supposed to get it on to the best of their individuality, meanwhile supporting each other to the limit of their respect.

This, an elastic happening important enough in its own right, was accompanied by something else: With Hartford and Tut and Norman, Vassar found himself suddenly on the college circuit. In those

regions, the audiences *listened*. Hartford was used to it, but the other boys fell back in joyful amazement: everywhere they went the kids loved and revered them with an intensity none of them had ever experienced. Each man gained new hope for himself during the venture.

It ended, though, and after a stint in the youthfully-inclined Earl Scruggs Review, Vassar found himself considering a life in which a combination of studio and vending-machine-business work would supply the necessary bucks. Meanwhile, his wife and manager, Millie, sat at home answering the telephone, and more and more she began to get calls from, of all people, college booking agents. They wanted Vassar, but neither Vassar nor



Millie knew how great was their desire until Millie finally began quoting the outrageous price Vassar had suggested as a means of getting the bookers off his back while he planned his new and disappointing life. Without so much as a "that's too much," the colleges accepted Vassar's price, and Vassar and Millie, amazed, went along with it. Vassar, whose star had risen without his knowing it, started showing up for college with just his fiddle. He was scared to death at first—he had to keep thinking about what he was going to say between numbers.

Gradually he grew accustomed to the fear and receptive to the admiration. Though still shy, he achieved a certain

Though still shy, Vassar achieved a certain revelation: music was the common ground.

revelation: music was the common ground, and here were people who thought that music was big, big fun.

The word spread. It was universally acknowledged that Vassar was not only a virtuoso but also a fine fellow who didn't mind mixing with the kids and giving his all when it counted. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band leaned heavily on both his talent and his amiability for their cross-generational **Will The Circle Be Unbroken** album; Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead incorporated him into his *Old & In The Way* neoblugrass band and occasionally took him on the road and into the hippie halls with the Dead themselves ("Ol' Garcia, he's gonna be playin' somethin' 24 hours a day unless he's just *got* to get a little sleep," said Vassar to writer Elkin Brown back in '75); Dickey Betts of the Allman Brothers Band did likewise, building the country-jazz core of his *American Music Revue* around him; in the end, Vassar got to make his own albums with his name on the front and the names of pickers of his own personal choice all over the back.

It was nice. The music was technically masterful on most occasions, always dependent on the jazz art of improvisation around planned structures, and usually with origins all over the place. It ranged from James Brown to Hank Williams to Hank Garland to *Black Mountain Rag* and something by Miles Davis, but it always had that Vassar vamp. Raised a country funk man and having shunned too much contact with the western, honky-tonk and MOR variants of yesterday's and today's country-type music throughout his career, Vassar had become a most purely unreconstructed and low-down dirty old boy. This he remains today.

* * *

Having submitted to the interview process, Vassar begins slowly—he really does hate to talk—but warms steadily. His new album, he says, will be "another kind



of mixture of things" but will perhaps be based more on country music than a lot of his projects. He's cut Hank Williams' *There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight*, for instance. On the other hand, the album also contains a version of *Move* by Miles Davis. Typical, this.

Otherwise, he's very happy with Flying Fish Records, where they treat him right and he knows them all personally and furthermore the promotion and distribution are surprisingly on the ball for such a small company; better than getting lost in some conglomerate, he thinks. As to his recorded product, his personal favorite is the **Vassar Clements** album, his first on the Mercury label some six years ago. That one had good tunes, he says.

The subject of that rebirth onto the college and youth circuit arises naturally, and Vassar begins to wax eloquent. "They don't have to be well informed or hear somebody else talk about a tune," he says about kid audiences. "They make up their own minds whether they like it or not. It's not like 'Well, that's the only one I know' and they give you a hand for that, and then you play your heart out on everything else and they don't even know what you're doing . . . y'know, there's so many people in Nashville that have just never experienced that kind of crowd, that don't even *know* about it. It'd blow their minds to get out there and have somebody really enjoy them like that." He adds vis-a-vis the unnatural barriers between different kinds of music and audiences that "music is a gift, and the musicians should give it, and the listeners should go hear everything they get a chance to hear."

The theme continues as I ask him about how he feels to be playing with a band which is much younger than himself. "Music is real strange," he says. "I guess I couldn't tell you the age of any one of them boys. It's just a thing where you hear somebody and you like the way they play, and you don't care if they got long hair or short hair or if they wear a tie, don't wear a tie, whatever . . . you're just into the music." He pauses for a moment, sucking that pipe and thinking. "Three gigs, man," he says. "They *are* good."

I ask him how he liked playing with the Grateful Dead, conceivably the ultimate no-holds-barred hippie-shake and boogie band of all time. "Deep down, really, it's just the beat and the electrical things of it that make it just a little different from country," he says. "To me, that's what makes any music different—swing music from the big band era, anything—it's that *beat*." He does admit that playing with the Dead was something of an experience. "I'd just sit around and *look*, y'know? I just didn't know how people got that *involved*." He shakes his head at the memory, and a little light comes into his eyes when he says that "when you play with the Dead you may just play for *hours*; you might get to play just about any doggone thing you want to." Difficult to imagine that kind of thing going on behind Faron Young.

But hell, maybe Vassar should be the one to get some of the older and absolutely expert country musicians together and give *them* a whirl, try to combine all that long-learned expertise and neglected soul with a stiff dose of free form and end up with

something just as exciting as the Dead but less sloppy. Has he ever considered doing such a thing?

"Yeah, I've thought about things in that respect," he says. "But it seems that some of those older country people don't think about the rhythm as much as I do. I play off the rhythm section, and they just don't seem like they do. If they got a bass, fine; if they don't, that's fine too. But a good rhythm section is the hardest thing to find, y'know? I think that's the reason they give up on it. I'd like to get 'em together and get a good rhythm section behind 'em. I think then they'd like it."

Now the talk has edged into dreams about how nice it would be if such a thing—a real hard-core-experienced country-jazz band which would play by ear and be almost transcendently moving—and it's sad to realize that given all the obstacles, it may never happen. On the other hand, though, Vassar's ambitions are straight and true. When asked about them, he replies immediately: "To be able to keep thinking, to keep learning, and to be able to play to as many people as I can."

The rest of the talk is more mundane. Millie "hangs on that phone" in Mt. Juliet, right across the lake from Cash's house, while Vassar works 240 days a year and the money stays stable thanks to a steady demand and Millie's financial expertise. There are no big debts, the bills get paid on time, the college and club circuit is hard but satisfying, and, says Vassar, "there's no way for me to complain."



At the Lone Star Cafe, Vassar's first set on the second night demonstrates the major flaw in his method—it's hard to cook your skull off when you have a headache, and it's still early and the crowd is still stoking its appetite while yours goes unsatisfied—but the second set, much more happy, vindicates it. The now-loose musicians sow their seeds with expert Vassar-led abandon and the now-fertile and attentive crowd laps them upon with vital concentration. In the process a few licks get invented and a few new dances are revealed, and all in all the joint in general jumps like a jellyroll on a flatbed. ■

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PEOPLE

By Bob Campbell

The new RCA album, **Reflections**, is a landmark LP in that it brings together **Chet Atkins** and **Doc Watson** for the first time and brings veteran singer/songwriter **John D. Loudermilk** back into the music business as co-producer of the album along with Atkins. Loudermilk, author of such classics as *Tobacco Road* and *Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye*, had been semi-retired but wanted to get back to work as a producer. Atkins, who helped Loudermilk get his start in Nashville, offered him the chance to co-produce the album. Chet and Doc sing as well as pick on the album, and it features some old breakdowns and traditional songs such as *I'm On My Way*, *You're Going To Be Sorry* and *Black and White Rag*. Atkins credits old friend and Nashville booking agent **Don Light** with getting the LP off the ground. "Don kept talking to me about it and suggesting it," Atkins said. "John Loudermilk had also suggested the idea to me. I had never picked with Doc before we did the album, and the first time I heard him was a year or two ago at the Exit/In (Nashville club). Don took me there to see Doc. I thought the album came off very well. Doc is a helluva picker and we had fun doing it."

Waylon Jennings has taped his first network television special and it is scheduled for release this fall. Jennings has long shied away from most TV performances, but producer **Jack Thompson** is an old friend who used to play in Waylon's band back in Phoenix, Arizona during the early '60s. The special has been taped in concert and at the Manzanita Speedway in Phoenix where Jennings and guest **Jim Garner** will race cars. **Jessi Colter** will also guest on the show. Waylon is also making his screen debut in a dramatic role in *The Oklahoma City Dolls*, a two hour ABC-TV movie set for future release. Waylon plays a semi-professional football player and co-stars with **Susan Blakely**.

Another country singer taking up acting is none other than **George Jones**. In *Any Which Way You Can*, **Clint Eastwood's** sequel to *Any Which Way But Loose*, George sings as well as acts in the movie. And someone recently asked Jones how he felt to be recording again with **Tammy Wynette**. "Well, I can argue with her now and get by with it," George laughed.

Speaking of Tammy Wynette, production has started on the CBS-TV film based on her autobiography, *Stand By Your Man*. **Barbra Streisand's** boyfriend, **Jon Peters**, is producing the movie which will be filmed in Nashville.

As most fans know, **Marty Robbins** races stock cars with the big boys when he is not singing. Racing around an oval track at speeds approaching 200 miles-an-hour seems like a risky business for an entertainer, but Robbins maintains an interesting perspective on the sport. "I don't consider myself as risking my life," Marty said. "Sure, it is dangerous and you have to know exactly what you are doing, but piloting an airplane or driving a ski boat is dangerous also. If you are prepared physically and mentally, if you know your car and what it can do, and if you have some experience at driving in a race, you are not risking your life. Boxers are taking a bigger risk than I am. Five of them died in the past year. Some people say drivers have a death wish—nonsense. We are having a good time."



Do you ever wonder what kind of music the stars listen to? **Joe Bonsall** of the **Oak Ridge Boys** loves the L.A. soft rock sound. "I love **Jackson Browne**. His lyrics just blow me away. I like all of that soft-rock L.A. sound. I like **J.D. Souther**, **Rondstadt**, **Karla Bonoff** and **Kim Carnes**. I get on kicks and right now I'm listening a lot to **Neil Diamond** and **Jimmy Buffet**. I also just bought **Bob Seger's Against The Wind** album. An Oak Ridge Boys album that I really like, and it is not one of our biggest sellers, is the **Room Service** LP. I think **Billy Joel's Just The Way You Are** is my favorite song over the past couple of years.

Charlie Daniels has never been a man to mince words or back away from much of anything. For instance, in his controversial song, *In America*, he tells the Russians to "go straight to hell" among other choice lyrics. But Daniels told the *The Nashville Tennessean* he is not trying to get political, only expressing a personal view. "I just got sick every time I turned on the damn TV—sick of all the negative things and no

positive things," the 43-year-old Daniels said. "It's nothing political, just the way I feel about my country." Daniels also said he supports the government on draft registration, although he has a 15-year-old son and is apprehensive about the possibility of war. Other than keeping in better shape and trying to cut down on drinking beer, Charlie also outlined a few new goals he is working toward. "I want a world champion Tennessee Walking horse, a regional champion quarter horse and a prize Hereford bull. I also want a 20-stall barn on my place. Your ideas, your ambitions and the plateaus change as you grow older and go along. Each plateau brings new goals."

Things could be getting slightly out of hand. Fans can buy **Willie Nelson** albums, Willie Nelson t-shirts, buy concert tickets, and go see him in the movies. Now you can buy Willie jeans. That's right. A Dallas sportswear firm is marketing a line of jeans carrying a metallic gold "Willie" logo on the rear pocket. The jeans are manufactured by Mr. Fine, Inc. and retail for under \$30. The firm indicates a line of Willie shirts, vests, jackets, and sweatshirts will eventually flood the market.

Eddie Rabbitt reminisced recently about his early days in Nashville, and he told a story involving him and **Kris Kristofferson**. Rabbitt's first big break came when **Elvis Presley** recorded *Kentucky Rain* in 1969. Eddie said he came out of the RCA building one day and ran into Kristofferson who was struggling to get ahead at the time. "Kris and I were friends and I ran into him in the alley behind RCA and told him I got an Elvis cut. Kris said, 'Well, that shows you where we are going. You get an Elvis cut and I just got a cut by **Sheb Wooley**.'"

Two more books on country stars are in the works. **Louise Mandrell**, sister of **Barbara**, is writing a book about the Mandrell family, and a new book on the late **Patsy Cline** is due to be released in 1981. After taping a Christmas Special last year with her family, Louise said the show brought back so many memories that she decided to write a book. **Ellis Nassour**, a New York-based entertainment writer, is working on an "intimate biography" of Patsy Cline called *Remembering Patsy: The Untold Story*. The book will feature interviews with her husband, **Charlie Dick**, and friends such as **Loretta Lynn**, **Dottie West**, **Jeanne Pruett** and **Jimmy Dean**. The book could possibly turn into a made-for-TV movie.

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Oak Ridge Boys Benefit Raises \$100,000

All day the bright Texas sun had burned a hot, dry hole in the deep blue Dallas sky, shooting the temperature above the 100 degree mark. In this third week in June of 1980, the biggest heat wave in 25 years had officially hit Texas. But the searing heat failed to fry the spirits of the 15,500 folks who nearly filled the cavernous, brand-new Reunion Hall in downtown Dallas for the second annual Stars For Children Benefit Show sponsored by and starring The Oak Ridge Boys. The show was an extravaganza in every respect. In addition to the Oaks, (who performed two sets), Eddie Rabbitt, Roy Clark, Tammy Wynette, George "Goober" Lindsay, Con Hunley, John Schneider of *The Dukes of Hazzard* and The Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders donated their time for the concert which ran from 8 p.m. until three o'clock the next morning. Everyone got their money's worth. Nearly all the crowd stayed until the final, blistering set by the colorful Oaks, and \$100,000 after expenses was raised by the stars for the Prevention of Child Abuse Fund. The Stars for Children Benefit is a coordinated effort between The Oak Ridge Boys and the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) of Fort Worth, which is heavily involved in the problem of child abuse. Although the Oaks donate their time to 10 benefits a year, the group had always wanted to sponsor a benefit of its own. The Oak Ridge Boys are family men and reports of child abuse worried and concerned them.

In 1978, following meetings with the ARC of Fort Worth, the idea for the Stars For Children Benefit concert was conceived. Held last year in Fort Worth, the first benefit raised \$47,000 and paved the way for the tremendous success of this year's show. The Oaks' Joe Bonsall, chairman and director of the Stars For Children organization, is understandably proud of the progress and success of the benefit. He said the Oaks are determined to use the funds primarily as an educational tool to make the public more aware of child abuse.

"Our benefit has turned into a monster," Bonsall said. "When we first decided to do this, we figured it would take us four or five years to get it off the ground. But we are thinking about expanding it into a two day concert now. But basically, we are trying to promote public awareness. We would like to see this money finance a national ad campaign showing a positive approach to the prevention of child abuse. Like having The Oaks surrounded by a bunch of kids and us saying children are our greatest natural resource, so let's love 'em. We want to use this money to promote children's rights. And we have total control over distribution of the money.

"This past year, we used the money from the first benefit to produce the film, *The Silent Neighbor*, which was shown at the concert," Bonsall added. "This is a 10-minute subtle, effective film that will be

shown this year for civic organizations, religious groups, hospitals, and wherever it can help. We also want to subsidize some day camps. There is a lot of abuse concerning retarded kids and sometimes parents get at the end of their rope. They need a place to send these kids for awhile. There are good camps out there that need funding."

Bonsall also said that much of his time this year will be spent in putting together a board of directors, consisting of leaders in the field of education, politics, business and the helping professions. Although the Oak Ridge Boys will still maintain control, this board will help to increase the size and scope of the Stars for Children organization.

The only possible criticism of the show concerned its excessive length. But Bonsall, aware of the time problem from the start, decided the benefit is special and refused to cut down each act's time.

"I knew it was going to be long, but I finally said I'm not going to cut anybody," Bonsall explained. "It is a once-a-year thing and if the acts don't mind, forget about the overtime costs. This is a benefit and we want to give the people the biggest show they had ever seen. How do you cut time on acts like Roy Clark, Eddie Rabbitt and George Jones? The biggest criticism last year was that there was not enough Oak Ridge Boys, so we opened and closed the show. I also tried to keep myself visible on stage. But everything was coordinated well and we had the quickest set changes of any show of this kind."

Besides building the Stars for Children organization, the Oaks have another goal up their sleeve.

"We have been thinking about getting together with Kenny Rogers again and going up and conquering the big Northeast markets," Bonsall said. "Maybe going into Philly and doing the Spectrum, going to Boston and playing the Boston Garden—maybe even trying out the Forum in L.A. I think it will take us and Kenny to pull those markets because they aren't strong holds for country music. You have to search the airwaves up there to find a country song. But putting on great live shows is what we love to do, and we would like to try those markets."



Elvis Anniversary LP Creates Great Demand

If any skeptics still remain who doubt the lasting popularity of the late Elvis Presley, they should check with RCA Records in New York City. Presley fans responded so enthusiastically last summer to the RCA announcement of the 25th anniversary limited-edition eight-record Elvis Presley album that the company was forced to initiate an unusual sales policy of arranging for retail stores to accept advance reservations for the coveted **Elvis Aron Presley** album. Priced at \$69.95, the 250,000 albums, 8-tracks and cassettes were sold almost through advance reservations. In fact, RCA was overwhelmed by the reaction.

"After the first national press stories appeared announcing the album, RCA and its branch officers were deluged by thousands of phone calls from fans and collectors virtually pleading to buy copies, RCA Division Sales Vice President Larry Gallagher said. "They wanted to give us credit card numbers, to send us checks or even to pay cash to assure their getting copies of the album. One child even telephoned from Wales wanting to be certain copies of the album would be available there. Some of the people thought that by placing their orders early they would get the lowest numbers of the sequentially numbered edition."

"One determined New York lady



telephoned ten retail stores attempting to reserve a copy," Gallagher added. "Each told her it was not set up to take advance orders. In desperation, she telephoned the *Daily News* writer who had written a feature about the album. He referred her to RCA, and the New York branch office began asking stores to take advance orders."

In the face of such demand, RCA advised its sales people across the country to recommend that all stores take advance reservations. Also, in a national ad cam-

paign, RCA ran ads in local newspapers telling customers they could make advance arrangements.

The album contains 65 previously unreleased cuts, 22 previously released cuts, 13 minutes of interviews with Presley, and additional interviews with people who knew Presley. Included in the album is an unusual cut in which Presley accompanies himself on piano. The signature on the front cover is an exact copy from his original RCA contract which was signed in March, 1955.

Nashville Pop Music Promoted

Bob Dylan has done it, Joan Baez has done it, Neil Young has done it, the groups Kansas and Dr. Hook have done it, Paul McCartney has done it, and such artists as Andy Williams, Helen Reddy, and Michael Johnson have done it. What they have done is make music in Nashville recording studios. Now, a group of Nashville music executives have formed the Nashville Music Association (NMA) a non-profit corporation that aims to inform the music business and general public that Nashville is much more than a haven for country music. The notion that only country music is recorded in Nashville has long been a popular misconception.

Because of the quality of Nashville studios, the expertise of Nashville studio pickers and the relaxed atmosphere inside the studios, artists from all fields of music have periodically recorded in music city. Jimmy Bowen, head of Elektra/Asylum Records in Nashville and board chairman of the NMA, is ready to let the rest of the world know the capabilities of Nashville.

"Our purpose is to present Nashville music—r&b, pop, rock, country, classical, jazz, gospel, disco, and everything in between to the world," Bowen said. "We will place particular emphasis on those forms of music which presently do not have organized support. Our aim is to do the same kind of fantastic job as the Country Music Association does with country music.

"Over the last few years, there has been growing unrest in Nashville caused by the fact that there is no representation for a large part of the music community," Bowen added. "This led to the formation of the Progressive Music Association,

which has now been assimilated into the NMA. One purpose is to let the centers of the music business know what is going on in Nashville other than country and gospel music. Pop success and rock success that comes out of Nashville is viewed as an exception, but it is the feeling of some of the leaders in the city that through a concentrated communications effort coordinated by this group, that we can change this attitude and let the rest of the industry know what is going on. We have one of the healthiest music centers in the world and we feel that we need to have everyone look at Nashville as a total music community."

The record companies in Nashville have traditionally been set up to sign country artists, and to promote and market country music. But Bowen said another NMA goal is to insure that Nashville record labels in three years will have executives on their staffs who understand and are willing to sign and promote pop music out of Nashville.

Patsy Bruce Enjoys Broad Nashville Career

"I seem to wear a lot of different hats. Sometimes I feel like I am a cat with different lives," Patsy Bruce has remarked, referring to her multi-faceted roles in Nashville as songwriter, publisher, agent, and now casting director. Along with husband Ed Bruce, she co-wrote *Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys*, as well as other hit songs. Last summer Ms. Bruce entered another field when she was named casting director for the movie, *This Is Elvis*, a docu-drama scheduled for release in 1981. The movie is endorsed by the Presley family and Col. Tom Parker, Presley's manager. The movie will combine actual concert footage of Presley along with a dramatic portrayal of his life.



And how did Ms. Bruce find herself in the role of casting director? She represents her husband, who is active in commercials. According to Patsy, she was disappointed with efforts by a local talent agency to land a TV role for Ed, so she decided to take things into her own hands. One thing just led to another.

"Two years ago a lady named Sherry Rhodes was casting in Nashville for *The Dukes of Hazzard*," Ms. Bruce said. "An agency from Nashville sought permission to present my husband for a part in the series. I gave them permission because I had to be in New York with Ed. When I got back I called the agency and they had done nothing. It made me so mad that I left the airport, picked up Ed's press kit at the of-

fice and went down to the casting office and sat there for about an hour. For some reason there was an immediate attraction and Sherry and I became fast friends. She was going through hell and not seeing the right people, so I got on the phone and helped her out. When she worked as casting director on *Urban Cowboy* she asked me to be her assistant. She trained me."

Although she is relatively new at casting, Ms. Bruce believes her songwriting experience is invaluable as preparation for casting a role. When casting for parts, she will sometimes see a multitude of people and quick judgements must be made. And sometimes her methods can be unsettling to people.

"I think the the thing that helped me most in casting is a sensitivity to people. I have acquired a lot of this through songwriting and observation of people," said Ms. Bruce, who also mentioned she works as agent for other actresses and actors besides her husband. "I think I have an insight into people and what they can and cannot do. I get into trouble sometimes,

though, because I find myself staring at people, particularly when I am working on a film. I suppose the wrong connotation is taken sometimes when I am in a bar and catch myself staring deep into someone's eyes.

"But I found a young man in a restaurant last night and I asked him to come see me," she added. "He had that something I was looking for. It is funny to watch people's reactions. I always introduce myself and tell them what I am doing, but people still look at you like you are nuts. People say, 'you're kidding, this isn't for real.' It's like going up to someone and saying, 'Hi, I'm from Warner Brothers films. Want to be in the movies?' Sounds like a line doesn't it?"

Since Ms. Bruce has entered the casting business, she has observed that some Nashville singers and songwriters possess acting talent. For instance, she said that R.C. Bannon is a fine actor who "can bring chills to your arm when he reads a part." She feels that Bannon will be cast in a film at some point. She also thinks songwriter Billy Ray Reynolds possesses genuine acting talent.

Stories are passed around that actors as a breed are not particularly intelligent, but after working in film, Ms. Bruce has learned this idea is wrong. And as a songwriter, she feels there are certain similarities between the professions.

"There is a common misconception that actors, and even songwriters are stupid," Ms. Bruce said. "They are not. The best actors I have ever known were very well read. They may not be Rhodes scholars, but they read a lot and observe people a lot. As a songwriter, I watch people a lot anyway. When I write a song I have to figure out what that person in the song will do next, the same thing as in a script. You don't jump rope in bed. That is the best way I know how to describe it."

But with all her other work does Ms. Bruce still have time or the inclination to write? Emphatically, yes. "I sure do. Writing is almost like a reward to me. I can be tired when I get home, but the thrill of sitting down and doing it is so great that I hold it out as dessert."

Changes Mark Debut of 12th Hee Haw Season

As *Hee Haw* starts its 12th season on national television there are changes—some you can see and some you can't. For one thing, it is finally being produced where most people thought it had been produced all along. This past spring Yongestreet Productions moved lock, stock, and corn pone to the television production facilities at Nashville's Opryland amusement park. As the hot theatre lights went down near the end of the spring session of taping *Hee Haw*, line producer Sam Lovullo stopped his otherwise incessant running from sets to control rooms to talk about the move.

"It was a lot of work, sure, but it's been fun," said Lovullo. "I came here roughly five or six weeks earlier than usual so we could get situated. It was sort of like starting all over."

The move to Opryland was precipitated by the management of Nashville station WTVF, *Hee Haw's* home for the first 11 years. The top brass at WTVF, a CBS affiliate, made the decision in late January of this year to get out of the "hall for hire" business and stick to using their facilities for their own productions. It might be relevant to note that CBS was the network which forced *Hee Haw* into syndication in the early 1970s, cancelling the show because they thought it was too hokey to last.

It seems like every time *Hee Haw* is forced to make big changes, things just get better. The Opryland television complex offers two pluses to the *Hee Haw* crew—more room and newer, better equipment. Lovullo also says that the layout of the entire Opryland complex, its personnel in addition to the facilities, will give the show more options in the future.

One of the options offered by the increased space at Opryland was to build larger sets for *Hee Haw* guests and regulars to use. Many of the simple, familiar sets like barnyard, corn field, and country stores will return this year. The only difference is that they are somewhat larger now.

"If we had brought all the old sets here and used them like they were, we would've been swallowed up by this place," explained Lovullo. "Besides, it would've been a waste to have all this extra floor space and not use it to improve the show."

New sets making their debut with this 12th season of *Hee Haw* include a fabulous large performance area called the "Hee Haw Club." It looks like a good sized country night club, and giving perhaps a more personal flavor to the performances that come from its stage. Tourists who just happen to be taking the guided tour of Opryland's Grand Ole Opry stage on the other side of the Opry House facility are whisked onto the night club set. There they are treated to songs by some of their favorite country artists as they become non-acting extras in scenes being taped for fall airing on the over 200 stations which now carry *Hee Haw*.

According to Opryland tour guides, visitors asked "and where do they make *Hee Haw*" even before the show moved there. Out of town tourists could never have found the unheralded downtown Nashville studios in the basement of WTVF. Now, if they are lucky enough to be at Opryland when the show is being produced they may see themselves on TV later applauding the likes of Roy Clark, Buck Owens, Grandpa Jones, or a host of

other great guest stars like George Jones or Sonny Curtis.

In a separate, but not all together unrelated move, *Hee Haw Honey's*, a spin-off from the original, was dropped from the production by Yongestreet. *Honey's* featured many of the supporting entertainers, actors and actresses from *Hee Haw*, minus Roy Clark and Buck Owens. It wasn't a matter of *Honey's* not being a good program, in fact its very popularity combined with an outside company's handling of the distribution caused the show to be canned.

Whereas Yongestreet Productions controlled the distribution of *Hee Haw*, *Honey's* was being handled by an outside group which was selling it to the stations in competition in the same market area as stations which had the original program. Problems arose when the spinoff wound up on another channel in the same time slot as the original, putting the two in direct competition and hurting both programs in the ratings game.

So, *Honey's* is gone but *Hee Haw* lives on, bigger and better than ever.

BOB MILLARD

Joel Sonnier: Champion of Country Music

Joel Sonnier will be the first to tell you it's tough to make a living performing a heart-felt ethnic music in an increasingly monochrome musical world. But his voluble, positive Cajun nature sees the outlook with optimism.

"It is music which is hard to be accepted, because it is unique. It is something very valuable to society, because it is music of the heart. It is based on the soulful, tearful, crying sound, the Cajun fiddle, and blues and jazz and country, and the French accordion. You have to feel it to sing it."

Sonnier has been on the bandstand for twenty-five of his thirty-odd years, singing and playing the accordion, blending the music of his native southwest Louisiana with his self-penned songs. He left the local club circuit ("I was playing thirteen dances a week at one point!") and headed for California in 1972, playing country and a bit of Cajun and endlessly performing and writing. He came to Nashville in the mid 1970s, and recorded for Mercury for three and a half years with moderate success, while playing on recording sessions and getting songs cut by Merle Haggard, Conway and Loretta, and Johnny Cash among others.

He now records for Rounder Records, and is delighted with the independent label's approach to and respect of his music: "Many of the songs are songs I was raised with, and some I have written, like *Louisiana Blues* and *Cajun Born*.

This is an introductory album, and that's why I feel so positive about it. They believe in Joel Sonnier and his music, in its honesty and in its beauty. In this way they introduce me: this is him, what he does. This is the music of his roots.

"I'll tell you—I think the 1980s and 1990s will have a different style of music; many styles. I think ethnic music, roots music, will come back in, music that has love and inspiration, that has some blues. Music that is real and not camouflaged.

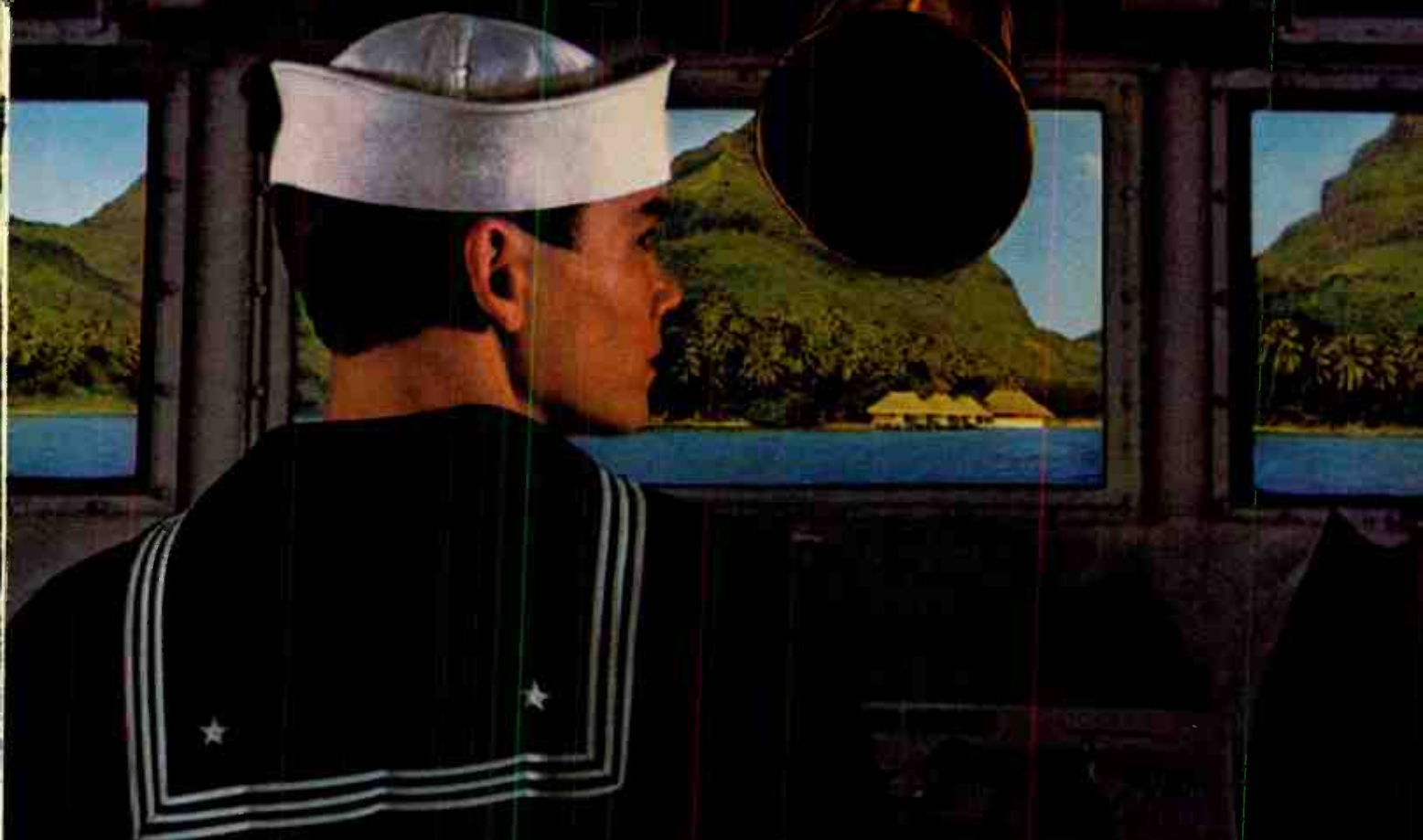
"Cajun music is that kind of music, and it is growing. We've got Frenchie Burke and Doug Kershaw and Jimmy Newman and his band; they are all building an audience for when this moment comes.

"I am from Louisiana, proud country. No Cajun will say he ain't proud! I am proud of my roots, and proud to be recording what I believe in. I believe people will accept honest music, heritage music, in the 1980s, and I fully believe Joel Sonnier will be a part of that."

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Battles Back

By Laura Eipper

The pretty, dark-haired lady perched on the sofa in Warner Brothers Records' Nashville office recently looked the picture of radiant health as she sipped a cup of herb tea, chatted light-heartedly about the rigors of a current diet and discussed the songs on her upcoming record album.

For years she had been known as the *Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A.*, a nearly inescapable nickname earned after she swept up a Grammy and a platinum album with her debut song of the same name in 1972.

If the Rebecca-of-Sunnybrook-Farm image it conjured up had never quite done justice to the intelligent, witty woman who wrote the song, it said something of her native optimism and a forcefully positive attitude toward life. And now, sitting next to Donna Fargo, it seemed inconceivable that just two years ago, she was lying in a hospital bed, exhausted, frightened and wondering how and if she could go on with a life that had suddenly been shattered.

The headlines in July, 1978 were simple, straightforward and devastating: *Donna Fargo Stricken With Multiple Sclerosis*. Her doctors were hopeful—multiple sclerosis, though it is incurable at present, varies considerably in its effects. With luck, they said, she could return to work after a few months of rest, and perhaps be troubled by nothing more than the deep numbness that had sent her to the hospital in Santa Barbara, California for tests.

For Donna herself, hopefulness was a little harder to come by. As it does in most cases, m.s. has struck her at a time when life held its fullest promise. Her career, if not at the fever-pitch it was when *Happiest Girl* made her the best-selling female recording artist of the year, was going nicely. Her time was busy, divided between a pleasant home in the hills of Nashville, a \$250,000 touring bus and a variety of concert dates and television engagements. She was writing songs, recording and steadily selling records. Her nearly ten year marriage to producer/manager Stan Silver was a happy one.

Then, with just the barest of warnings,

the walls came crashing down. The facts about m.s. are sobering: a progressive, degenerative disease of the nervous system, characterized by hardened patches of tissue in the brain and spinal column that interfere with normal neurological functions. Symptoms can include numbness, loss of coordination and painful spasms. At its worst, it can lead to blindness, paralysis and even early death, and doctors can do little but try to alleviate the severity of the symptoms.

For some m.s. victims, it is just the unpredictability of the disease that is one of its worst symptoms—a fear that can lead to a paralysis of the spirit. Donna Fargo was no exception, and for her the past two years have been a test of courage and spirit, an epic battle that she has turned into a victory of personal growth.

The lady sipping her tea on the sofa still had the plucky smile, the feminine warmth and homey charm of the *Happiest Girl*, but with something special added. There is the steady glow of maturity and depth in Donna Fargo today, and a committed desire to share what the past two years have taught her about her illness and herself.

"When we first found out, I was overwhelmed by fear, just overcome," she said, her pixie-ish smile sobering to thoughtfulness. "It had been kind of gradual but I really knew before the doctors told me, but I still wasn't prepared. When I went to the hospital for tests, I had been suffering from numbness and I'd had an earlier attack a few years before. But I kept hoping that it might be something easy, like a vitamin deficiency. I kept telling my doctor, 'Don't let it be the biggie—' and he knew what I meant."

"One day during the tests, I heard the doctors talking and all at once I knew what it was. It hit me hard, although I think at the time it hit Stan even harder. I felt—lost. I immediately called the hospital chaplain and told him I needed help. He was a real stern type of guy, but I felt some comfort in just being able to say that to him: 'I'm lost. I need help.'"

It was at that point, she said, that she began to evolve what became a plan to cope with her illness, though for months after the initial diagnosis she was stymied by wave after wave of terrifying physical symptoms.

"At first my body was going through so many changes. I became very depressed and I seriously questioned whether I even wanted to try working again. It seemed as if every day I'd wake up and something else would go wrong with me. There was the numbness, and then I went through a period when I lost my coordination. I couldn't write, I couldn't dial the phone, I couldn't even cut my own food. I gave up completely for a few weeks until that passed. Then, for about six weeks I had what they call tonic spasms. They don't know too much about them, but they are triggered by movement, and they feel like you're being electrocuted. Sometimes they lasted only a few minutes, but toward the end they lasted for hours. I was terribly frightened, really depressed, but I began to realize finally that I was going to have to just take things a minute at a time. I began to consciously work my way out of the depression."

When she speaks of her struggle with

"At first my body was going through so many changes, I became very depressed and I seriously questioned whether I even wanted to try working again."

m.s. and the accompanying depression, there is a strong streak of the high school English teacher Donna was before she was suddenly whisked to stardom. She has coped with her illness in much the same way she coped with becoming a star—with intelligence and a great deal of thought. When she was discovered at an audition by her future husband, she took his encouragement of her songwriting to heart, went home and "analyzed all the hits on the radio and tried to figure out what made

them good." When *Happiest Girl* hit, she was still sensibly teaching school—just in case. She graded her last exam papers on the plane to Las Vegas for her first opening.

Then, two years ago she sat down and began to figure out the reasonable way to proceed down what was at best an uncertain path. She decided to continue working, trying to find a pace she could maintain within the confines of her health. The best defense, she decided after long thinking, was a good offense.

"Other people help you make decisions. Stan and I talked and talked about going back to work. He encouraged me to do what I wanted. My doctor was supportive—a great believer in following your own instincts. I took about four months off, but then gradually I got my bearings again. I knew I had to get back on a schedule again, so I did and that helped. I began to read and study and really discipline myself.

"I decided that I couldn't just give up, that I wasn't going to become defeated and overcome by this disease. I think you can try too hard sometimes and have to ease up a little, but I think I've made the progress I've made in the past two years because I

"I took about four months off, but then gradually I got my bearings again."

kept trying. I was convinced of something and I kept trying."

Her approach, she said, has been a three-part effort—spiritual, mental and nutritional—that she pursues faithfully every day.

The spiritual side of her life, particularly, has become important, and she speaks of it freely and with conviction. Though her earliest recollections of singing go back to childhood solos in the tiny Baptist Church, in Mt. Airy, N.C., religion as such had been a regular but not a major part of her life until two years ago.

"I always believed in God and went to church as a little girl, which I think is reflected in some of my songs," she said. "But I've gotten much more serious about it now. It's been a kind of gradual growth for me the past few years, and I certainly don't have it perfected yet. But I came to the realization through this disease that you eventually come to the end of yourself. You realize how helpless you are by yourself, that there has to be something in life bigger than you are. Now, I read the Bible all the time and I listen to a lot of spirit-building tapes, especially tapes from Kenneth Hagan, who's a minister in Tulsa. I've found a lot of comfort in the reading and the tapes—in fact I think they've saved my life."

Mentally, Donna has engaged in a rigorous, no-nonsense Operation Bootstrap based on self-analysis, constant reevaluation of her progress and a realistic

approach to the seriousness of her illness.

"I read all the time. Books on illness, the general causes of illness. It's devastating to read up on the realities of a disease, but I think it's something you need to do when this happens. I make a very conscious effort to evaluate myself realistically, to look at where I really am, how I'm really doing. I try very hard to keep a positive attitude mentally and it's worked very well."

Self-discipline is the key in Donna's approach to nutrition, too, and something she considers a cornerstone to maintaining her health at its best.

"A person who has a health problem already doesn't have as much to work with obviously, so it's doubly important to watch what you're doing nutritionally. I believe you have something to say about how your health turns out. One of the hardest things about this whole illness has been changing my diet. I fight with myself every day about what I eat. Right now I've given up sugar and I'm working on giving up cheese, and boy it's hard. But I believe if you really want to get better, you have to make some sacrifices."

Her diet regimen centers around an abundance of fruits and fresh vegetables, natural foods whenever possible, and none of the fattening and delicious junk food that is usually a staple of life on the road.

"Basically, I'm just sticking to a good diet and evaluating myself each month. I literally write down what I've eaten and take a look at it. I don't kid myself—I mean I'll look at the list and scold myself, like 'Okay kiddo, you ate tortilla chips twenty times this month'—and it works great. You get to give yourself a little praise that way too when you've done something good. I'd recommend it to anyone."

In apparent good spirits, and in improved health, Donna's plan seems to be working like a charm. Her career too, is thriving. Though she has pared down the number of one-nighters and long jaunts on the bus, she and Silver find themselves on the road nearly as much as ever, roosting in Nashville just long enough for a brief vacation or a recording session.

This spring she recorded a new album, *Fargo*, which was released recently. After a

"I still have to take it easy at times. The problem is that my mind wants to go on, but my body says to slow down sometimes."

temporary respite, she is also writing songs again, perhaps her first love.

The songs, she said, do not deal with her illness, something she feels would be self-pitying and of questionable taste.

"I guess to some extent it will be

reflected in my writing—maybe it was in some of the songs on *Just for You*, my last album. But things like this are hard to share at first and I sort of believe that you shouldn't get too self-indulgent either. In a song you start out with the basics of your own experience, but then, if a song is good, it becomes its own thing. I think you draw from other people's experiences, too, which is part of why I like to record other people's songs and not just my own. It tickles me to hear good material, to see how other people write and how they see life."

She describes her health as "really fine," although it is only in recent months that she has begun to enjoy entire days at a stretch that are free of pain.

"I still have to take it a little easy at times. I still have the numbness from the neck down, although it's not nearly as severe as it was when I had the big attack in '78. The main problem these days is the fatigue. The problem is that my mind wants to go on, but my body says to slow down sometimes."

Her candidness about her experiences with m.s., she says, is something that came about after a long and determined effort. At first reluctant to discuss the disease publicly at all, Donna now freely volunteers her thoughts on the illness and has become increasingly involved in fundraising for m.s. research.

"For the first six months I couldn't talk about it at all, but now I've gotten much more at ease about it. As I've dealt with it better, I've felt that maybe I could help other people deal with it too. I've heard from a lot of people with m.s. myself and that helped me a great deal. Now, I feel responsible to spend some time talking about it, because I think I may have come to some places within myself that other people may not have reached yet. They may need reassurance and if I can give it to them, I want to."

Donna feels she is realistic about her future, since the disease can stay in extended remissions much like the ones she is now enjoying. It can also worsen, and that knowledge is something she is resigned to.

"There's really no way to know what will come, but I try to keep that positive attitude all the time. I try to stay up. I guess I've learned that there are times when you have to run and times you have to face things and times when you have to fight and times when you need to give in. We go through all these things. You need to keep reevaluating, and don't stop trying. Sometimes people can be destroyed by an illness—but it can also work for you.

"I will never be able to look on this as a blessing or be thankful in any way that it has happened. But it's made me grow. It's made me stronger and tougher. Right now, I just look forward to finding a solid answer to m.s. And in the meantime I want to help other people who are trying to struggle with it the way I am." ■

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Alabama:

Southern Bred and Stardom Bound

By Suzan Crane

As I anxiously finger the keys of my typewriter, my efforts to compile a complete list of country music bands is being met with unexpected results. My memory and my files divulge scores of duets—George and Tammy, Dolly and Porter, Jim Ed and Helen—among the ranking male and female country vocalists, but

both the album and single, *Tennessee River*, have been escalating steadily up the country charts of the three trade publications; the single, as of this writing, having just hit the coveted number one slot in the *Cashbox* listings. This establishes Alabama as the first new band to reach the top spot in nearly two years.

but lacking. That kind of financial push did not exist. Here is another case, in the Sun Records mold, of a small independent company believing in, taking a chance with, and subsequently breaking an artist cast away by the established industry.

After nine years together things are now happening with a vengeance for Alabama.



only one current band. Not a singer with a backup group, mind you, but a complete, all-inclusive instrumental outfit. And they have been seen on television so much lately, it may be equally accurate to qualify them as stars of the tube. You know, of course, of whom I speak: Mr. Charlie Daniels and his band of hot country kickers. But the question still remains: Is the Charlie Daniels Band really the only country group today to sing, play and write their own material, aside from forerunners in the field like the Byrds, the Flying Burrito Brothers, and such legendary southern rockers as the Allman Brothers and Marshall Tucker Band? If in fact this is so, then it is no small wonder that RCA Records' newly signed group Alabama is presently enjoying status as something of a country music phenomenon.

Released the beginning of June the band's debut album, *My Home's In Alabama*, is receiving not only critical acclaim, but substantial commercial success as well. So substantial, in fact, that

The land of numbers, though, is not totally alien territory to the three cousins who are the nucleus of Alabama. In 1977 they had a mild success, due to their huge following, with a tune released on GRT Records called *I Want To Be With You*. More recently, with just a limited press run, their independently released single *I Wanna Come Over* hit the charts last year within a week of its release. In the next seven days the disc was picked up by Dallas-based MDJ Records, re-released in quantity, and finally peaked at number 33. Their next single, which is the title cut of their current album, *My Home's In Alabama*, positioned itself in the charts for 13 weeks, eventually jumping all the way to number 17.

These figures may seem unimportant to the average music lover, but they are crucially significant in terms of a band's future. What makes these achievements even more remarkable is that the money and hype that usually backs a record released by one of the major labels was all

The band generally agrees that their performance at the New Faces Seminar, an event which attracts radio, press and record people, clinched their signing with RCA, one of the majors which had formerly rejected them. Ironically, one of those songs which had failed to entice the record companies to their court was *I Wanna Come Over*.

Joining RCA's roster last April, Alabama is now enjoying the attention and promotional benefits of a large company. During Fan Fair week in Nashville, the members endured an especially hectic schedule of performing and promoting as RCA, like a proud parent, showed off its new arrival to press and public alike.

"Hectic," laughs Jeff Cook, Alabama's lead guitarist, fiddler and keyboard player. "that's not even the right word. It's going to have to be more emphatic than that. But even though I'm going around without much sleep, doing all these shows, signing autographs . . . I love it. It's flattering for someone to want your autograph because

you feel that you've done your best to give them music that they will enjoy.

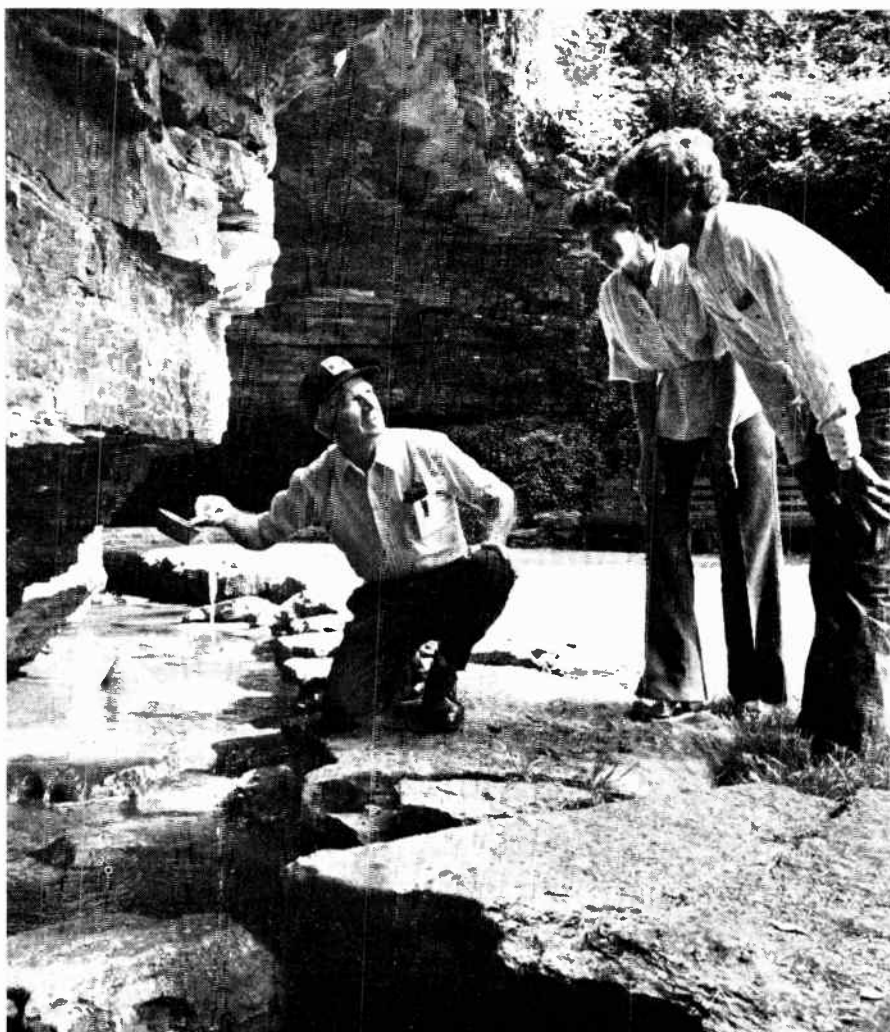
Cook is the spokesman for the group during our interview, as the members share equally in responsibilities involving the press and media. This communal setup is further exemplified on the album jacket, with the four band members each credited as a "creative songwriter."

It is 4:30 in the afternoon and the group has been working since 6 a.m. when they appeared on *The Ralph Emery Show*, a performance which Jeff admits did not come off too well. But such an occurrence is not the norm. While most of their music has the unpretentious sincerity of the truest country tune, Alabama's stage show exists as much more of a spectacle. Donned in an elaborate confederate-flag cape, Jeff plays clean, crisp guitar licks as his musical counterparts reproduce the same calibre sound heard on their album. Just as the record lacks the visual elements of their live performance, the concert is without some of the embellishments heard on vinyl. Missing most noticeably are the "sweetening touches" of Kris Wilkinson and The Wire Choir's 18-piece string ensemble, and the layers of three-part harmony overdubbing allows in the studio. Nevertheless, Jeff, Randy Owen, and Teddy Gentry (lead singer and rhythm guitar; bass and vocals, respectively) mesh their voices into hauntingly beautiful harmony with no discernable sacrifice for quality evident. Their flashiest stunt on stage is a little musical acrobatic number the three frontmen choreographed to *Wildwood Flower*, inspired by a similar antic Jeff once observed.

The unsuspecting audience first witnesses Jeff playing his guitar underneath an arched back, then upright behind his head, a series of movements which then shift into some pretzel-like entanglement involving the two guitarists and bassist playing each others' instruments.

An extensive national tour had to be postponed due to Alabama's prior commitment to play at The Bowery, a club in the South Carolina resort town of Myrtle Beach at which they have been the resident band for the past eight summers. This exposure has earned the group a legion of loyal fans, many of whom belong to the band's already established fan club. It also gave them the opportunity to sell their four independently released albums from the stage. "We probably got albums over half the country," Jeff says in reference to the incredible turnover and cross-section of people such a resort area sees. "We've had people there from Germany, Sweden, France, England . . . really all over. Not a majority, but a representative. Enough to get a few things scattered around the world."

According to Jeff, statistics (from where unknown) show the greatest percentage of Alabama's fans to be women. "I don't



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know why," he shrugs in bewilderment. "That's just something I've heard since being around Nashville. They say 'Don't ever write a song that puts a woman down, and if anything build her up.'"

Much of the material on Alabama's current album appears to be autobiographical, at least in part. They take the listener on a journey through their past; bringing us to their home, introducing us to their lovers, and inviting us to share some of their experiences. It's a scenic ride on American roads and through human emotions. The music won't allow you to stay in any one place too long, though, as tempos and sentiments change with every song. You get to like these boys on vinyl, their honesty and integrity, and especially their loyalty to their roots.

*My home's in Alabama
No matter where I lie my head
My home's in Alabama
Southern born and southern bred*

My Home's In Alabama
Copyright 1980 BMI

And Alabama is where they continue to live with their families, despite Nashville's prominence in country music. Jeff, Randy, and Teddy are all married and have children. Mark Herndon, Alabama's drummer, is not. In fact, he will move to that state for the first time after the band gets off the road and settles, temporarily, into a more staid routine, practicing and composing at their workshop in Fort Payne, about three hours from their homes.

Aside from the fact that he is a good steady drummer, flexibility is one of Mark's greatest attributes as far as the rest of the band is concerned. "If we wanted to go to Timbuktu tomorrow," jests Jeff, "he'd be ready to go." His childhood as a "military brat" accustomed the band's youngest member to moving around a lot throughout Europe and the United States. Originally from Massachusetts ("Extreme Northern Alabama" he'll tell you), Mark spent the greater part of his life in the south, most recently in North Carolina, which is where he first met the other members of Alabama just over a year ago.

Mark is the seventh in a long progression of drummers that never seemed to work out. Strange, I thought, that their last drummer, the one preceding Mark, should have left the band in the wake of a pending and long awaited break. It was the dawning of summer, just prior to their signing to MDJ and the release of *I Wanna Come Over*. "Well, we didn't know that at the time," Jeff replies. "There were no problems as far as the music. He just went back to Nashville to evidently try and make it on his own."

Which unfortunately wasn't the case for some of the others. "We tried another one of our cousins. He played with us a very short time—maybe a month. We thought he had some rhythm, but it wasn't enough to be a drummer. I think he's gone into

banjo pickin' now. I haven't seen him in quite a while." A tight rhythm section is much of the basis of a tight band. It is therefore necessary for the drummer to work with and off the bass, an ability which Mark apparently has. After an unsettled history, it seems as though Mark has provided Alabama with that missing beat.

Jeff Cook, Randy Owen, and Teddy Gentry are bound not only by the music in

Randy and Teddy. Jeff further channeled his interest in music through the airwaves, working all during high school as a part-time disc jockey at a local radio station, where he played rock and country music. "About every third record was country... right from the *Record World* charts," he slyly admits. It is this amalgamation of influences that have melded to create the accessible hybrid sound of Alabama.

A lot of work and a lot of frustration



Highlighting Alabama's shows, Randy Owen, Jeff Cook and Teddy Gentry literally trade licks as they play tangled up in string to the tune of Wildwood Flower.

their souls, but by the blood running through their veins. While cousins Randy and Teddy spent their youth on neighboring farms at the top of Lookout Mountain, they did not discover until the three had been playing together for some time, that Jeff, who grew up in the nearby city of Fort Payne, was also family. "We all got to talkin' one day," recalls Jeff, "and realized 'Well if he's kin to you, and I'm kin to him, then I must be kin to you too.'"

Although a mere eight miles separated the cousins' childhood homes, their backgrounds spanned a much greater distance. Randy and Teddy both come from musical families; mostly gospel, some country. Until joining with Jeff, their roots emanated from the music of the church. Jeff's tastes paralleled the British invasion of rock 'n' roll in the '60s which led to his early involvement in rock bands. Having played lead guitar since age 13, Jeff garnered experience in the rock/top 40 vein, while simultaneously assembling an arsenal of musical equipment. It was this equipment, an asset few others had, that initially brought him to the attention of

also characterizes the band's struggle toward stardom. There were many times throughout the years that the boys were ready to call it quits. In the early '70s Jeff moved to Anniston, Alabama followed shortly by his two cousins. Jeff held jobs in the government and at Western Electric; Teddy and Randy layed carpet. But they were together, which was after all, the point. Sharing a house, they practiced their instruments and sang... literally throughout the night. So intent were they on utilizing their waking hours, they even moved all three beds into one room. "Even with the lights off we'd lay there in the dark and sing until one by one we'd drift off to sleep," Jeff reminisces with amusement.

Although his former jobs were good ones, they were also merely "average" ones, a feeling which eventually compelled Jeff to leave and pursue music full-time. Upon his departure co-workers dismissed him with doubt and pessimism, and it is now his greatest pleasure to prove them wrong, to vindicate himself with a 'Hey I showed you' without actually going back

and saying it." It's a personal satisfaction, one that he and the rest of his band hope to achieve in the form of a CMA award. "Right now," Jeff says, "we're working towards *Group of the Year* or *Entertainer of the Year*. We would also like *Song of the Year* ... you know, any of the awards."

They hope to begin recording their fifth album, the second for RCA, following their summer run in Myrtle Beach. "Our booking schedule is filling up rapidly, but we hope to spend a week or two at one time in the studio—something we've never been able to do before." Indeed, living in one place and recording in another characterizes Alabama's past recording experience, which more resembles a series of quick, fragmented hands of poker during short lunch breaks rather than a continuous afternoon marathon. Just as you're about to lay that winning card down, the time's up.

According to Jeff, the band currently has enough material to fill the grooves of records for the next two years, aside from any new tunes they write, or what others may pitch to them. But it is unlikely that a song other than their own will appear on an Alabama album. Justifying this, Jeff says, "We're not against recording someone else's stuff; but we prefer to record our own simply because of publishing and writer's royalties. It's just another way to make the money that's to be made on a song."

No greenhorns, these boys. The three cousins have even formed their own corporation: Wild Country Incorporated. "That was the name of our band until 1977," offers Jeff, "when we found out there were millions of 'Wild Countries' scattered around. Also, we thought there might be a problem with a certain cosmetic firm, Avon, who makes a product by that name." The rest of his explanation only affirms my belief that these guys have it all pretty much figured out. "Alabama is a good short name, and you can't copyright a state name. It's also a good alphabetical place to be in a music store. That's the first album that's gonna be in there."

Their logic, and allegiance to their home state is impressive. And indeed these country folk may have lived happily ever after in the womb of this mountain region had their passion for music not driven them beyond the comforts of home. Despite having to leave their families, and the often dizzying schedules, Jeff exclaims with boyish enthusiasm, "Yes, I like the road life. I like meeting people. I like doing interviews—it's a learning process. I'm learning about, and seeing places that I probably would have never seen. Tomorrow," he beams, "we're flying to St. Louis. We'll see the arch, ya know!" But it seems once a country boy, always a country boy as Jeff reveals, "I still need my time to get out on the riverbank and fish."



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*On the road again
I just can't wait to get on the road again
The life I love is makin' music with my friends
I can't wait to get on the road again...*

On The Road Again (theme from Honeysuckle Rose Copyright 1979, Willie Nelson Music)

By Bob Allen

After national exposure in a film with Robert Redford, and more recently, in a starring role of his own in *Honeysuckle Rose*, the quiet days are gone forever for the Red-headed Stranger... but *who's* complaining!??

Several months from now after the picture of Willie Nelson sitting on a wooden fence in front of a pastoral Texas outdoor scene has appeared as part of the promotional campaign for his recently released feature film, *Honeysuckle Rose*, only a few people will know where it was really taken: in the parking lot of a nondescript beachfront motel in the suburban outskirts of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

But *that* is the reason why Willie is perched on a small "portable" Hollywood facsimile of a wooden fence on a patch of grass next to a busy dual-lane thoroughfare, in front of a Best Western Motel in this rather early, but very hot Sunday morning in Southern Florida.

The theory is that Willie Nelson doesn't have time right now, in the middle of a tour, to come to Hollywood for this photo, so instead, Hollywood has come to him: A contingent of photographers and executives have flown in the night before and brought with them, the pieces of the ready-to-assemble fence on which Willie is sitting. Later, back on the West Coast, through the wonders of modern photography, the photo of Willie will be touched up slightly; a bucolic scene of hay bales, moo-cows, horses and cowboys and cowgirls will be superimposed over what is now mere asphalt and parked cars. More fence will be stripped in, until it looks like that one little section on which he's sitting

stretches all the way to the Texarkana border.

Even though it's only about 10:00 a.m., a small crowd quickly gathers. Cars that pass on the busy street honk their horns and the drivers lean precariously out with huge smiles on their faces, giving ol' Willie the universal power sign of the raised fist.

"Hhheeeeeyyyyy Willllleeeeeee!!!!!"

Willie smiles quietly at them and returns their acknowledgements with his own clenched and raised fist. It's obvious he doesn't mind being recognized like this. In fact, he seems to rather enjoy it.

But still, there's something slightly incongruous about it all: dear old Willie, his slender, well-carried frame perched up there like a parrot, with a Best Western Motel behind him, cars whizzing by in front of him, and the hot Florida sun beating down causing beads of sweat to form on his brow and under that freshly-pressed, expensive cowboy shirt he's wearing, while his air-conditioned tour bus sits idling a few yards away, ready to whisk him off to his next show, clean across the state in St. Petersburg on the Gulf Coast.

Perspiration is also forming on the brows of the two young photographers. One of them appears to be uneasy about something. His camera stops clicking. He looks up at the sun, then looks at the ground and then looks at Willie. He is not happy with Willie's tennis shoes.

"I think you should have boots on," he decides after a long, pregnant pause.

Ol' Willie, whose movements are slow and deliberate anyhow, looks down from his perch at the ground, then he looks up at the sun. His eyes narrow into slits and he

locks the photographer in a scowl that would send Charles Bronson running for cover.

"What makes ya think that?" he says ever so softly.

The photographer backs off a bit, throws up his hands in a conciliatory gesture. "Well, it's uh... it's *fine* with me... it's great... if you're comfortable with the image..."

"I am."

* * *

Far from ever being replaced by cowboy boots, Willie Nelson's blue sneakers will probably some day be set in bronze. Because here lately, travelling the road with him, one gets the distinct impression that the whole world is now waiting to embrace him just the way he is—blue jogging shoes and all. To steal an applicable phrase from the late John F. Kennedy, the quiet days are gone forever. When Willie's on the road anymore, it's nothing like the tours of earlier years when he could check into a hotel under his own name, and walk around outside the club before the show to kill time. Nowadays, as soon as he signs his name to a room service tab, it's all over: Word spreads through the hotel that he's cloistered away on the grounds and a quiet, hushed excitement spreads through the lobby.

And funny things happen. Like the time on an earlier date of this particular swing through the Southeast when Willie happened to check into the same motel where two busloads of kids from a high school marching band were staying. The students and their instructors got word from the hotel management that Willie



was on the premises, and then proceeded to roll out their instruments on the front lawn and play a command performance just for him. Willie was so amused and delighted by it all that he returned the favor by sticking around to pose for snapshots and sign autographs.

Things like that just seem to happen to Willie everywhere he goes these days: every mayor seems ready and waiting to give him the key to his city. (He was recently presented the key to one good-sized Southern metropolis by the mayor, only to later pass it on—with equal formality—to the nine-year-old sister of one of his soundmen who had come to see his show.) People line up to get their photos snapped with him and offer him the use of their houses for the weekend. During his stay at the beachside motel in Fort Lauderdale, a large speedboat called the “Hot Lick” was quietly placed at the disposal of Willie and his travelling Family. Several times when he set off to take his daily run down the beach, he was waylaid by well-intentioned fans bearing joints and cold cans of beer.

Except for some weird scenes in the parking lot—where crowds inevitably gather around the four tour buses that haul Willie’s Family around the country as soon as they pull in—and backstage, where the “lunatic fringe” sometimes congregates, Much of the adulation for Nelson still remains more of a reasonably calm veneration than a dangerously heated frenzy.

Nelson’s own appraisal of his new role as a latter-day cultural hero is amazingly

realistic—almost self-effacing. “It’s a big responsibility to know that maybe just one person might be influenced just a little bit by what I do,” he told me in his usual soft speaking voice one afternoon sitting in his tour bus as it carried him and his band through the suburbs of Fort Lauderdale on the way to a one-nighter at an auditorium in a town somewhere out near the Florida Everglades. “But to think there might be thousands is a little bit scary . . . especially when I don’t consider myself as that much of someone to pattern their lives after . . . But,” he adds, “I feel like I’ve made all the mistakes and I hope I’ve learned from them.”

An objective look at the present state of Willie Nelson’s nearly three-decade-long musical career indicates that he’s not only learned from the errors of his ways, but he’s in fact, gone a step further and turned them all into triumphs. For at least the last three years, some journalists have been subtly predicting that his career was bound to peak any second now, and that it would be all downhill from there. But, the fact is, it just seems to be gaining more and more momentum—almost by the day.

In fact, throughout Willie’s entire organization, there is a strange new feeling during this late Spring tour. It is a feeling that things had reached a new level that everyone involved is just learning how to deal with. Security is tighter and the whereabouts of Willie at any given time is a well-kept secret. (Some members of his crew even wear t-shirts insisting, “I DON’T KNOW WHERE WILLIE IS!”)

Calculated strategies now have to be developed to get Willie swiftly through the choking backstage crowds and into his bus after the show. There seems to be shades of Elvis Presley everywhere; there are now hulking security men who keep watch over him from the shadows in back of the stage, all through his performances.



Dyan Cannon plays Willie’s miffed wife.

The point is, things *have* changed. Members of the band now find themselves being chased through hotel lobbies by teen-aged girls; and inside the auditoriums during the shows, there is a tense, restless electricity that just wasn’t there a couple of years ago.

“Goin’ out and openin’ for Willie on a show sure ain’t the easiest thing in the world,” singer/songwriter/comedian Don Bowman, a long-time Willie Nelson sidekick sighs as he sits in the air-conditioned comfort of his hotel suite complete with a picture window overlooking the ocean, the morning after one such concert in West Palm Beach. “This tour’s been the wildest of all. It’s like . . . the crowds . . . Well, you saw ‘em last night, up standin’ on their chairs before he even hit the stage . . . The only thing there is to compare it to is Elvis.”

The electricity of his live shows, though, is merely the most obvious evidence of the fact that Willie Nelson is in high gear, and clearly on his way to becoming a household word. He’s walked away with both the Country Music Association’s and the Academy of Country Music’s *Entertainer of the Year* awards in recent months, and he’s selling more records than ever before. All of his recent albums, including *Willie And Family Live*, *Willie Nelson Sings Kristofferson* and *One For The Road* (with Leon Russell) have reached either gold or platinum (million-sales) status. His two most recent, *San Antonio Rose* (with Ray Price) and the soundtrack from *Honeysuckle Rose*, both headed right for the top of the country charts. During the mid-summer of this year, he had six different albums simultaneously in the charts.



In a scene from Honeysuckle Rose, Willie and Amy Irving get closer when she joins his road show.

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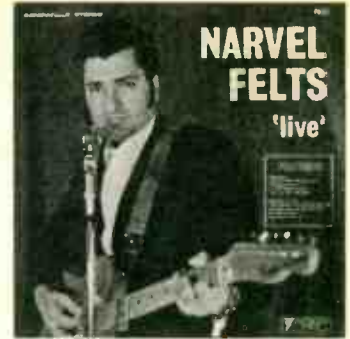
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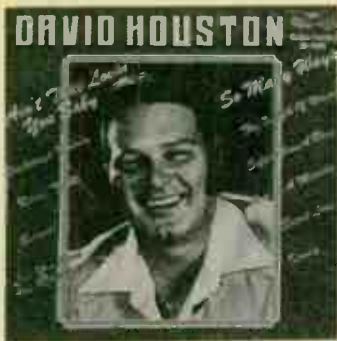
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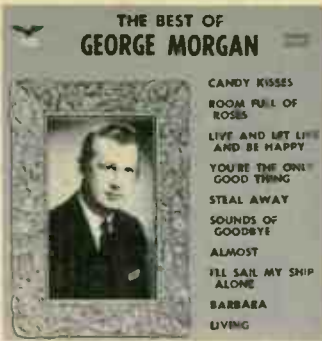
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Lonesome Pine Fiddlers
Play 14 Mountain Songs: Eatin' Out Of Your Hand/Lonesome Pine/Kentucky Hill Special/Two Timin' Baby, more! Starday LP No. R29O 8TK No. T29P Cassette No. C29Q

Lulu Belle & Scotty
Lulu Belle & Scotty-Sweethearts Still: I'll Be All Smiles Tonight/Between You & Me/I Told Them All About You, more! Starday LP No. R29R 8TK No. T29S Cassette No. C29T

Lulu Belle & Scotty
Sweethearts Of Country Music: Have I Told You Lately (I Love You)/Remember Me/Mountain Dew Time, many more! LP No. R29U 8TK No. T29V Cassette No. C29W

Warner Mack
The Best Of The Best Of: Is It Wrong/Sittin' On A Rock/The Bridge Washed Out/Drifting Apart/Talkin' To The Wall, more! LP No. R29X 8TK No. T29Y Cassette No. C29Z

Mainer's Mountaineers
Mainer's Mountaineers-Good Ole! Mountain Music: The Lonely Train/The Forks Of The Road/Run Mountain/John Henry, more! LP No. R30A 8TK No. T30B Cassette No. C30C

Curtis McPeake
Duelling Banjos: Title Song/Home Sweet Home/Brassy Bluegrass/Old Joe Clark/Doodlin' Banjos/Red Dress, much more! LP No. R30D 8TK No. T30E Cassette No. C30F

Roger Miller
Roger Miller-Painted Poetry: Under The Spell Again/Poor Little John/Play Boy/I Ain't Never/Country Girl/Pillow, more! LP No. R30G 8TK No. T30H Cassette No. C30I

Charlie Monroe
Charlie Monroe-Tally Ho: Lazy Day/Penitentiary Blues/Hard To Believe/Willow Garden/Time Clock/I'm Going Away, more! LP No. R30J 8TK No. T30K No Cassette Available

C. Moore & B. Napier
The Best Of: I'm Just Your Stepping Stone/Chain Gang/No One As Sweet As You/I've Got Over You/Down South, more! LP No. R30L 8TK No. T30M Cassette No. C30N

C. Moore & B. Napier
Lonesome Truck Drivers: Long White Line/This Truck And Me/Long Old Road/Pinball Blues/Coming Home To You, more! LP No. R30O 8TK No. T30P Cassette No. C30Q

George Morgan
George Morgan-Best Of: You're The Only Good Thing/Room Full Of Roses/I'll Sail My Ship Alone/Candy Kisses, more! Starday LP No. R30R 8TK No. T30S Cassette No. C30T

Moon Mullican
Moon Mullican-Greatest Hits: I'll Sail My Ship Alone/Louisiana/Mona Lisa/Bottom Of The Glass/Jole Blon/Farewell, many more! LP No. R30U 8TK No. T30V Cassette No. C30W

Nashville Guitars
Music To Park By: Let It Be/Blue Hawaii/For The Good Times/We've Only Just Begun, plus many more great hits! LP No. R30X 8TK No. T30Y Cassette No. C30Z

Nashville Harmonica
Plays Today's Hits: Riss An Angel Good Morning/Bad Bad Leroy Brown/Why Me Lord/Delta Dawn/Alabama Bound, more! LP No. R31A 8TK No. T31B Cassette No. C31C

Nashville Sax
Plays Yakyety Sax And Other Hits: You And Your Precious Love/I Can Help/Rhinestone Cowboy/Bad, Bad Leroy Brown, more! LP No. R31D 8TK No. T31E Cassette No. C31F

New Grass Revival
New Grass Revival-Today's Bluegrass: Cold Sallor/Pennies In My Pocket/Great Ball Of Fire/Lonesome Fiddle Blues, much more! LP No. R31G 8TK No. T31H Cassette No. C31I

The Oak Ridge Boys
Featuring: I Am A Pilgrim/Shine Shine Down On Me/Golden Hills Ahead/There's A Light Guiding Me/Angel Band, more! LP No. R31J 8TK No. T31K Cassette No. C31L

The Oak Ridge Boys
Featuring: I Wouldn't Take Nothing/Hide Thou Me/The Christian Way/I Asked The Lord/One Of These Mornings, more! LP No. R31M 8TK No. T31N Cassette No. C31O

Oak Ridge Quartet
Sing & Shout: At The Roll Call/Behind Your Tears/Do You Know Jesus/My All I Give/Keep Me, many more! LP No. R31P 8TK No. T31Q Cassette No. C31R

Roy Orbison
Roy Orbison-Original Sound: You're Gonna Cry/Ooby, Dooby/It's Too Late/I Never Knew/Rock House/Devil Doll, more! Sun LP No. R31S 8TK No. T31T No Cassette Available

Brother Oswald
Bashful Brother Oswald: Southern Moon/Weary Weary Blues/I Like Mountain Music/Columbus Stockade Blues, more! Starday LP No. R31U 8TK No. T31V Cassette No. C31W

Johnny Paycheck
Johnny Paycheck-At His Best: Who Needs Your Love/Forever Ended Yesterday/Julie I'm Remembering, much more! Power Pak LP No. R31X 8TK No. T31Y No Cassette Available

Carl Perkins
Carl Perkins-Golden Hits: Matchbox/Blue Suede Shoes/Dixie Fried/Right String But The Wrong Yo Yo/Only You, more! Sun LP No. R31Z 8TK No. T32A No Cassette Available

Del Reeces
Greatest Hits: Girl On The Billboard/There Wouldn't Be A Lonely Heart In Town/Be Glad/Dime At A Time, and many more! LP No. R32B 8TK No. T32C Cassette No. C32D

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D. Reno & R. Smiley
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D. Reno & R. Smiley
Last Time Together: Are You Waiting Just For Me/Row My Boat/Yes Sir, That's My Baby/Family Bible/Holiday Religion, and! LP No. R32N 8TK No. T32O Cassette No. C32P

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Cassette No. C34H

D. Reno & R. Smiley
16 Greatest Gospel Hits: He Will Set Your Fields On Fire/The New Jerusalem/Jesus Is Waiting/Tree Of Life, many more!
LP No. R34J
8 TK No. T34K
Cassette No. C34L

Larry Sparks
Larry Sparks Ramblin' Bluegrass: Darl Hollow/Brand New Broken Heart/Faded Love, plus many more great hits!
LP No. R34L
8 TK No. T34M
Cassette No. C34N

Charlie Rich
Arkansas Traveler: Unchained Melody/Time And Again/Ballad Of Billy Joe/Who Will The Next Fool Be/Stop/Rebound, more!
LP No. R34O
8 TK No. T34P
Cassette No. C34Q

Jeanie C. Riley
Country Gold: Games People Play/Help Me Make It Through The Night/Oakie From Muskogee/That's A No No, more!
LP No. R34R
8 TK No. T34S
Cassette No. C34T

Kenny Roberts
Kenny Roberts-Indian Love Call: Maybe I'll Cry Over You/Listen To The Mockingbird/Tavern Chime/Bells, more! Starday
LP No. R34U
8 TK No. T34V
Cassette No. C34W

Jean Shepard
Jean Shepard-Best Of: Many Happy Hangovers To You/Haul Off And Love Me/Satisfied Mind/2 Little Boys, 6 more! Power Pak
LP No. R34X
8 TK No. T34Y
Cassette No. C34Z

Jimmie Skinner
Jimmie Skinner-No. 1 Bluegrass: Everybody Ought To Have A Song/It's Blowin' Away/This Old Road/Whoopie Liza, more!
LP No. R35A
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Cassette No. C35C

Jimmy Skinner
Original Greatest Hits: I Found My Girl In The Good Old USA/Jimmy's Ramblin' Blues/Wrong Side Of The Tracks, more!
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Cassette No. C35R

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Red Sovine-Best Of: Giddy Up Go/I Know You're Married/One Is A Lonely Number/I Didn't Jump The Fence, more! Starday
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8 TK No. T35T
Cassette No. C35U

Red Sovine
Red Sovine-Phantom 309: In Your Heart/That's Me/Bummin' Around/Same Old Situation/Phantom 309, more! Power Pak
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8 TK No. T35W
Cassette No. C35X

Red Sovine
16 All Time Favorites: Satisfied Mind/6 White Horses/I'm Only 17/The Gearjammer & The Hobo/I'm Gonna Move, more!
LP No. R35Y
8 TK No. T35Z
Cassette No. C36A

Red Sovine
16 Greatest Hits: In Your Heart/Class Of '49/Little Rosa/Teddy Bear/Giddyup Go/It'll Come Back/Daddy, more! Starday
LP No. R36B
8 TK No. T36C
Cassette No. C36D

Red Sovine
Classic Narrations: A Dear John Letter/I Think I Can Sleep Tonight/Giddyup Go/Viet Nam Deck Of Cards/21, more!
LP No. R36E
8 TK No. T36F
Cassette No. C36G

Ralph Stanley
Hills Of Home: Title Song/Darling Brown Eyes/The Kitten And The Cat/I Only Exist/Medicine Springs/California, more!
LP No. R36H
8 TK No. T36I
Cassette No. C36J

Stanley Brothers
20 Bluegrass Originals: Love Me Darling Just Tonight/Stone Walls & Steel Bars/Little Maggie/5 String Drag, many more!
LP No. R36K
8 TK No. T36L
Cassette No. C36M

The Stanley Brothers
Folk Song Festival: Still Trying To Get To Little Rock/The Drunken Driver/Da-Da-Da In Dixie/There Is A Trap, more!
LP No. R36N
8 TK No. T36O
Cassette No. C36P

The Stanley Brothers
Good Old Camp Meeting Songs: Who Will Sing For Me/We Are Drinking From The Fountain/I'll Fly Away/Leaning, more!
LP No. R36Q
8 TK No. T36R
Cassette No. C36S

The Stanley Brothers
Folk Concert: Lips That Lie/Just Because/My Brother's Bride/He Went To Sleep/No Letter Today/Hills Of Roan County, more!
LP No. R36T
8 TK No. T36U
Cassette No. C36V

The Stanley Brothers
16 Greatest Hits: I'm A Man Of Constant Sorrow/Train 45/Old Love Letters/There Is A Tramp, much more!
LP No. R36W
8 TK No. T36X
Cassette No. C36Y

The Stanley Brothers
Stanley Bros.-Best Of: Rank Strangers/How Far To Little Rock/The Master's Bouquet/A Few More Seasons, more! Starday
LP No. R36Z
8 TK No. T37A
Cassette No. C37B

The Stanley Brothers
Banjo In The Hills: 5 String Drag/Train 45/Rang Tang/Red River Valley/Snow Deer/Lonesome Traveler/Stoney Creek, more!
LP No. R37C
8 TK No. T37D
Cassette No. C37E

The Stanley Brothers
Sing The Songs They Like Best: Wild Side Of Life/The Window Up Above/The Story Of The Lawson Family/Jenny Lynn, more!
LP No. R37F
8 TK No. T37G
Cassette No. C37H

Stanley Brothers
For The Good People: Four Books In The Bible/I'll Not Be A Stranger/Pass Me Not/Jacob's Vision/Jordan, many more!
LP No. R37I
8 TK No. T37J
Cassette No. C37K

Stanley Brothers
16 Greatest Gospel Hits: White Dove/I'll Fly Away/Who Will Sing For Me/Rank Strangers/Over In The Glory Land, more!
LP No. R37L
8 TK No. T37M
Cassette No. C37N

Carl Story
Get Religion: I Feel Like Traveling On/I Shall Meet Someday/Give Me The Roses/Uncloued Day/Just One Way, more!
LP No. R37O
8 TK No. T37P
Cassette No. C37Q

Carl Story
Carl Story-16 Greatest Hits: Daddy Sang Bass/Family Reunion/Mighty Close To Heaven/Sweeter Than The Flowers, much more!
LP No. R37R
8 TK No. T37S
Cassette No. C37T

Carl Story
Carl Story-Songs Of Life: Glory Hallelujah/Now I'm Satisfied/The Old Country Preacher/Dear Willow, more! Starday
LP No. R37V
8 TK No. T37W
Cassette No. C37X

Carl Story
Carl Story-Gospel Revival: Light At The River/Be Kind To Mother/Ship That's Sailing Down/Family Reunion, more!
LP No. R37Y
8 TK No. T37Z
Cassette No. C37Z

Stringbean
Stringbean-Salute To Uncle Dave Macon: Tennessee Farmer/I'm The Man Who Rode Around The World, 10 more! Starday
LP No. R38A
8 TK No. T38B
Cassette No. C38C

Joe Tex
Another Woman's Man: Tittle Song/She's Mine/Come In This House/Get Way Back/Right Back To My Arms, more!
LP No. R38D
8 TK No. T38E
Cassette No. C38F

B.J. Thomas
B.J. Thomas-Best Of: Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head/Most Of All/Mighty Clouds Of Joy/Rock & Roll Lullaby, many more!
LP No. R38G
8 TK No. T38H
Cassette No. C38I

Mel Tillis
Mel Tillis & Friends: Stateside/Mr. Drop-out/Wine/Honey Hungry/Faded Love/I'm Gonna Move, much more! Power Pak
LP No. R38J
8 TK No. T38K
Cassette No. C38L

Carl Tipton
The Carl Tipton Show: Banks Of The Ohio/It Won't Be Very Long/Hills Of Tennessee/Death Is Only A Dream, much more!
LP No. R38M
8 TK No. T38N
Cassette No. C38O

Trucker Special
Radar Blues: Tittle Song/Truck Driver's Queen/Interstate 81-Hawshaw Hawkins; Grandpa Jones; Red Sovine, much more!
LP No. R38P
8 TK No. T38Q
Cassette No. C38R

Trucker Special
Best Of Truck Driver Songs: D. Dudley: 6 Days On The Road/R. Sovine: Giddy Up Go/M. Pearl: Giddy Up Go Answer, more!
LP No. R38S
8 TK No. T38T
Cassette No. C38U

Trucker Special
Truck Driver Songs: 6 Days On The Road/Truck Drivin' Man/Passin' Zone-Moore & Napier; Bob Newman, and more!
LP No. R38V
8 TK No. T38W
Cassette No. C38X

Trucker Special
Overloaded Diesel: I'm Movin' On/18 Wheels A Humming, Home Seet Home/Truck Driver's Blues, more ... Various Artists.
LP No. R38Y
8 TK No. T38Z
Cassette No. C39A

Trucker Special
Heavy Haulers: Red Sovine; Johnny Bond; Willis Bros. ... Giddyup - Go/Long Lonesome Road/The Last Mile/Gears, more!
LP No. R39B
8 TK No. T39C
Cassette No. C39D

Trucker Special
Diesel Smoke, Dangerous Curves: 6 Days On The Road/Pinball Machine-Willis Bros.; Red Sovine; Lonnie Irving, much more!
LP No. R39E
8 TK No. T39F
Cassette No. C39G

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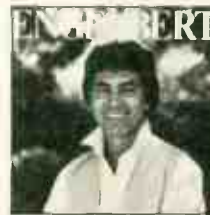
THE BEST OF RED SOVINE—2-Record Set: Teddy Bear/Daddy's Girl/Lay Down Sally/Truck Drivin' Son Of A Gun/Giddy-Up-Go/I Didn't Jump The Fence/It'll Come Back/Roses For Mama/Little Rosa/18 Wheels A Hummin' Home Sweet Home/Phantom 309/Little Joe/Anything Leaving Town Today/Woman Behind The Man Behind The Wheel, and more!

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8 TK No. T6Q
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GOLDEN DREAM OF HANK WILLIAMS—2-Record Set: Cold, Cold Heart/Settin' The Woods On Fire/Take These Chains From My Heart/Half As Much/Wedding Bells/Hey, Good Lookin'/My Buckets Got A Hole In It/You Win Again/I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry/I Saw The Light/Lovesick Blues/I Can't Help It/Mansion Of The Hill/There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight/Your Cheating Heart/Jambalaya, 22 in all!

LP No. R1X
8 TK No. T1Y
LP-\$7.98/8 TK-\$9.98



ENGELBERT—2-Record Set: After The Lovin'/Another Time, Another Place/This Is What You Mean To Me/And I Love You So/Last Of The Romantics/Too Beautiful To Last/What I Did For Love/Just The Way You Are/First Time I Ever Saw Your Face/Love Me Tender, plus many more great hits by the one and only headliner of Las Vegas and the world, Engelbert Humperdinck!

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8 TK No. T5B
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LP Three: Good Old Fashioned Hoe Down/Story - Gene Is Robbed/How Long Is Forever/Mr. And Mississippi, more!

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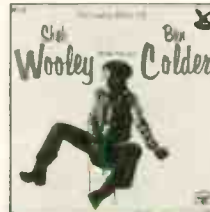
ERNEST TUBB: THE LEGEND AND THE LEGACY—2-Record Set: Ernest performing with Willie, Waylon, Loretta, Merle and the other top country names ... Featuring: Waltz Across Texas/Answer The Phone/Journey's End/Walkin' The Floor Over You/Set Up Two Glasses Joe/Fillpino Baby/It's Been So Long, Darling/Jimmy Rodgers Last Blue Yodel/Blue Eyed Elaine/You Nearly Lose Your Mind, 20 in all!

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LP No. R7P
8 TK No. T7Q
LP-\$5.98/8 TK-\$6.98



GREATEST HITS OF SHEB WOOLEY & BEN COLDER—2-Record Set: Purple People Eater/That's My Pal/I Walk The Line/Runnin' Bear/15 Beers Ago/Detroit City/Harper Valley PTA/Later The Same Day/Don't Go Near The Eskimos/Little Green Apples/Hello Walls 2/Rollin' In My Sweet Baby's Arms/Little Brown Shack/Sunday Morning Fallin' Down, more!

LP No. R6T
8 TK No. T6U
LP-\$7.97/8 TK-\$7.97



CHARLY PRIDE FAVORITES—2-Record Set: Kiss An Angel Good Morning/A Shoulder To Cry On/Let The Chips Fall/Crystal Chandeliers/Tennessee Girl/The Easy Part's Over/I'd Rather Love You/I'm So Afraid Of Losing You Again/Just Between You And Me/She's Too Good To Be True/Lovesick Blues/Green, Green Grass Of Home, much more!

LP No. R7F
8 TK No. T7G
LP-\$7.98/8 TK-\$9.98



ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK 20 GREATEST HITS—2-Record Set: Release Me/I'm A Better Man/A Man Without Love/A Place In The Sun/Spanish Eyes/A Time For Us/Those Were The Days/Funny Familiar Forgotten Feelings/There Goes My Waltz/Am I That Easy To Forget/Quando, Quando, Quando, more!

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COUNTRY SWEETHEARTS—20 Hits On One Album: Lynn Anderson - Barbara Mandrell - Tammy Wynette - Tanya Tucker - Bedtime Story/Woman To Woman/Delta Dawn/Give A Little What A Man My Man Is/Show Me I'm Gonna Write A Song/Till I Get It Right, many more!

LP No. R2L
8 TK No. T2M
LP-\$6.98/8 TK-\$7.98



MAC WISEMAN'S SONGS THAT MAKE THE JUKE BOX PLAY—2-Record Set: Bubbles In My Beer/Slipping Around/My Mary/Home In San Antonio/I Love You Because/Divorce Me C.O.D./Time Changes Everything/Born To Loss/Yesterday's Girl/Worried Mind, many more!

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8 TK No. T4B
LP/8 TK-\$11.98 Ea.



ROLL ON BIG MAMA: 20 Hits On One Album: Statler Bros. - King Of The Road/C. W. McCall - Convoy/Wolfcreek Pass; Old Home Filler Up/Jim & Jesse - 6 Days On The Road; Girl On The Billboard; Diesel On My Tail; Lovin' Machine/Cleudis Maggard - White Knight, and a lot more!

LP No. R2P
8 TK No. T2Q
LP-\$6.98/8 TK-\$7.98



RONNIE MILSAP—2-Record Set: Never Had It So Good/Denver/Mr. Mailman/I Can't Tell A Lie/Need To Belong/If You Go Away/Maybe/1000 Miles From Nowhere/I Just Don't Get Around/Barbara Ann/Shut Down/409/California Girl/Long Tall Texan/In My Room/Dance Dance Dance/When I Grow Up, many more!

LP No. R7H
8 TK No. T7I
LP-\$6.98/8 TK-\$8.98



BEACH BOYS SUMMER FUN—2-Record Set: Fun Fun Fun/Help Me Ronda/Little Deuce Coupe/Surfin' U.S.A./Surfin' Safari/Surfer Girl/I Get Around/Barbara Ann/Shut Down/409/California Girl/Long Tall Texan/In My Room/Dance Dance Dance/When I Grow Up, many more!

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ROAD MUSIC—2-Record Set: Red Sovine: Go; Little Joe/Dave Dudley: Six Days On The Road; Truck Drivin' Son Of A Gun/Minnie Pearl: Giddyup Go Answer/Del Reeves: Girl On The Billboard; Looking At The World Through A Windshield/Tommy Hill Music Festival: Convoy; White Knight/The Willis Bros.: Give Me Forty Acres To Turn This Rig Around/Jimmy Martin: Widowmaker, more!
LP No. R1P
8TK No. T1Q
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THIRTY FIDDLER'S GREATEST HITS—2-Record Set: Bob Willis: Beaumont Rag/Benny Martin: Soarta Waltz; Big Tiger Special/Joe Red Hayes: Sweet Nellie; Texas Quick Step/Curly Fox: Black Mountain Rag; Whistlewooc/Chubby Wise: Opry Fiddler's Blues; Peacock Rag/Arthur Smith: Tulsa Hop; Louise, plus the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers and many more!
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Willie as Buck Bonham. "Acting," says Willie, "isn't much different than what I've been doing all my life. There's words on a piece of paper and you try like hell to make them mean something. Acting is like singing, except there's no melody..."

Then there is this whole new dimension to his career which probably has more to do with all the craziness on the road than anything else: his successful involvement in and national exposure from films like *The Electric Horseman* and the \$11 million Warner Brothers release, *Honeysuckle Rose* in which he recently made his debut in a starring role. Soon he will begin filming *Barba Rosa*, in which he takes on his first non-musical dramatic lead opposite Gary Busey of *The Buddy Holly Story* fame, whom Willie has known since back in the days when Busey played drums for Leon Russell. "Ever since I was a kid, ever since I first saw Gene Autry, there was no doubt about what I wanted to be," Willie smiles: "A cowboy movie star."

Yet, there's still more. In addition to the movies, the records, the sold-out tours, there's his songwriting, which Willie has gotten back to with the new material written especially for *Honeysuckle Rose*. There's his publishing companies, production companies, music clubs, golf courses, restaurants, stores and other business enterprises. All the details and responsibilities that come with each of these would be enough to drive most grown men crazy. How in the world, Nelson is asked one night as he sits peacefully backstage between shows, in a small, ridiculously crowded and noisy dressing room, sipping

a Budweiser and toking contendedly on a joint, does he keep up with all this?

"Ah, it's not that time-consuming, really," he replies softly (as if to say, "Aw, shucks, anybody could do it!"). "Those kinds of decisions (like last-minute photo sessions) don't really come up that often. And when they do, it's kind of a pleasure to be diverted from whatever I was thinkin' about anyway."

Don Bowman has known Willie through the lean times, at least since the early 1960s when they played a series of shows together in Texas to support the campaign of former U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough. ("You talk about hot!" Bowman laughs. "Hot, we were not! I remember we played some auditorium in Austin. You know: 'FREE CONCERT: WILLIE NELSON.' And the only people that showed up was me and Willie and Paul (English) and Senator Yarborough, and a couple other dudes we had to call at home to come down and open the building! We were not exactly overrun! But we had the nicest hotel suites in town and we just stayed stoned for 18 days. Wasn't no reason to straighten up. We got paid for that first gig and the check bounced, bigger 'n hell. . . . But God, did we have a lot of fun!")

Bowman maintains that there is nothing put on about Willie's almost impenetrable

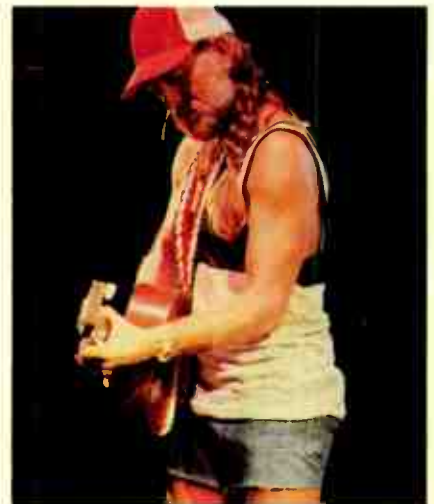
calm. Still, after all these years, even he expresses quiet amazement over Willie's ability to keep his cool amidst all the madness. "Willie's the only person I've ever seen . . . well, Bobby Bare comes pretty close. . . . He just doesn't get upset. I mean, if he really wanted to get into it, he could drive himself crazy in about 20 minutes! But all he wants is that guitar tuned and waitin' for him when he hits the stage every night. That's all he worries about.

"And another thing I've noticed," Bowman adds, "is how much more confidence he has now. I've noticed it standin' backstage and I told him the last time we talked: I can hear songs of his I heard fifteen years ago, and I hear 'em now and hear all kinds of highs and rolls and runs and deep notes that he was afraid to try and sing before.

"But now, shit!" Bowman laughs, "he's won every damned award they can give away! I mean goddamn, even he's got to know that he can do any damn thing he wants to now!"

* * *

*"On the road again
like a band of gypsies we go down the
highway
on the road again
insisting that the world keep turnin' our
way . . .
and our way. . . ."*



"My wife Connie helps me a lot mainly just by being a good critic," Willie tells me that afternoon as we ride toward the Florida Everglades in the tour bus. He glances around the rear compartment of the bus before making his next remark, as if he is afraid it might be taken the wrong way if overheard by the wrong person. "She'll give me good honest opinions . . . which are sometimes very hard to find."

A little while later, what Willie says is illustrated when a couple of young Warner Brothers film executives come on the bus for an impromptu meeting to discuss the advertising campaign for *Honeysuckle*



Rose and the accompanying soundtrack album.

The Warner Brothers fellows are smooth—so smooth you might think they were born with martinis in their right hands. They dwell in an uncertain world where those drawing six-figure salaries and riding high on huge expense accounts can suddenly find themselves cleaning out their desks if *their* pet project dies at the box office. These guys are disarmingly like the cliched Hollywood types so often depicted in TV comedy shows. As Willie and the execs gather around the small wooden picnic-type table in the bus, there is much heavy-duty *stroking* going on on the part of the executives. This is an industry term, stolen from the glossary of pop psychology. It is the oft-practiced strategy of winning the favors of, and putting at ease, a ranking individual by massaging his ego and reassuring him of his own overwhelming importance in the scheme of things through the use of lavish, yet subtle compliments.

The Warner Brothers executives have brought with them, proposed sketches for the movie posters for *Honeysuckle Rose* and the album cover art for the film's soundtrack, to be approved by Willie. A large joint is passed around among Willie's contingent and Willie takes a healthy toke from it as the movie execs come on strong with the strokes:

"Now *this* one will be used for the poster and the advertisement," says one of the Warner Brothers people. "It'll make a great ad! It will be run in *Time*, *News-*

week, *The New York Times*. . . ." The man's eyes seem to glaze in awe at the gravity of his own words as he recites an impressive shopping list of national publications.

Willie doesn't bat an eyelash or even lift his intent gaze from the sketches. He just takes another long, thoughtful toke on the joint. "And this'll be for the album cover?"

"That's right! . . . I'm telling you, *everybody* at Warners is *up* on this project," the executive adds in smooth, reassuring tones. "It's going to open in cities all across the country before all the kids go back to school!"

Willie's expression does not change. His eyes maintain their skeptical but approving focus on the album cover art. Smoke trails softly out of his nostrils. "Hmmm," he replies absently, "I'll have to have a hundred picnics this year—one in every town. . . ."

"I'm telling you," the Warner Brothers man adds with an extravagant wave of his hand that causes his expensive digital watch to glint in the early evening light. "*This* is going to be the *biggest* movie Warner Brothers has had in a long time!"

The inscrutable concentration in Willie's eyes does not relax. He takes another drag on the joint, passes it along and looks across the table at the man with a very distant, noncommittal smile.

"I sure hope so," he says softly.

A few minutes later, word is passed to Willie that it's time for him to head for the stage. There are 6,000 people waiting impatiently for him inside the coliseum. He quietly excuses himself from the meeting and heads directly for the backstage entrance and on to the stage where his

battered guitar, along with his band, is already waiting for him. The applause from the 6,000 Florida fans is deafening, and like Don Bowman said, a few of them are already up on their chairs.

At the end of the show, nearly two hours later, with routine clockwork two ranking Family members wait for Willie just off the stage behind the huge Lone Star State flag as he makes his exit. They hand him a lit joint so he can enjoy a few quick tokes before he goes back out to do his encore.

After the show, there is no autograph signing in the parking lot like there would have been a year or so ago—the crowds are just too big and too unpredictable now. Instead, Willie is ushered quickly through the hopelessly crowded backstage corridors by a T-formation of the same hulking road crew members who have been watching and waiting silently in the backstage shadows throughout the entire performance. In the parking lot, Willie hops into a chauffer-driven Cadillac Eldorado with Don Bowman and Paul English and they disappear into the night with the roar of the audience and the final stanzas of their song still ringing in their ears:

*On the road again
like a band of gypsies we go down
the highway
on the road again
insisting that the world keep turning
our way
and our way . . .
Just can't wait to get on the road again.*

(Copyright 1979 by Willie Nelson Lyrics reprinted courtesy of Willie Nelson Music.) ■



The Making of *Honeysuckle Rose*

"One person who saw *Honeysuckle Rose* when we first screened it, came up to me afterwards and said, 'I think it's got too much music and not enough story.'" Jerry Schatzberg the film's director recalled recently at a post-premiere press gathering in Austin, Texas. "I told them, 'You must not have been listening to the music, because the music is the story.' I wanted to tell a love story, and tell it mostly through music."

Essentially, the story-line of *Honeysuckle Rose* is not a complex one. In fact, it could have been adapted from the stanzas of any of a dozen good country songs: Singer (Willie Nelson) is away from home too much and isn't making it as big as he'd like to. Wife (Dyan Cannon) stays at home on the farm and worries that he is fooling around on her. Singer adds pretty young female guitar player (Amy Irving) to his band, and next thing you know, in spite of himself, he is fooling around. Hearts are broken, reconciliations are made and the sun sets on them singing together happily. The story line is, in fact, very straightforward; but it is embellished with enough fine music, credible dramatic performances, and vignettes of comic relief to make for some pleasant surprises.

For Nelson, this \$11 million Warner Brothers film marks his first starring role and only his second dramatic appearance in a major motion picture. One would imagine that there would be some apprehension involved on his part.

"No, not really," he insisted when interviewed at the working press breakfast that was held for him and the film's other

that. Willie has a basic honesty that came through, though. The screen doesn't lie."

"Willie was much less insecure than a lot of people I've worked with," added director Schatzberg, who in the past has worked with actors like Al Pacino, Gene Hackman and Alan Alda in such films as *The Seduction Of Joe Tynan*, *Panic In Needle Park*, and *Scarecrow*. "He is less temperamental and he listens. I think he really wants to be good, and that makes a big difference. He may have been a little apprehensive during his first dramatic scenes, but once he started going, oh boy, he just took over! He could hold his own with Slim (Pickens), Dyan, or anybody."

The original script which contained the seeds of the story that—after numerous rewrites—evolved into *Honeysuckle Rose* was put together several years ago, and was originally based, to some degree, on the real-life character of singer—songwriter Hoyt Axton. One draft of this script eventually found its way to producer/director Sydney Pollack who later directed Willie in *The Electric Horseman*. "When I was doing *The Electric Horseman*, Sydney had already had this script for a couple of years, and he asked me about doing it," Nelson recalled.

As executive producer, Pollack later guided the *Honeysuckle Rose* project. Dyan Cannon was eventually offered the leading part, opposite Willie.

"I have to admit, I'd never heard of Willie Nelson before I did this movie," Cannon recalled. "Can you believe that! Now I think, how can I have ever not known this man who picks up his guitar

Viv more believable and real to me. And I was."

Slim Pickens, who plays Garland, Willie's long-time guitarplayer and father to Lily (Amy Irving), the female guitarist with whom Willie fools around in the movie, recalled that he didn't have to think about it too long when he was offered a supporting role in *Honeysuckle Rose*.

"I'll tell you what! The radio in my pick-up truck is welded to a country station!" Slim explained with that knee-slapping insistence of his which he's made immortal after more than 30 years of film appearances. "I became a fan of Willie's back when I first heard *Bloody Merry Morning*. When I found out I was gonna do a picture with him, it was kinda like gettin' paid to go to a party!"

"Willie and I never had any problems in our scenes together," he adds. "It just seemed like, well . . . we're both kinda from the same background; we're both country people, and we had no problem communicating at all. We'd get in a scene, and if the dialogue was not quite what we thought it should be, why, we'd kinda change it around a little bit. That line of mine in the movie, 'I'm gettin' too old for this kinda shit?' Well, that was my own!"

Months before the actual filming of *Honeysuckle Rose* began, Jerry Schatzberg began looking for particular songs that would properly sequence the story line and precision-fit in filling the loose ends where dramatic emphasis was needed. He was particularly looking for one strong song that could serve to thematically unify the entire film.

"I knew I wanted a song of that kind, and I was going to go with *Whiskey River*," he explained. "Then Willie and I were on a plane coming from Atlanta to Austin, and I said to him, unless you write some original music, we're not going to have a chance for an academy award. So he pulled out his ticket and started writing! And that's where the lyrics for *On The Road Again* came from. It was several more months before I heard the finished song, and I loved it! I decided to make it a theme throughout the film."

One question that was asked more than once during the Austin press gathering was whether or not real marijuana was used during the frequent reefer-toking scenes in *Honeysuckle Rose*. Willie characteristically avoided the question once or twice before answering it.

"Yeh . . . well, some of the people suggested that we use something else besides marijuana in those scenes," he smiled sheepishly. "But nobody wanted to do that." BOB ALLEN



Slim Pickens plays Willie's long-time pal and guitar player in *Honeysuckle Rose*.

principal players at the Austin Hilton, the morning after the film's premiere and the day of Willie's eighth annual Fourth of July Picnic. "I was too busy learning my lines, I guess, to figure out what I was going to do to get there. It's kind of like doing a show: you don't have time to think about it."

"From time to time, Willie was nervous," Dyan Cannon revealed with a smile. "But he's really good at covering

and sings those beautiful songs . . . and cheats on his wife!"

Cannon was making a film for Paramount called *Coast To Coast*, which is to be released later this year, when she was approached about doing *Honeysuckle Rose*. "I really didn't want to do it at first, but I went and talked to Jerry (Schatzberg), and he told me I would be allowed to help in the rewrite of the script, in order to make the character of

DON'T LABEL ROSANNE CASH

By Laura Eipper

The mild chaos reigning in Rosanne Cash's hotel room is a far cry from the trappings you'd normally expect to see around an up-and-coming star. There are no flowers, no gaggle of admirers, no rhinestone studded outfits flung casually over the furniture. Instead, Rosanne Cash, in loose fitting t-shirt and rumpled jeans, presides over a scene of cheerfully distracted domesticity, simultaneously supervising the departure of husband Rodney Crowell, and step-daughter Hannah, four, on a shopping trip, pouring a Perrier for a visitor, and answering the phone—wise-cracking gently as she goes.

"You know, I'm trying to be one of those people who has it all together and never gets flustered," she laughs, her huge dark eyes shining out from a mass of thick dark hair. "But I can't, so I've accepted that I'm just going to be flustered."

In fact, Rosanne Cash seems far from flustered. An intelligent, articulate young woman with a warm sense of humor, she has managed in little more than a year to get married, have her first child and launch one of the brightest young recording careers around.

The daughter of country music legend Johnny Cash, she has staked her own claim to the limelight, and done it without help, on her own terms. Her debut Columbia album, **Right or Wrong**, became one of 1979's most acclaimed sleepers. A rarity for a first effort, it produced three hit singles, *I Couldn't Do Nothin' Right*, a duet with Bobby Bare, *Don't Want No Memories Hangin' Round*, and *Take Me, Take Me*. Particularly remarkable is the fact that the album succeeded without the benefit of any promotional tours by the artist, who was reluctant to "rock and roll around a tummy like this."

"It's not what you'd call perfect timing, I guess," Rosanne quipped last summer,



patting the same tummy. "In fact it was a shock. But now I think it's a good thing and I'm excited about it. You can be overexposed on a first album and the baby will keep me from doing that."

Months later, holding Caitlin Rivers Crowell on her lap, Rosanne ruffles the shock of black hair that looks much like her own and confirms her earlier opinion.

"Having the baby has turned out to be a good thing in terms of my career. Usually you get a big push going when a record comes out. I didn't get to do that but the album did well anyway in a slow and steady kind of way. That's the way I'd rather have it, instead of a big splash that goes away suddenly."

At 25, Rosanne has a wisdom about her professional life that is rare for a new artist. She admits that at least some of that

comes from years of watching her father struggle with his own remarkable career.

"I like my privacy, for example. I saw that taken away from my father on a lot of levels and that scares me. But then, if I ever do have any fame to deal with, I've had some good lessons on how to do it. He's kept his integrity and his soul through a lot of it."

Musically, too, she readily points to Cash as one of her most important influences, right up there with Joni Mitchell, Ray Charles and the Beatles, and included her favorite Cash tune, *Big River*, on her album.

When Rosanne speaks of her father, it's with obvious admiration and affection. Their relationship is close, she says, but on a personal, not professional, level.

"How could my father not be an influence on me," she asks. "I've listened to his music all my life. I've always been a fan of his. He makes good music, there's no denying that. But I'm not a carbon copy of him."

"I like my privacy . . . I saw that taken away from my father on a lot of levels and that scares me. But then, if I ever do have any fame to deal with, I've had some good lessons on how to do it. He's kept his integrity and his soul through a lot of it."

"He gives me advice sometimes, but it's more father-daughter advice and sometimes I take it and sometimes I don't. He was really more excited about the baby than he was about my album. I think. When he came into the hospital room after

she was born, he had tears in his eyes. He said she looked just like me when I was a baby, which of course is exactly what he should have said."

A far more decisive factor in her decision to jump with both feet into her music was Crowell, who entered her life at a critical point.

Rosanne was born in Memphis just about the time her father was beginning to get his own career in gear. When she was 11, her parents were divorced and Rosanne was raised in Ventura, Cal., by her mother, Vivian Distin, though she retained a close relationship with both parents.

The day after her high school graduation, she joined Cash's show on the road, which her father insists is the only help he ever gave her professionally.

"I was working in the wardrobe department and hadn't planned to be in the show at all," she remembers. "Then Dad started

"How could my father not be an influence on me? I've listened to his music all my life. I've always been a fan of his. He makes good music, there's no denying that. But I'm not a carbon copy of him."

putting Rosey (Carter, her half sister) and me on singing backup. We were scared to death. Eventually he had us opening up for him. I was still scared to death, but it was fun and I learned a lot. It was an incredibly protective atmosphere, where I didn't have to go out and fall on my face. Which eventually, of course, was exactly what I had to do."

For several years she wandered. An interest in acting took her to London, where she intended to go to drama school. Instead, she says, "I spent six months hanging out and working at CBS on the Wembley country music festival. I had a good time, got depressed and gained a lot of weight."

She returned to the U.S. and enrolled at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, planning to study drama and creative writing. However, after a year of self-enforced isolation she left to study acting at the Lee Strasberg school in Hollywood. It was there that she began to lose some of her painful shyness.

"It was like being introduced to myself for the first time," she says. "It was like therapy in a way. For the first time somebody yelled at me to do things, and I found I could do them."

Engrossed in her acting, Rosanne was suddenly confronted with a record deal and reluctantly took it. Impressed by a demonstration tape she had recorded in Nashville (produced by Crowell, on whom she had a schoolgirl crush), Ariola



Records flew Rosanne to Germany to record. The trip, she feels, proved to be a serious mistake.

"It was a soul-wrenching experience. I didn't know any of the musicians and there was a huge gap between the producer and me about where our hearts lay in music. I freaked out and had to go to bed for a week. I still can't listen to that record.

The album was never released in the U.S., much to Rosanne's relief, but her stay in Munich wasn't entirely a disaster. What had at first been a friendly correspondence with Crowell bloomed into something much more.

"We were both so shy, and when we started writing, the letters were so tentative. Then it began to get romantic and when I got back home it was like love at first sight. We were captivated."

Still a bit shaken by her first recording experience, Rosanne began to play with Crowell's band, The Cherry Bombs, around California. She remembers that

"I think my first record was a culmination of all my influences . . . No matter what I do it's going to sound country to some extent, because of my accent, my background..."

often she was so frightened that she played entire evenings with her guitar amplifier turned off. Slowly, her confidence grew under the tutelage of Crowell, who she says "showed me what I could do. He pushed me, and I finally began to push myself."

The couple married in early 1979, and have worked together closely ever since in one of the happier husband and wife collaborations in music. Crowell, who has had no small success himself as a songwriter/artist, produced both her first and second Columbia albums. He is, Rosanne boasts, a booster of her songwriting, an advisor, manager and friend, in addition to being her husband.

"I guess I'd consider another producer sometime, but I'm pretty hard-headed and Rodney doesn't try to mold me. He knows what I want and what I like and he doesn't try to shape it too much. That's a quality that's hard to find in a producer."

The two share a certain taste in music, too. She included four of Crowell's tunes on her last album, described by Crowell as "second generation country." Rosanne shies away from labels when she talks about her music, and steadfastly reserves the right to sing what and how she likes.

"I think my first record was a culmination of all my influences up to that point—a real diversified record. No matter what I do it's going to sound country to some extent, because of my accent, my background, things like that. But I think

my next album will be more singular in approach, a little narrower, more high-energy.

"If a record is going to be honest, it has to reflect wherever you are at any given time. I love new wave music, for example, and even though I'm not going to strike a pose or anything on the next album, you'll hear some of that influence."

In line with her new-found determina-

on the road with us and she'll be fine.' Now I'm concerned about giving her enough attention and not letting my lifestyle interfere with her needs.

"You never know that you can feel this way about another person, that you'd literally throw yourself in front of a train for them. I never knew it would be this demanding, but then I never knew it would be this rewarding either."



tion to grow musically, whatever direction that takes, Rosanne is planning to co-produce her next album (due for release in early 1981) with Crowell, and is developing an increasing confidence and interest in her songwriting, which until lately she kept on a back burner.

Being a full-time parent to two children, however, has admittedly put an unexpected temporary cramp in her style artistically.

"I've been taking care of young 'uns lately—and that is all. Sometimes it gets to the point where you don't have time for anything else. I had a very romantic idea of how babies act once they get here," she says with a grin. "I thought they ate maybe once an hour and slept five or six hours at a time. Boy, was I wrong. Before Caitlin was born I thought 'Great, I can just take her

There was a time right after Caitlin's birth, she says, when the career versus motherhood dilemma was a pressing one, but she now feels that situation has resolved itself to some extent.

"All during my pregnancy I had wanted to do things, but then when the baby was born I had a big flash of anxiety. It was like, you have to do something now—it's all you've got. It was tough, but the anxiety is better and I'm getting my old cockiness back, or trying to anyhow.

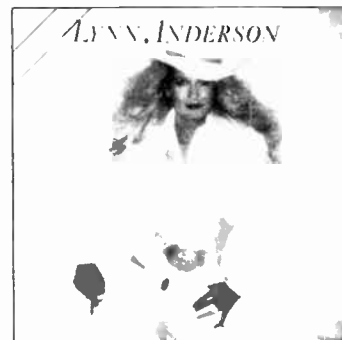
"I'm more confident now than I've ever been. And I think it's partly because of the baby. It spills over into all parts of your life. Now that I feel confident about being able to take care of this child, and all that that involves, I feel like I can do anything." ■

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The Guitar-Shaped Adventures of Webb Pierce

By Bob Allen

Several years ago, backstage at a concert in Nashville sponsored by a now defunct group of old-timers called The Association of Country Music Entertainers (ACE) is where this writer first encountered Webb Pierce.

He looked fat and sleek as he stood talking and picking his teeth contentedly. His pot gut hung over his large belt buckle and his eyelids drooped lazily behind his gaudily framed tinted glasses. The sequins on his baggy stage costume seemed tarnished, and the suit itself seemed rumpled and old-fashioned, as if it had been hanging in a closet ever since Webb's salad days in the 1950s when he had most of his big hit records.

With the slow-moving, self-centered air of a corn-fed, down-home wheeler-dealer, Webb was regaling a group of fans and entertainers who were hanging around backstage with a story about his World Famous Guitar-Shaped Swimming Pool:

"This h'yere Hollywood movie feller called me and wanted to use my house and my pool in one of his movies," Webb boasted with lazy self-assurance as he twirled a toothpick in his mouth and foraged for the bits of roast beef left over from his dinner. "I told him, 'No way! That pool's *my* thing!'"

* * *

More than two years later, when Webb greets this writer at the front door of his sprawling, antique-filled fieldstone house on ten acres of beautifully landscaped property adjacent to the Tennessee governor's mansion in one of Nashville's most exclusive suburbs (appropriately referred to as "Millionaires' Circle"), he seems a changed man. He seems dreamy, quiet, slightly out of it. The braggadocio and swagger seems gone. "What magazine did you say you were from?" he asks me about three times as he leads me through the immaculate and ornately furnished rooms of his house to the living room where he takes a seat on the corner of the large sofa and sips on a glass of water.

"*Country Music Magazine*," is the reply.

Webb sits on the sofa, sipping his water and staring into space as this writer turns on his tape recorder and shuffles with his



notes, preparing for the interview. Just then, Webb's son comes down the hall whistling loudly.

"Hey, keep that whistlin' down!" Webb hollers with a chuckle. "We're doin' a radio show in here!"

Webb has recently recorded a single record with his attractive dark-haired daughter, Debbie. She leaves a back room where she has been playing piano and comes into the spacious living room to join the conversation. The talk eventually turns to *Coal Miner's Daughter*, the recent feature film based on the life of Loretta Lynn.

"Loretta's movie's got a banner in it with my name on it!" Webb remarks to no one in particular as he smiles a weak nostalgic smile, just as a retired movie star from the silent film era might after hearing his name mentioned on a TV talk show.

Once Webb begins reminiscing about his long illustrious musical career which stretches back nearly 30 years and spans dozens and dozens of hit records, he seems to begin to enjoy himself and his attention span lengthens. He rambles on delightfully about his childhood, his first breaks in the music business and the shrewd business investments that have made him a wealthy man today.

But when Max Powell, his long-time bandmember, manager and protégé comes in the room, Webb seems to clam up. And unfortunately, Max Powell starts doing all

the talking. He is to Webb, sort of what Howdy-Doody is to Buffalo Bob: he's the perfect ventriloquist's dummy. You ask Webb a question and Max interrupts and answers it for him. ("What Webb means is . . ." "What Webb's really tryin' to say is . . .")

Meanwhile, Webb seems to doze off there on his corner of the sofa, which is all well and fine, except for the fact that Webb Pierce is rich, famous and intelligent, while Max Powell seems to be none of the above. He doesn't seem to realize that people want to hear what Webb Pierce has to say, not Max Powell.

During the interview, Max keeps getting up and going in the kitchen and getting himself what appear to be cans of Coca Cola. He drinks three or four of them and seems to belch every time he tries to say something profound. Later, he gives up his ruse: In the kitchen, I see him grinning a guileless grin as he peels the false stick-on Coca Cola label off of what is actually his fifth or sixth Budweiser.

But during Max's frequent trips to the refrigerator in the course of the afternoon, Webb does manage to get a few words of his own in edgewise. He talks about the years when he was country music's top record seller. He expresses pride in his sprawling, well-manicured \$1.5 million estate (complete with guitar-shaped swimming pool and guitar shaped mailbox). And he expresses bitterness when he talks about the recent controversies he's been involved in over his guitar-shaped swimming pools—misadventures that seem to have left Webb a tired and somewhat defeated man.

Webb seems most serene, however, when he talks about his present kicked-back lifestyle, which involves, for the most part, sitting on the sofa, golfing, bowling and spending much time in Florida where he has a condominium. He refers to himself as "semi-retired." He hasn't had a big hit record in years, he admits; and he has no real plans to make more records, except to help out his daughter Debbie who is embarking on a music career on her own.

"Nowadays, I just count my money," he laughs softly . . . "Or I get Max here to count it for me!" He and Max look at each



The controversial guitar-shaped swimming pool. "It represents the business I'm in," says Webb. "It represents my image...so people don't have to guess what I do."

other and roar with laughter.

"I started savin' and investin' when I got my first hit record," Webb adds with a more serious tone. "You know, when you start makin' money and start havin' hits, if you think it's gonna last forever, I got news for you: it ain't. Some day, somebody'll tap ya on the shoulder and say, 'Hey, it's all over!'"

"I'm very thankful for what I got," he adds. "I'd hate to go through a very successful career and end up broke like some of 'em."

It all began for Webb Pierce in Monroe, Louisiana where he was born in 1926. His father died when he was three months old, but he left the family a 300-acre farm where Webb grew up. Webb recalls that when he was nine or ten, he began singing and he would accompany himself by beating out a rhythm on the bucket that he used to haul water to the house from the spring down the hill. His mother grew tired of the ruckus and finally broke down and bought him a "\$5 red guitar."

By the time he was 16, Webb was landing work on occasional Saturday afternoon radio shows. When he got a little older, he went to Shreveport, Louisiana and landed a spot on the prestigious Louisiana Hayride, a radio show which around that time, featured young up and coming artists like Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. To make ends meet, he also took a daytime job as a floor manager in a Sears Roebuck store.

Around 1950, Webb was asked to sign with Decca Records, and in 1951 he had his first hit with a song called, *Wondering*. He decided to leave the job at Sears. "They told me, 'We'll save your job for ya, because that music ain't gonna last!'" he laughs at the recollection. "So I guess I can still go back to Sears if I want to!"

Around this time, Webb formed his own band, and it included Faron Young and Floyd Cramer, two artists who would later go on to make their own marks in Nashville. Faron recalls that Webb later helped him immeasurably in carving out his own early career. "Webb was like a daddy to me," Faron says today.

There followed for Webb Pierce, a string of hit records that for many years was unparalleled. *Wondering* was followed by *There Stands The Glass*, which stayed in the charts for 27 weeks during late 1953 and early 1954. *Slowly*, another Webb Pierce smash, hung in the charts for 36 weeks. *In The Jailhouse Now* stayed in the number one spot for an incredible 26 weeks and stayed in the charts for nearly a year. Other memorable Webb Pierce hits like *I Ain't Never*, *More And More*, *Back Street Affair*, *Love, Love, Love*, *Memory #1*, and *Fallen Angel* and *Tupelo County Jail* did similarly well.

During his more than 20 years with Decca Records, Pierce recorded more than 38 albums. The actual number of hit records that he had is something that nearly everyone seems to have forgotten—even Webb himself.

"I had 18 consecutive number one records," he says sleepily from his corner of the sofa, before Max can interrupt him. "Nobody's ever matched that."

"Webb's had 168 single records that have charted," Max adds proudly.

"183," Webb corrected him softly.

"And one *more* piece of information that 'cha might wanta know," Max adds with boastful pride. "At one time durin' the '50s, Webb had seven records in the top-15 . . ."

"In the top-12," Webb corrects him dreamily. "Two of 'em was tied for number one."

Unfortunately, records gathered by the Country Music Foundation at the Hall of Fame, from *Billboard Magazine's* charts of past years don't bear out Webb's claims too well. Webb Pierce has actually had *eight* number one records in his career. This number has since been surpassed by at least a dozen other artists, including Conway Twitty, Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard, Sonny James, Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton. Webb's had a total of 78 chart records, 42 of which made the top ten. Webb did nearly set a record of his own in that he was on the charts every year for 20 consecutive years, from 1952 to 1972. No other artist of his generation, with the possible exception of Eddy Arnold, have displayed this kind of longevity.

But by the late 1960s, Webb's illustrious career had finally started to fizzle down. He grew tired of touring and admits that after so many years in the business, he'd lost a great deal of his original enthusiasm. "I quit lookin' and studyin' for new material so much," explains the 54-year-old Pierce. "Y'see, I'd done about everything I could do, and I just wanted to more or less retire and stay away from the music business some."

During his heyday, Webb was known for his flamboyance. Many of the more sedate country artists, once they'd made it, actually seemed to be sort of, well, *embarrassed* by the business they were in, once they started hobnobbing with the bank presidents and stockbrokers in their new neighborhoods. But Webb, bless his heart, went in a totally opposite direction. He just got more and *more* gaudy. Far from settling into the subdued life in his ritzy neighborhood, he practically did everything but graze cows on his lawn. Once he made it, he bought himself two \$20,000 "Silver Dollar" Pontiacs, all decorated in gold and actual silver dollars, later, he built his guitar-shaped swimming pools, which he encouraged his fans—for a small fee—to come and visit. "It (the pool) represents the business I'm in," Webb explains today. "It represents my image. Like, I have a clock in the shape of a guitar and a mailbox in the shape of a guitar, so people don't have to guess what I do."

"There's three guitar shaped swimmin' pools in Nashville, and Webb built all three of 'em!" Max says with a kind of lap-dog admiration for his master.

But behind Webb's self-chosen role as Nashville's answer to the Beverly Hillbillies, there has always lurked the sensibilities of a shrewd businessman who managed over the years to parlay an initial \$12,500 investment into a multi-million-dollar portfolio of holdings which, before he sold it, included several radio stations and an interest in a highly successful publishing venture.

"I think every home I ever bought, I paid cash for," Webb adds. "I don't believe in payin' interest. If you can't af-



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ford it, don't buy it 'til you can."
Pierce's other investments over the years have included everything from skating rinks and oil wells ("They didn't turn out too well!" he admits sheepishly. "In fact, they didn't turn out to be wells!"), to a club in downtown Nashville. "We did some different things," he recalls, "sort of experimenting. Some of 'em good, some of 'em bad. If some of 'em didn't work out, we'd just quit and go out and start golfin' and get it off our mind," he laughs.

But one thing Webb has not gotten off his mind so easily is the fiasco that surrounded his guitar-shaped swimming pools—the one at his house and the one he more recently built, along with a partner, on Music Row. When he tried to keep them open to the public and turn himself a guitar shaped little ole profit, he instead ended up with a guitar-shaped migraine headache.

The trouble all started for Webb when he turned his backyard pool into a tourist site and tour buses full of eager fans began tramping through the exclusive neighborhood where he lived—Webb even built a special ramp in front of his house so the tour buses could pull over and unload. At poolside, Webb would sign autographs, shake hands, sell record albums and souvenirs and occasionally even sing for his enthusiastic fans who had paid admission to the pool. During one year, according to legal briefs that were later filed, 16,000 people visited the pool in Webb's backyard and bought 4500 albums from him at \$5 each.

But some of Webb's more sedate neighbors, like Ray Stevens across the street, didn't like all the crowds and the traffic congestion caused by the tour buses one little bit. ("That's what he gets for livin' across the street from a star!" Webb snapped bitterly at one point during their well-publicized feud.) Pretty soon, Stevens and the community of Oak Hill where Webb's house is located, slapped a lawsuit on him and closed his poolside operation down.

"That kinda aggravated me," Webb admits, in what is probably the understatement of the month. "I just thought that people had a right to come and see the pool. After all, they're the ones who paid for all this for me. The tourists, they say now, has been cut in half (in Nashville) and they say this was one of the big blows," he adds sadly.

But all that was nothing compared to what all hit the fan when Webb and a business partner opened a similar pool on Music Row, just across the street and down a ways from the Hall of Fame. First off, Webb says, some of the "muckety-mucks" on Music Row took him to court, claiming he was creating a "carnival" atmosphere with his tourist trap—which was actually pretty sedate, compared to some of the other junk shops just up the street.

Webb's plan, in addition to charging a few bucks admission to get into the pool

and see his gold records and one of his "Silver Dollar" cars, was to let the fans, for another \$10, purchase a membership in Webb's Swimming Pool Hall of Fame. For this modest price, they would get their names indelibly inscribed on a scroll next to the pool.

But almost before the pool was even opened to the public, Webb and his partner had a bad falling out with each other. In a fit of pique, Webb removed his Pontiac and his gold records and changed the locks on the pool and locked his partner out. His partner retaliated by breaking in with a crowbar and throwing catfish in the murky waters of the pool.

Pretty soon, Webb Pierce had a guitar-shaped mess on his hands as the deserted pool fell into litigation and slime gathered on the water's surface.

Now, months later, the pool has changed ownership and has once again been opened to the public. Webb and his former partner, however, are still battling it out in court. Now they've changed the big letters on the archway over the pool around and left out Webb's name. Now it just says 'WORLD FAMOUS GUITAR-SHAPED SWIMMING POOL.' The plug has officially been pulled on Webb Pierce's guitar-shaped dreams and his hopes for a 'Swimming Pool Hall of Fame' have gone down the drain with the dead catfish.

When asked about the Music Row pool today, Webb gets a pained and disgusted look on his face and turns away. "That's in litigation, so we can't talk about it," he snaps in the reedy agitated voice of an old man.

"It broke Webb's heart," interjects Max in a voice that is almost theatrical in its sadness. "He had a *envision* (sic) that the fans would be able to see his pool and *even* have their names inscribed around it. But he got involved with a guy that didn't have the same *envision*."

Ah, but still, the invincible Webb Pierce will surely come through it all right. Surely his heart will soon mend. Aside from his misfortunes with the pool, he seems to have it made as he revels in his leisurely existence with the satisfaction of a self-made man whose success has enabled him to retire in luxury at a relatively early age. He's been married to the same woman for 20 years, even though she spends much of her time in Florida these days; and his two college-aged kids are both doing well for themselves. In his mid-fifties, Webb has achieved the kind of leisurely existence that so many older Americans strive for all their working lives. And what's more, he's got the ever-faithful Max Powell to look after him.

"I'm very thankful for what I've got," he admits. "Money's not my God, but God gives it to you as long as you know how to use it, I think. I want my family to have something when I'm gone, and now they will."

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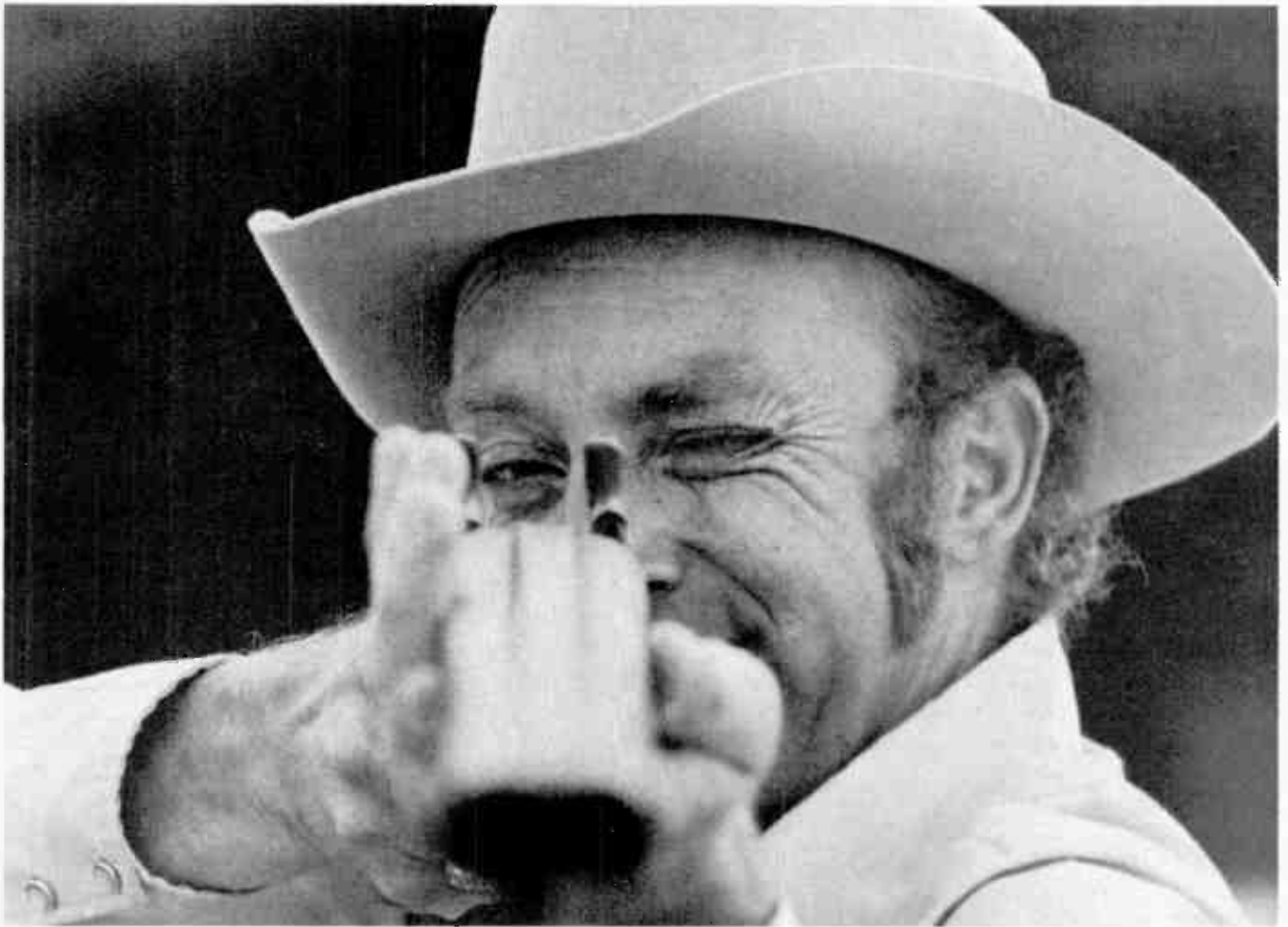
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The Vernon Oxford Conspiracy

By John Pugh



Vernon Oxford never went to college and certainly never took any courses in Logic or Theory of Reasoning, but to him his arguments are as valid as any philosopher's and he doesn't need any complicated abstractions to back them up. All he needs to know is what he sees and feels and experiences. And that all adds up to one thing. There is a conspiracy to keep him from taking his rightful place in country music. Occasionally when discussing it, he can name names and dates and places, but mostly he is vague and nebulous about how this conspiracy operates and who is behind it but, mind you, that doesn't mean that it isn't there, just the same.

For years Vernon Oxford tried to be accepted by the Nashville establishment and let them, in turn, help him get

somewhere as a country singer. And for years he went largely unheard. Granted, he had a fairly sizable hit a few years ago with a somewhat novelty song which glorified a day in the life of a typical redneck, but he never got on *Her Haw* or was asked to present an award or got to sit down for a few minutes with a talk show host. Finally, both bewildered and resentful, he made an end run around the power structure and decided to be his own manager and agent, and to sign with a label. Rounder Records, outside of Nashville. The results have been heartening. He has recently purchased his first home in a Nashville suburb and spends long hours lovingly remaking his yard into the garden spot of Donekson, Tennessee. He points with satisfaction to his income of last year, which probably

was no more than what Dolly Parton makes in one night and certainly no more than one of her weekends, but it is more than he has ever made in any one year and he is justifiably proud of it. And always there are his fanatical overseas fans, ranging from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean Sea, from the British Isles right up to the Berlin Wall. Because of them he rests grateful in the knowledge that he can say goodbye to those seven years of nailing sheetrock. He has a dotting wife and a bouncing baby boy. He has gotten religion and sobered up from his wild, hell-raising days. All in all, he is happy, secure, content.

And yet. . . . If only he knew who was keeping him standing outside in the cold with his nose pressed against the window

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pane. If only he knew why. If only he could get a deal without it somehow mysteriously falling through. If only he could get a contract without so many weird circumstances surrounding it. If only he could get to the bottom of this maddening *Conspiracy*.

I first interviewed Vernon Oxford for *Country Music* in the mid 1970s. The piece asked if it were possible that he was too "country" for modern day country music, what with his mournful ballads and nasal singing; his raw speech and unpolished manner. I found him to be humble, contrite, beseeching; simply a country boy from the Arkansas Ozarks who only wanted to sing his 1950ish songs. Five years later he still wishes only to be heard by those who like their music unadorned by strings and synthesizers, who like to hear about hearts and barrooms, guilt and teardrops. That part of Vernon Oxford will never change. But personally I found a great difference. This time he was arrogant, outspoken, angry. He was the picture of a man who has taken as much as he can and is now fighting back, a man who is through knuckling under and playing games.

"It's not so much *me* against the country music establishment, but *me* for what I believe in," he explained. "I've had a lot of other artists tell me they'd like to cut pure country like I do, but their label or their producer won't let them. Those artists could cut country if they wanted to, but they let themselves be controlled for the sake of the dollar. They won't stand up for what they believe in any more. I'm different. I won't bow down and let them run my life. I'm man enough to make my own decisions. The more they try to force me under their control, the more I rebel against it.

"There have been so many people who have told me, 'Sign with me and I'll make you number one overnight.' Of course, the first thing they always wanted was for me to put up some money. Others have told me, 'If you ever need any money, just come see me.' I soon realized that's their way of getting you in debt to them so that you can't get out, and you're under obligation as long as the contract runs. I got about \$1000 in debt to one manager and he stopped booking me. I said, 'I'm getting a new agent.' He said, 'Not until you pay me that \$1000.'

"The Mafia is behind a lot of this. Nobody wants to admit it, but it's true. That's why so many entertainers are on dope; the Mafia gets them hooked. I was invited to a party at an agent's house one time. I got there and found out that half the guests were Mafia people.

"I've been accused of being a Hank Williams imitator all my career," he continued. "I couldn't get any TV exposure, a chance at the Opry, anything. All of a sudden here comes Jim Owens—out of nowhere, and he's Hank Williams *exactly*,

and they push the hell out of him, have him on TV and everything. The publisher of the song killed my first record. I asked him why. He said, 'I don't want you to make it that easy. I want you to have to struggle to be number one, so when you make it, nobody can knock you off.' That sounded kind of strange to me, so I did some checking around. I found out he had been pressured to kill my record. Someone once told me that one artist even bought my contract from RCA because I was giving him too much competition. One agent told me, 'I can't book you. Nobody wants you.' I bought my contract and started booking myself. Now I've got a whole year of bookings ahead of me. It's all politics and money. You can become president easier



than you can a country music star.

"What killed them was me breaking so big in Europe. They never foresaw that. They can't kill the public. As long as there's companies like Rounder Records and fans that still like what I sing, then nobody can stop me if I got something the public wants and if I'm that determined to make records."

When I tried to pin Vernon down on specifics, he simply let one all-inclusive statement suffice as an answer to each query. When asked how he knew the men at his ex-agent's home were all Mafia members, he replied, "They dress just like they do on television." When asked, even if they were actually Mafia, what made him think they were involved in country music, he answered, "Anywhere you got big money floating around, you got the Mafia." His answers about the details of the alleged conspiracy are equally as evasive. "I've just had so much pulled on me that I know it's true," he said. So, while we don't know that any of Vernon's allegations are true, we can certainly see that they are real to *him*.

The question is: Why would anyone want to keep Vernon Oxford out of country music? To be sure, his talent is un-

paralleled, but his style and his music are so anachronistic that they compete with almost no one else's. Even Vernon laughingly acknowledges this. "I don't know if they're afraid that I'm so much better than the rest of them that I'll show everybody up, or if I'm so much worse that they'll all be embarrassed by me." He also admits that his often abrasive personality may have alienated some movers and shakers on Music Row. He realizes he has been blunt and forthright, even "stubborn and bullheaded." But he sees this as an attribute, not a drawback. He concedes that in his heavy-drinking, hell-raising days he may have frightened some people off or given them the impression that he was a poor risk. But it has been quite some time now since he has taken anything stronger than iced tea, and besides, look at all the others who drink far more than he ever did and all the ones who've lately taken to popping pills and snorting coke. His resemblance to Hank Williams (physical, as well as musical) may have had something to do with it, but why would anyone want to keep him from "competing" with a man who'd been dead 12-13 years before Vernon even came to Nashville?

And yet, two incidents make me wonder if perhaps some of his suspicions might be founded in substance, if not in fact. I once talked with an artist who claimed he was offered a management contract with the Mafia. There was no doubt about their identity, he said, as they ran the resort where he had just completed a week-long socko run. As he related the details of their offer, I sat in open-mouthed wonder at the money, the cars, the clothes, the women they would lavish on him as soon as his name was on the dotted line. "Why didn't you sign?" I asked incredulously. "Because," he answered, "if your records or your booking slow down, the Mafia has you out selling dope." The other example is the book *Coal Miner's Daughter* where Loretta Lynn recounts the aborted attempts by some female stars to keep her out of the limelight. So both of Vernon's allegations appear to have happened to other, bigger names than his.

* * *

Circumstances, conspiracy, luck: whatever the reasons, it is indeed strange how so many off-the-wall occurrences have taken place in Vernon's career. Perhaps the following incident underscores the kind of break he has gotten for the last 15 years. He was given a part in the movie *Coal Miner's Daughter* as one of Loretta Lynn's uncles. In the final cut, he was edited out. Furious, he went to the producer. "Calm down," the producer told him. "We'll put you in a speaking part, after all." He did. Vernon was the preacher who married Loretta and Mooney. He was on for maybe ten seconds. His back was to the camera the whole time. ■

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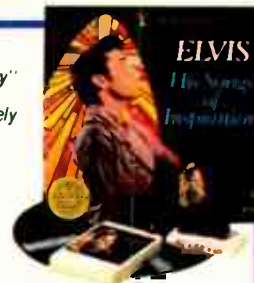
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1980

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1978



1977



1976



1972



1971



1970



1969



1968



1967



October is
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Record Reviews

Glen Campbell Somethin' 'Bout You Baby I Like

Capitol S00-12705

A while back I was watching the world series or something, and true to form, it started with the National Anthem. Glen Campbell was going to sing it. I snickered to myself. As all Americans know, it's a hard song to sing. Glen sung it. He stopped me in mid-snicker. I never heard it sung better. The grace notes he added to "Oh" as in, "Oh, say does that star spangled banner yet wave" were exquisite. Glen

Campbell is a damn fine singer.

But it was the way he countrified his approach to the *Star*



Spangled Banner that made it special. And it's when he does country styled songs like

Wichita Lineman and *Galveston* that his gift really shows. But there's nothing really country on his album. Too bad for me. Too bad for you? Too bad for Glen?

Not if he really prefers to sing adult contemporary. After all, this is the '80s. If he wants to sing songs more appropriate to the shopping mall than the honky tonk, well, there's more shopping malls than honky tonks nowadays. His stardom certainly puts him in a position to sing whatever pleases him. And him and lots of others like the middle of the road.

Despite the fact that there isn't

a token country song here, there is a token rocker, *Hooked on Love*. The rest of the album is nice, safe, and occasionally pretty. Rita Coolidge is featured on two songs, the title song, and *Show Me You Love Me*. They don't exactly sparkle, but they do provide a little contrast. Also included is the Academy Award winning song from *Norma Rae*, *It Goes Like It Goes* which is the prettiest song on the album. Campbell sings pretty songs well. If he's going to sing less country songs, more pretty ones will help fill the void. A little.

PETER STAMPEL

John Anderson John Anderson

Warner Bros. BSK 3439

With all the political barbs and promises being tossed about, one thing has become perfectly clear. Linda Ronstadt and Jerry Brown won't be moving into the White House. If the turkeys that are running have you confused or frustrated, you should consider soothing your soul by listening to another non-candidate, John Anderson. The platform he carries on his debut album is solid, back-to-the basics country.

All of his single releases, which have gotten progressively hotter on the chart, are included. *Your Lying Blue Eyes* and *She Just Started Liking Cheatin' Songs* provide a most welcome boost to the re-emergence of honky tonk music. And that's just the beginning. Anderson handles an old standard, *The Arms of a*

Fool like a seasoned veteran.

Two things come to mind which convince me of Anderson's potential for continued success. This first album il-

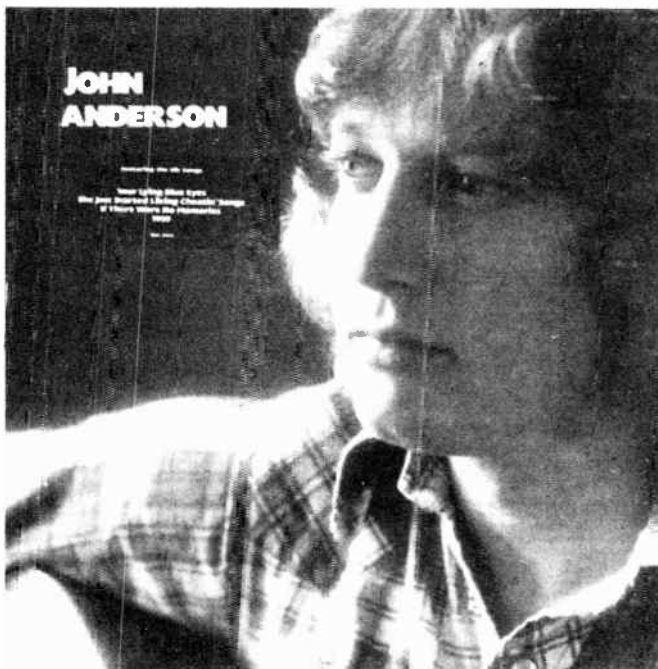
lustrates that he can confidently maintain a style of vocal phrasing that for years and years was characteristic of country music. I can't define it, but few artists

in the past decade (new artists, that is) have been inclined to indulge in it. Perhaps John Anderson can't help it. I would like to think so. He's just a hard country singer by nature, and he has hit at a time when the radio stations are willing to go along with it.

The second plus factor is the variety of well written original material. In conjunction with Lionel Delmore, Anderson is credited for *Havin' Hard Times*, *The Girl at the End of the Bar*, *Low Dog Blues*, and *It Looks Like the Party is Over*. The pace and the feel differs on each one, showing off plenty of versatility. In a couple of spots, the backup vocals are a bit exaggerated, but that would only bother the most ardent of the purists.

If you see John Anderson's name on the ticket this fall, tear it in half and walk on in and sit yourself down. If his show is as good as this album, you're sure to have a good time.

BILL OAKLEY



Record Reviews



Eddy Arnold A Legend and His Lady RCA AHLI-3606

The cover of Eddy Arnold's **A Legend and His Lady** serves as a pretty good indicator of the album's contents. Relaxed, smiling, the singer lounges in a super-modern acrylic armchair, but is dressed in a traditional hand-knit Irish sweater.

Likewise, the ten songs inside are a cheerful combination of Arnold's traditional, smooth-as-molasses delivery and a fresh, contemporary approach to production, thanks to Bob Montgomery.

The songs Arnold has chosen are love songs, from sentimental ballads to swingy, uptempo tunes. Polished and professional, they showcase Arnold at

his country Perry Como best, giving a nod to the new while retaining the style that literally made Arnold a country music legend.

Arnold is backed on the album by Nashville's "A" team session players, and is also the beneficiary of a number of tasty string arrangements (Ron Oates) that in general complement his voice, though sometimes threaten to overwhelm the songs themselves.

Arnold's no-nonsense to a song, his super-smooth (but with a country edge) voice, lend themselves best on the album to neat, sweet ballads such as *Happy*. He's less appealing on swingers such as *Sally K*.

Arnold fans may wish to invite a close friend over for the evening and dim the lights for this one. LAURA EIPER

Eddie Rabbitt Horizon Elektra 6E-276

After an artist experiences his first wave of success, something happens which may seem a bit unsettling. What does he do next? Eddie Rabbitt has reached that pivotal point, after cranking out a series of pleasant, yet somehow predictable love songs. With these he has garnered a strong legion of fans, but the time has come for him to embark into some new territory.

What he has come up with on the first side of **Horizon** is nothing less than the finest set of rockabilly to come out of Nashville in years. It makes me believe that he must have been there, at least in spirit, during those great Sun sessions of the fifties. Either that or he has simply done his homework.

Especially satisfying is *Short Road to Love*, with its thumping intro, akin to the flavor of

Mystery Train by Elvis. And then, adding a contemporary flair to the train theme, is *747*, which is an Eddie Rabbitt original. The other four tracks were co-written by him and Even Stevens with producer David Malloy helping out on **Rockin' With My Baby**.

This is the kind of music that will lift you out of a hard working week and into a Friday night. It comes on straight. No frills and no gimmicks. For all of its airplay, *Drivin' My Life Away* never seems to get old. Sometimes modern interpreters of rockabilly fall into the trap of a repetitious beat. Fortunately, each of these selections has a different feel.

Side two of the album is another chapter in the Eddie Rabbitt love song story. First there's *I Need to Fall in Love Again* and *So Deep in Your Love*. These two and *Just The Way It Is* measure up to his previous efforts along similar lines, but they go no further.

However, if there is to be a country music renaissance of the eighties, **Horizon** should be counted, since Eddie Rabbitt

has done for rockabilly what Emmylou has done for bluegrass.

BILL OAKY



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PATSY CLINE'S GREATEST HITS

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8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-12 \$4.98

JERRY CLOWER - MCA-486 ALBUM \$2.98

Live In Picayune; Physical Examination; The Plumber; Bird Huntin' At Uncle Versie's; Marcel's Snuff; The Trazan Movie; Rattlesnake Roundup; Aunt Penny Douglas; A Box For Clovis; Marcel Ledbetter Moving Company; The Coon Huntin' Monkey; Marcel's Old Goose; Uncle Versie's Horse; The Chain; Marcel's Hair Growing Secret; Hot Apple Pie; Soppin' Molasses; Newgene's 4-H Trip; What's His Number; Conterfeifers; You're Fixin' To Mess Up.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-486 \$4.98

JIMMY DAVIS - MCA-150 ALBUM \$2.98

Supper Time; My God Is Real; I'd Rather Have Jesus; Long Long Journey; Oh, Why Not Tonight; Where He Leads Me I Will Follow; When The Master Speaks; Battle Hymn Of The Republic; There Is A Fountain; When I Move To The Sky; Someday There'll Be No Tomorrow; What A Friend.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-150 \$4.98

JIMMY DAVIS' GREATEST HITS

MCA-269 ALBUM \$2.98
I Wouldn't Take Nothin' For My Journey Now; How Great Thou Art; One More Valley; Someone To Care; Wasted Years; Supper Time; When God Dips His Love In My Heart; Taller Than Trees; Who Am I; Near The Cross; His Marvelous Grace.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-269 \$4.98

RED FOLEY - BEYOND THE SUNSET

MCA-147 ALBUM \$2.98
Beyond The Sunset; Should You Go First; Peace In The Valley; Steal Away; Just A Closer Walk With Thee; Our Lady Of Fatima; The Place Where I Worship; Someone To Care; The Rosary; Will The Circle Be Unbroken; Old Pappy's New Banjo; I Hear A Choir; When God Dips His Love In My Heart.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-147 \$4.98

RED FOLEY - MCA-86 ALBUM \$2.98

I'll Fly Away; The Last Mile Of The Way; No Tears In Heaven; Were You There?; This World Is Not My Home; My Soul Walked Through The Darkness; I Just Can't Keep From Cryin'; Lord I'm Coming Home; Only One Step More; Stand By Me; Farther Along; Life's Railway To Heaven.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-86 \$4.98

LIONEL HAMPTON'S FAVORITES

MCA-204 ALBUM \$2.98
Flying Home; Everybody's Somebody's Fool; How High The Moon; Blow-Top Blues; Midnight Sun; Air Mail Special; Hamp's Boogie Woogie; Red Top; Gone Again; New Central Avenue Breakdown; Hey! Ba-Ba-Re-Bop; Rockin' In Rhythm.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-204 \$4.98

WOODY HERMAN'S GOLDEN FAVORITES

MCA-219 ALBUM \$2.98
Woodchopper's Ball; The Golden Wedding; Who Dat Up Dere; Yardbird Shuffle; Down Under; Indian Boogie Woogie; Blue Flame; Four Or Five Times; Irresistible You; Chips Boogie Woogie; Las Chiapanecas; Woodsheddin' With Woody.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-219 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - MCA-113 ALBUM \$2.98

Don't Come Home A Drinkin' With Lovin' On Your Mind; I Really Don't Want You To Know; Tomorrow Never Comes; There Goes My Everything; The Shoe Goes On The Other Foot Tonight; Saint To A Sinner; The Devil Gets His Dues; I Can't Keep Away From You; I'm Livin' In Two Worlds; Get What 'Cha Got And Go; Making Plans; I Got Caught.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-113 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - HYMNS

MCA-5 ALBUM \$2.98
Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven; Where No One Stands Alone; When They Ring Those Golden Bells; Peace In The Valley; If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again; The Third Man; How Great Thou Art; Old Camp Meetin'; When I Hear My Children Pray; In The Sweet Bye And Bye; Where I Learned To Pray; I'd Rather Have Jesus.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-5 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - MCA-6 ALBUM \$2.98

You Ain't Woman Enough; Put It Off Until Tomorrow; These Boots Are Made For Walkin'; God Gave Me A Heart To Forgive; Keep Your Change; Someone Before Me; The Darkest Day; Tippy Toeing; Talking To The Wall; A Man I Hardly Know; Is It Wrong; It's Another World.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-6 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN AND CONWAY TWITTY

MCA-8 ALBUM \$2.98
It's Only Make Believe; We've Closed Our Eyes To Shame; I'm So Used To Loving You; Will You Visit Me On Sunday; After The Fire Is Gone; Don't Tell Me You're Sorry; Pickin' Wild Mountain Berries; Tak Me; The One I Can't Live Without; Hangin' On; Working Girl.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-8 \$4.98

LORETTA LYNN - MCA-7 ALBUM \$2.98

Who Says God Is Dead; I Believe; Standing Room Only; The Old Rugged Cross; Harp With Golden Strings; If You Miss Heaven; I'm A 'Gettin' Ready To Go; In The Garden; Ten Thousand Angels; He's Got The Whole World In His Hands; Mama, Why.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-7 \$4.98

SAMMY KAYE - MCA-191 ALBUM \$2.98

Harbor Lights; Walkin' To Missouri; Penny Serenade; Atlanta, G.A.; Roses; Laughing On The Outside (Crying On The Inside); It Isn't Fair; Chickery Chick; I'm A Big Girl Now; Blueberry Hill; Room Full Of Roses; The Old Lamp-Lighter.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-191 \$4.98

WAYNE KING - MCA-94 ALBUM \$2.98

The Waltz You Saved For Me; Josephine; Now Is The Hour; Near You; Dancing With Tears In My Eyes; Lonesome; That's All; Goofus; Where The Blue Of The Night Meets The Gold Of The Day; Together; True Love; Deep Purple; Meet Me Tonight In Dreamland.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-94 \$4.98

TED LEWIS - MCA-258 ALBUM \$2.98

When My Baby Smiles At Me; She's Funny That Way; Just Around The Corner; The Sweetheart Of Sigma Chi; The Old St. Louis Blues; Tiger Rag; Wear A Hat With A Silver Lining; Down The Old Church Aisle; I'm The Medicine Man For The Blues; King For A Day; Three O'Clock In The Morning; Good Night.
NO TAPE AVAILABLE

GUY LOMBARDO - MCA-103 ALBUM \$2.98

MEDLEY'S: Blues In The Night; The Birth Of The Blues; I Gotta Right To Sing The Blues; Memories; Let The Rest Of The World Go By; My Secret Love; Love Nest; Love Is The Sweetest Thing; Something To Remember You By; The Very Thought Of You; You're My Everything; Kiss Me Again; A Kiss In The Dark; I'll See You Again; By The Light Of The Silvery Moon; Shine On Harvest Moon; Moonlight Bar; As Time Goes By; Bidin' My Time; Breezin' Along With The Breeze; I Want To Be Happy; I'm Looking Over A Four Leaf Clover; Happy Days Are Here Again; April Showers; September In The Rain; I Only Have Eyes For You; If I Could Be With You; It Had To Be You; In A Shanty In Old Shanty Town; Three Little Words; Baby Face; Somebody Loves Me; Don't Take Your Love From Me; What Is This Thing Called Love.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-103 \$4.98

JIMMY MARTIN - MCA-96 ALBUM \$2.98

Prayer Bells Of Heaven; Goodbye; Give Me Roses Now; What Would You Give In Exchange; Voice Of My Savior; Shut In's Prayer; This World Is Not My Home; Pray The Clouds Away; Lord I'm Coming Home; Give Me Your Hand; Little White Church; God Guide Our Leaders Hand.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-96 \$4.98

JIMMY MARTIN - MCA-137 ALBUM \$2.98

Singing All Day And Dinner On The Ground; Lift Your Eyes To Jesus; My Lord Keeps A Record; God Is Always The Same; When The Savior Reached Down For Me; Shake Hands With Mother Again; Help Thy Brother; A Beautiful Life; Stormy Waters; Hold To God's Unchanging Hand; Little Angels In Heaven.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-137 \$4.98

WEBB PIERCE - MCA-120 ALBUM \$2.98

In The Jailhouse Now; Slowly; I Ain't Never; Wondering; There Stands The Glass; If The Back Door Could Talk; Tupelo County Jail; I Don't Care; Alla My Love; Don't Do It, Darlin'; Missing You.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-120 \$4.98

MILLS BROTHERS - MCA-188 ALBUM \$2.98

Paper Doll; I'll Be Around; You Tell Me Your Dreams; I'll Tell You Mine; Till Then; You Always Hurt The One You Love; Don't Be A Baby, Baby; Across The Alley From The Alamo; Be My Life's Companion; The Glow Worm; Queen Of The Senior Prom; Smack Dab In The Middle; Opus One.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-188 \$4.98

BILL MONROE - I'LL MEET YOU IN CHURCH SUNDAY MORNING

MCA-226 ALBUM \$2.98
I'll Meet You In Church Sunday Morning; Drifting Too Far From The Shore; Master Builder; I Found The Way; We'll Understand It Better; Let Me Rest At The End Of The Journey; Going Home; One Of God's Sheep; Way Down Deep In My Soul; On The Jericho Road; Farther Along; The Glory Land Way.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-226 \$4.98

BILL MONROE - MCA-131 ALBUM \$2.98

Let The Light Shine Down On Me; Lord Protect My Soul; Wait A Little Longer Please Jesus; A Voice From On High; I'm Working On A Building; Don't Put Off Till Tomorrow; He Will Set Your Fields Afire; Get Down On Your Knees And Pray; Boat Of Love; Walking In Jerusalem Just Like John; River Of Death.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-131 \$4.98

RUSS MORGAN - MCA-92 ALBUM \$2.98

Does Your Heart Beat For Me; The Object Of My Affection; Do You Ever Think Of Me; Cruising Down The River; Linger Awhile; Stumbling; The Wang Wang Blues; So Tired; Josephine; You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You; Wash Blues; Johnson Rag; Dogface Soldier.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-92 \$4.98

OSBORNE BROTHERS - HYMNS

MCA-125 ALBUM \$2.98
I Bowed On My Knees And Cried "Holy"; How Great Thou Are; Rock Of Ages; Steal Away And Pray; I Pray My Way Out Of Troubles; Will You Meet Me Over Yonder; Light At The River; What A Friend We Have In Jesus; Medals For Mothers; Jesus Sure Changed Me; Where We'll Never Grow Old.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-125 \$4.98

ERNEST TUBB - MCA-16 ALBUM \$2.98

Walking The Floor Over You; Rainbow At Midnight; Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello; Another Story; Thanks A Lot; Half A Mind; I'll Get Along Somehow; Waltz Across Texas; It's Been So Long Darling; Mr. Juke Box; I Wonder Why You Said Goodbye.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-16 \$4.98

ERNEST TUBB - MCA-84 ALBUM \$2.98

I'll Get Along Somehow; Slipping Around; Filipino Baby; When The World Has Turned You Down; Have You Ever Been Loned; There's A Little Bit Of Everything In Texas; Walking The Floor Over You; Driftwood On The River; There's Nothing More To Say; Rainbow At Midnight; I'll Always Be Glad To Take You Back; Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-84 \$4.98

KITTY WELLS - DUST ON THE BIBLE

MCA-149 ALBUM \$2.98
Dust On The Bible; I Dreamed I Searched Heaven For You; Lonesome Valley; My Loved Ones Are Waiting For Me; I Heard My Savior Call; The Great Speckled Bird; We Will Set Your Fields On Fire; We Buried Her Beneath The Willows; One Way Ticket To The Sky; I Need The Prayers; Matthew Twenty-Four; Lord I'm Coming Home.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-149 \$4.98

KITTY WELLS - MCA-121 ALBUM \$2.98

It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels; This White Circle; Mommy For A Day; Release Me; I Gave My Wedding Dress Away; Amigo's Guitar; Heartbreak U.S.A.; I'll Repossess My Heart; Password; Searching; Making Believe.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-121 \$4.98

KITTY WELLS AND RED FOLEY

MCA-83 ALBUM \$2.98
One By One; Just Call Me Lonesome; As Long As I Live; A Wedding Ring Ago; Make Believe; Candy Kisses; You And Me; Memory Of A Love; I'm A Stranger In My Home; I'm Throwing Rice; No One But You; I'm Counting On You.
8 TRACK TAPE - MCAT-83 \$4.98

Record Reviews

John Conlee Friday Night Blues

MCA-3246

If not a once-in-a-lifetime stylist like Merle Haggard or George Jones, John Conlee is nonetheless, one of the finest vocalists to emerge from the ranks of male country singers in recent years.

Conlee, as witnessed by his earlier hits, is also an excellent songwriter; but surprisingly, there are no originals on *Friday Night Blues*. In place of them, Conlee and producer Bud Logan have come up with the next best thing: ten solid songs—some of them outright beauties—by top Nashville writers of the day like Sonny Throckmorton, Rafe Van Hoy, Roury Bourke, Don Cook, Sanger Shafer and Doodle Owens.

These songwriters are really so good that if you want to know where the mainstream of country music is headed at any given time, you need only listen to the originals that they are turning out. Their songs, when they are effectively rendered by an artist like Conlee, are brief glimpses into the times we live in; and often, they are accurate reflections of the things that go



on in our lives. *Friday Night Blues*, the title song, for instance, beautifully illustrates the toll that a demanding work week can take on a love relationship. *Let's Get Married Again* is about a couple who, after a separation and divorce, followed by a period of estrangement, fall uneasily back in love again and come to the conclusion that they'd be better

off back together after all.

Conlee is able to wring all the convincing inflections of sadness, sorrow, confusion and celebration out of such songs. Oh, occasionally his deliveries from song to song do suffer from a bit of sameness, and he obviously sings some of the songs on *Friday Night Blues* with far more conviction than he does others. But the only

time he really even threatens to fall short, though, is on a song like *When I'm Out Of You*, where he seems to be trying to beat Merle Haggard at his own game. The influence of Haggard, whether it is conscious or not, runs like a thread through Conlee's music. It is subtle enough on most cuts that it gives credence and authenticity to Conlee's own singing without becoming obvious, in and of itself. But it becomes a hindrance on those rare occasions where, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it seems to break into outright imitation. That's when we're reminded that as good a singer as Conlee may be, he *ain't* Merle Haggard.

Though *Friday Night Blues* is not a milestone album in Conlee's career, it still delivers a healthy sampling of good solid mainstream country music which is contemporary without the expense of being pretentious—and that's a quality that is becoming quite rare these days.

As long as Conlee's around, we'll know there's at least one more artist who's going to be singing today's country songs like they're meant to be sung.

BOB ALLEN

Dave Rowland and Sugar

New York Wine & Tennessee Shine

RCA AHL 1 3623

Unfasten your cummerbund. Sit back and relax to the music of Dave Rowland and Sugar. To coin a phrase, the group's latest effort, *New York Wine & Tennessee Shine*, is tuxedo country at its saccharin best. Their sound has become so slick and polished, each song seems to be wearing a

gold chain.

This album is a safe bet in



that no chances are taken in the production, song selection, or

arrangements. Produced by Jerry Bradley and Rowland, the LP is not without merit, although one could not call it exactly exciting or inventive music. It is smooth and relaxing, aided and abetted by Bergen White's string arrangements, performed by the Shelly Kurland Strings. At times the strings are lush and overwhelming.

Adding to Rowland's deep, masculine voice are "Sugar"—Sue Powell and Melissa Dean. Sugar is certainly an apropos name for them. Their melli-

fluous vocals blend well with Rowland's crooning voice.

The top selection is the title cut, *New York Wine & Tennessee Shine*, followed closely by *Changin' A Love Song*, and *Delta Queen*. However, the overall sound is so much the same, that each song does tend to flow namelessly into the next. Variety is not the album's strong suit.

This album may not give you much to think about, but it is enjoyable listening if you tend to like your music lush as tropical vegetation.

KELLY DEANEY

Record Reviews

Tom T. Hall Soldier of Fortune

RCA AHLI-3685

The cover photo of *Soldier of Fortune* depicts of Tom T. Hall as a scruffy looking picker with his battered guitar case, looking conspicuously, almost brazenly, out of place in someone's posh, chandeliered living room (probably his own).

This album cover, even if it is intended to be comical, still reflects something essential about Tom T. Hall—at least about the Tom T. Hall we hear on *Soldier of Fortune*. It reflects the sound of a vagabond poet forever restless, that lurks beneath, and sometimes feels trapped by, the dignified country gentlemen exterior of this self-made musical philosopher who has achieved worldly success in the traditional sense (big fancy house with chandeliers, etc.) in his own time and on his own terms.

As Tom T. grows old gracefully it seems as if the poet in him does not really feel at ease amidst the trappings of fame and fortune, and instead seems to reflect endlessly on the beauty and strangeness of where he's been, where he is now and where he might be going next.

On songs like the title song ("I'd rather chase rainbows than stay here and grow old," he sings), Tom T. seems to be articulating his own daydreams about chasing head-long after his lost youth, footloose and fancy-free, down some dusty country road. In other songs, like *Back When Gas Was Thirty Cents A Gallon* and *Me And Jimmie Rodgers* (a whimsical Shel Silverstein tribute to some of America's cultural heroes, in which the singer himself imagines that he is participating along with his heroes in all their legendary exploits), we find Tom T. looking back with a trace of sadness and nostalgia,

to bygone times that seem sweet, now that they have all too soon passed into memory. ("I don't know if I'd know you now if I saw you," he sings regretfully of a long-lost teenage sweetheart whose memory still obviously pulls at his heartstrings.)

Musically, *Soldier of Fortune* is a treat. Tom T. sings in a relaxed, beer-soaked voice, and on many of the cuts, there's a refreshing abundance of out-front, hard-core country, steel guitar and honky tonk piano tracks. The beautiful high background harmonies (of the Osborne Bros.) on the title tune also reflect Hall's enduring fondness for vintage bluegrass.

But even when Tom T. Hall writes and sings the hardest of hard country lost love ballads, or the dustiest of alone-on-the-road, rambling songs, there is almost always a distinct twist that you won't find anywhere else. It's as if he's not only reflecting on the hurt of being left behind (as in *We're All In This Thing Alone*) or the freedom of the road (as in *I'll Go Somewhere And Sing My Songs Again*), but he's also letting us in on some strange new perspective he's found on the whole situation as he attempts to fathom the mystery and meaning of these recurrent and universal emotions.

The most recurrent themes on *Soldier Of Fortune* are of restlessness and mild cultural dislocation. Tom T., as settled as he may sometimes appear to be, obviously still does spend a lot of time himself, looking backward and forward, wondering what it all amounts to and where it's all going to lead.

Maybe this does not always make for the most comfortable or simplest way of life, but as *Soldier of Fortune* proves, some damn fine music can sometimes come out of it.

BOB ALLEN



The Dirt Band Make a Little Magic

United Artists LT-1042

Country music has been around for almost 60 years as far as records go. Rock 'n' roll has been with us for almost 30. Country rock! What a concept! 90 years of tradition to draw from! Why, then, does most country rock sound like it came from the Buffalo Springfield? Did they do such a definitive job that no one can improve on it?

The Dirt Band's acquaintance with the roots of country music is deep and thorough. But on most of this album, their cues could have been taken from the Buffalo Springfield. Oh, well. It's a good album, anyway.

Most of the songs lope along in the usual good time country rock manner, but there are a couple nice changes of pace. *Badlands* (that's the third song with that title in the last couple years I've heard) had a Steely Dan influence that works real good with the Dirt Band sound. *Mullen's Farewell to America*

is a country/classical instrumental that brings the album to an unexpected and very pleasant close. *High School Yearbook* is a straight ahead rocker. *Leigh Anne* is a ballad with a haunted minor flavor. Another slow, mysterious one like this would have been nice.

Nicolette Larson adds background and harmony vocals to three of the songs, including the title track, which is briskly climbing up the singles charts. Geoffrey Morris put a spritely slide guitar part on *Too Good To Be True*.

There's no dead wood here
PETER STAMPEL



Record Reviews

Alabama

My Home's In Alabama

RCA AHL 1 3694

If you're a group vocal freak, as I am, then **My Home's In Alabama**, the debut album by Alabama, is a must for your record collection.

The group consists of Randy Owen, lead vocals and rhythm guitar; Jeff Cook, vocals, electric guitar, keyboards, and fiddle; Teddy Gentry, bass and vocals; and Mark Herndon, drums and vocals. While the boys are capable musicians, most of the picking on the album was performed by a yeoman cast of Nashville session players, enabling the group to concentrate on its vocal sound.

Most of the lead vocals are sung by Owen whose phrasing and tone are not unlike Frizzell or Haggard. He is one of the most exceptional lead singers in some time. However, the harmonious sound of Owen and his two cousins Cook and Gentry,



is where the unit really shines.

While Alabama is seemingly another overnight success story, actually the group has

been refining its sound for years. Honing their talents in a Myrtle Beach, S.C. resort club, the group had one chart record

in 1977, *I Want To Be With You Tonight*. Following the record's limited chart success, the boys returned to the club scene.

Three years later they surfaced again with their present string of hit records—*I Wanna Come Over*, *My Home's In Alabama*, and *Tennessee River*. All three songs are included on this album along with some other outstanding selections. Of the remaining tunes, *Why Lady Why*, a ballad with soaring harmonies, and *Keep on Dreamin'*, a mid-tempo number are superb creations.

Produced by Harold Shedd, Larry McBride, and Alabama, the album is attracting some pop attention. To the group's credit, however, the sound is rooted in country and southern music.

Judging by this album, Alabama is on its way to becoming one of the most popular country vocal groups of the 80s. This time, the boys are right on time.

KELLY DELANEY

Gary Stewart

Cactus and A Rose

RCA AH LI-36 27

Gary Stewart caught the edge this time around. He has been shifty-eyed for a couple of years now, trying to nail down what he wants to do with his music. That is the rub with many talented creative artists. They can do so much with their art that it takes a good wild drunk or two (or several years) before they find their niche. But Gary just missed. **Cactus and a Rose** is a good album, but not a great one. It is good because of the skill and feel of the musicians, but it is not great because all the songs are not strong and distinctive. This is basically nitpicking, because Stewart is on the right road and close to making the kind of music which could establish him as a superstar.

The difference between this album and other Stewart albums is that Gary takes

musical chances. He has long admired the southern rockers; specifically the Allman Brothers Band. He has even toured with the band some. So this time, instead of your standard Nashville pickers, he pulled folks like Dickey Betts, Gregg Allman, Gary Scruggs and Bonnie Brammet into the studio. He also uses a new producer, Chips Moman on the sessions. Moman is a talented writer and guitar player who has produced the likes of B.J. Thomas and Elvis Presley. This album definitely draws a line between his other RCA records. The spirit and production is outstanding, and Gary is singing better than ever, but it is an uneven project because of the song selection.

The song that works best is *Harlan County Highway*, a song that weaves singer, song and production in a tight web. Gary captures what he wants on this country-blues tale. The title song, *A Cactus And A*

Rose, is also a strong song. Written by Moman, it is commercial pop-country with a smooth melody. Even though

his vocals are strong, for some reason, the loud rockers on the album fail to bring out the best in Stewart. BOB CAMPBELL





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Record Reviews

Richard Leigh "Richard Leigh"

United Artist LT 1036

Allen Reynolds is one classy producer. Never obvious, never overbearing, never schmaltzy in his arrangements, Reynolds seems to have an un-what's necessary to make a track stand out or an artist shine. He cut his 'teeth' producing Don Williams, and now it appears he may have found another potential country superstar.

Richard Leigh is one classy artist. Hold it, hold it, who's Richard Leigh? Isn't he the songwriter who penned *Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue* and *I'll Get Over You* and *Your Old Cold Shoulder* for Crystal Gayle and *In No Time At All* for Ronnie Milsap? Well yes, but Leigh you see, is something different: he's a songwriter-turned-singer who actually *deserves* to be an artist. In fact, judging from the strength and quality of this debut album, Leigh could just as easily have started out in the business the other way around. He's that good.

The combination of Reynolds and Leigh together is a match created somewhere up in 32-track heaven. Leigh's of the basic, earthy Don Williams persuasion, and vocal comparisons between the two artists are going to be inevitable. Fortunately, however, Leigh has his own style which makes it clear that any similarities are purely by chance and not by in-

Leigh's a mellow laid-back balladeer whose smooth voice washes over you like a summer breeze.

Musicians on **Richard Leigh** were kept to a manageable minimum. Tracks flow with crystalline presence and ingenious tasteful touches. Leigh's guitar work is surrounded by that of Chris Leuzinger (longtime member of Crystal Gayle's excellent backup band, Peace and Quiet) and Billy Sanford; Joe Allen holds down the bass line. Kenny

Malone keeps the drumbeats solid, and two of Nashville's hottest keyboardists—Bobby Wood and Charles Cochran—ride the ivories. Cochran also arranged all the string on the album, which understand their proper function as harmonious highlights and aren't allowed to dominate the entire final mix.

Surprisingly for a debut

album **Richard Leigh** doesn't have any noticeable clunkers. And several of the cuts (such as Leigh's single, *I've Come A Long Way* which reminded this reviewer of the old 1966 Crispian St. Peters chestnut, *Pied Piper* that have a sneaking way of humming along in your mind like permanent residents long after

the record's quit spinning.

Maybe one of the reasons this entire project works so successfully is that although Leigh is a superior songwriter himself, he chose to look outside his own catalog for equally strong songs by other talented writers, a commendable trait these days.

KIP KIRBY

BURIED TREASURES

By Rich Kienzle

Hank Williams has been dead 27 years now, and in that time nearly 50 albums of his MGM recordings have been released in this country. Some were thematic, like the gospel, blues, novelty and **Luke the Drifter** recitation LPs. Nine of them have been known as either **Greatest Hits** or **Best Of** collections. Trouble is, many of them also featured additional instruments dubbed on. Even strings and full orchestras have been added to a couple of albums, with results so vile they make one's flesh crawl. Just as bad is the "reprocessed stereo" which adds nothing more than a worthless echo effect. Many of Hank's fans have wondered why anyone would want to change the original performances, and more important, why MGM never paid tribute to him by issuing everything in its original form in one magnificent boxed set, the ultimate Hank Williams collection.

Well it's here, but not from America. **The Immortal Hank Williams** (MGM MO 9097-9106) is a breathtaking 11 record boxed set that brings together everything he ever recorded for MGM without overdubs (except for one song), from Japan. And the Japanese, who also reissued complete boxed collections of the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers recordings, have shown meticulous care in assembling them. There are ten 11-song albums, bringing together the

Williams legacy in its original, monaural state. Some songs, recorded by Hank alone with guitar, were later released, with the Drifting Cowboys overdubbed; the overdubs are gone here. An additional LP of live material, originally released here as **On Stage, Volume 2** (and long out of print) consists of his Hadacol *Health And Happiness Shows*, recorded with Autrey, the Drifting Cowboys and announcer Grant Turner at WSM. The song lyrics are all transcribed in English in a large book, along with a text in Japanese and all of the songs, with titles in both Japanese and English. It is, indeed, the Ultimate Hank Collection.

If any one man is continuing the Hank Williams tradition today, it would have to be Vernon Oxford, whose raw, unvarnished singing has made him a star in England. Two recent releases hint he might be ready to hit over here again, as he did with his hit single *Redneck!* some years ago. **America's Unknown Super Star** (Rich-R-Tone 8109) (see September's *Country Music*) features Oxford singing mostly the songs of Everett Corbin, a longtime Oxford Supporter, and tunes like *The Great Stone Face* and *Turn The Record Over* are perfect for him. **His And Hers** (Rounder 0123), produced by veteran RCA producer Bob Ferguson, is more of the same, this time including John Fogerty's *Bad Moon Rising* and

Leon Paynes's *They'll Never Take Her Love From Me*. The musicians are Nashville's best and one thing's for sure: you'll never hear the Shelly Kurland strings backing Vernon.

Country Records' Country Classics Series is off to a good start with three compilations of material from Columbia, produced with the cooperation of Columbia Special Products. Two are Flatt and Scruggs collections. **The Golden Years** (CCS 101) brings together songs from 1950 to 1955 including the banjo classic *Earl's Breakdown*. **Blue Ridge Cabin Home** (P 14730) features 1955-1957 songs, including three never before issued. Another, **Early Recordings** by Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper (CCS 103) shows a different, more soulful and religious type of old time music, that made the Coopers Opry legends (Wilma Lee carries on today).

Sierra Briar have yet another addition to their archives of early L.A. country-rock with **Silver Meteor** (SRS-8706) an anthology combining some unissued material by the late guitar legend Clarence White, an out of print Everly Brothers single and some 1969 recordings by the Blue Velvet Band.

The ultimate Hank Williams set is \$115 postpaid from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Ave. El Cerrito, CA 94570. The Vernon Oxford Rich-R-Tone LP is \$7.50 from Everett Corbin, 118 Baily Collins Dr. Smyrna, TN 37167.



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Record Reviews



Ricky Skaggs & Tony Rice

Skaggs & Rice
Sugar Hill SH-3711

It happens all too often with young performers. They make a name for themselves with a given music, then one day, eyes filled with stars, they look for something else, a newer different direction, usually more sophisticated and guaranteed to expand their audiences. If it works, they treat their musical past as some sort of youthful mistake. It's happened before and it'll happen again.

But not to these two, Ricky Skaggs made his early reputation with Ralph Stanley's bluegrass group and Tony Rice did likewise with J.D. Crowe. But though Skaggs now provides the haunting oldtime authenticity behind Emmylou Harris's current music and Rice has gone on to acoustic jazz, first with David Grisman and now on his own, they remain unabashedly proud of their bluegrass roots, eager to sit in on more conventional bluegrass albums as sidemen.

Skaggs & Rice is a stunning tribute to the old-timey music that nurtured them, the bluegrass and stringband music they grew up with. With no other sidemen, just Skaggs on mandolin, Rice on guitar and both singing close harmony, they provide a haunting look at their pasts through tunes like Bill Monroe's mandolin instrumental *Tennessee Blues*, *More Pretty Girls Than One*, *Where The Soul of Man Never Dies* and *Will The Roses Bloom*. The a cappella *Talk About Suffering Here Below* is positively haunting mountain gospel music. At times it's hard to remember that this isn't a 1940s field recording made in the Virginia mountains. Though both are known for their not licks, there is nothing here but simple accompaniment, as it should be.

Bill Monroe might have created a new musical form when he created bluegrass, but he never forgot the various elements from his youth that inspired him. Neither have Skaggs and Rice, and in this day and age, that's something.

RICH KIENZLE

Hank Williams, Jr. Habits Old And New Elektra 6E-278

Bocephus has come a long way, no doubt about it. After several tries, and a false start here and there, he's found his own musical voice. The struggles with his past are behind him and his image is his own, so much that he can finally sing Daddy's song on *his* terms. The fact that all of this is resulting in music that's as successful commercially as it is artistically is just icing on the cake.

He can sing of his love life, as he does in *The Blues Man*, and sound totally in control, not lashing out blindly as he sometimes did in the past. Even past crises, including his accident are addressed in *All in Alabama*, a celebration of his triumphs over it all. And the tendency toward blunt, no-holds-barred protest numbers that's been surfacing over the past few albums continues here, particularly with *The American Way*. The song, a well-aimed, pointy-toed kick at white collar elitism truly connects, mainly

because Hank avoids the "Yahoo, I'm a redneck!" silliness that threatened to become an epidemic a few years ago. Likewise, *Dinosaur*, declares open season on disco and other noxious aspects of current American pop music with straightforward lyrics (written by the up-and-coming Pittsburgh song-writer Bob Corbin, who also wrote Mel Tillis's *Blind In Love* Kristofferson's *If You Don't Like Hank Williams*, performed with backup in the Drifting Cowboy tradition, gets its best performance ever.

And Hank, Sr. would certainly approve of the Dixierock version of *Kaw-liga* and the country boogie version of *Move It On Over* is the perfect progression for a song that, in its original form served as a model for Bill Haley's hit *Rock Around The Clock*.

Habits Old and New, like its predecessor, *Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound*, is a totally satisfying record. If you want to really appreciate it, read *Living Proof* and then listen to it. It'll make perfect sense, and don't forget to play it loud.

RICH KIENZLE

Hank Williams Jr.

Habits Old and New



Burt, Smokey and the Country Music Bandits

By Michael Bane

When we last left Frog and the Bandit, you will recall, the duo, with Jerry Reed and Fred The Dog in tow, were on their way to Boston to pick up a load of Boston Baked Beans, having just hauled a load of illegal Coors Beer halfway across the Ewe-knighted States on a bet. Needless to say, Sheriff Buford T. Justice, was prepared to continue his hot pursuit.

Thus ended *Smokey And The Bandit*, arguably the most popular thing since sliced bread, and, to boot, the movie that kicked off the whole urban cowboy craze—although I guess we can forgive ol' Bandit Burt Reynolds for that. The movie came out in 1977 and has, since then, netted the tidy sum of a quarter of a billion

dollars for its backers. Somehow, it's not surprising that those backers decreed a second movie, *Smokey And The Bandit II*, which should be coming out just about the time you read this.

Not surprisingly either, the team remains the same: Burt Reynolds returns as the Bandit, the logical continuation of his seemingly endless "good ole boy" roles that have made him a household name and a millionaire many times over. Hal Neeham, Burt's stuntman buddy-turned-director and the original creator of the first *Smokey* returns as director. And that's not to mention Sally Field as Frog, Jerry Reed as the hapless Cletus, Jackie Gleason as Buford T. Justice, and even

Fred the Dog repeating his role as himself.

Whoa, son! How can this movie miss?

It was already blistering hot in South Florida when I finally caught up with the Bandit last March. The whole crew has relocated in West Palm Beach for much of the interior filming, within spitting distance of Burt's Jupiter, Florida ranch and dinner theater. In fact, the locals down at the 7-11 have nothing but kind words for Jupiter's most famous son—"That Burt," says one woman, "he said he was gonna bring us some business, and he did. Just like that."

The movie set is low-key, a series of tractor-trailer trucks

packed around the Tiger Paw Inn in West Palm, right next door to the One-Stop-Beer-Gas-Bass Pro Shop store. Inside, the club looks like any honky-tonk between here and Timbuktu. Swamp murals decorate the walls and spilled Jim Bean decorates the floor. The room is chocked full of camera equipment, and a man comes around to explain that what we're supposed to do is applaud, assuming we can continue breathing.

Which is a touch and go situation, since it turns out that real cigarette smoke doesn't show up well on camera. So if you want to film a smokey room, say, like this honky-tonk, you have to use special smoke. The very best smoke





The photos on this page indicate that the antics in *Smokey And The Bandit II* pay appropriate homage to its predecessor, *Smokey I*. On the opposite page, Mel Tillis seems to be the brunt of some forceful observations of Sheriff Buford T. Justice (Jackie Gleason). Below right, Don Williams chats with former stuntman and director of the *Smokey* films, Hal Needham.

comes from church incense, which smells like the very devil and is guaranteed to rot your lungs out inside of ten minutes.

We all applaud and hoot and holler, for practice.

This is a concert sequence, featuring Don Williams—one of a whole bunch of country artists to join ol' Burt in *Smokey II*, including Brenda Lee, Mel Tillis, and the Statler Brothers. Laid-back Don is a little choked up, but he's able to cough out a couple of bars of *Tulsa Time* before Needham yells, "Cut it!" We all applaud anyway.



"What is this smoke anyway?" shouts Dom DeLuise, the newest addition to the cast, above our enthusiastic applause. "Is this what makes priests celibate?"

Needham, coughing himself, orders a break, and we all troop outside. Needham is like a little kid with a new toy—he loves *Smokey* and he loves to talk about it. "Hell," he says, wandering over to me, "Some of the theaters guaranteed us three months of showing this movie, and that's damn near how long it's taken us to make it!"

He still seems amazed at the success of *Smokey I*, which he and Burt tinkered together as they went along. "I guess it was just the right combination," he says. "CB was hot; country music is always hot; the stars were hot; the weather was hot. I don't know—it just worked."

After a quick break, they haul in the bee-smokers again, and we all troop back inside, where Don Williams, playing



very much himself, delivers a couple of credible lines while Burt and Sally stand up and take a couple of bows.

We applaud, and I decide to give up my movie career for a little fresh air.

It's hard to really put a finger on Burt Reynolds, I think. No doubt he has benefited from his 31 movies, and no doubt that he has played some outstanding roles (*Deliverance*, for one). But he remains strangely unacknowledged for many of his biggest advances, not only in Hollywood, but in Nashville as well. It was, after all, Burt Reynolds who virtually ramrodded country music into the movies. (He told me later that, when he had sought permission to use the Grand Ole Opry in *W.W. And The Dixie Dance Kings*, a landmark country music movie, the request was about to be denied when Minnie Pearl interceded on his behalf.) It was Reynolds who showed that country music appealed to more than just a few hillbillies in Nashville, that it could be *commercial* in the movies. Reynolds has also been responsible for opening up the door for numerous country artists—Jerry Reed is the prime example, with Don Williams following close behind. It was Reynolds who personally arranged for Don Williams to appear on the prestigious *Tonight Show*, and it has been Reynolds who has steadfastly maintained that country music stars are better at being actors than actors are at being country music stars.

"Burt's got more faith in me than I've got in myself, especially when it comes to ac-

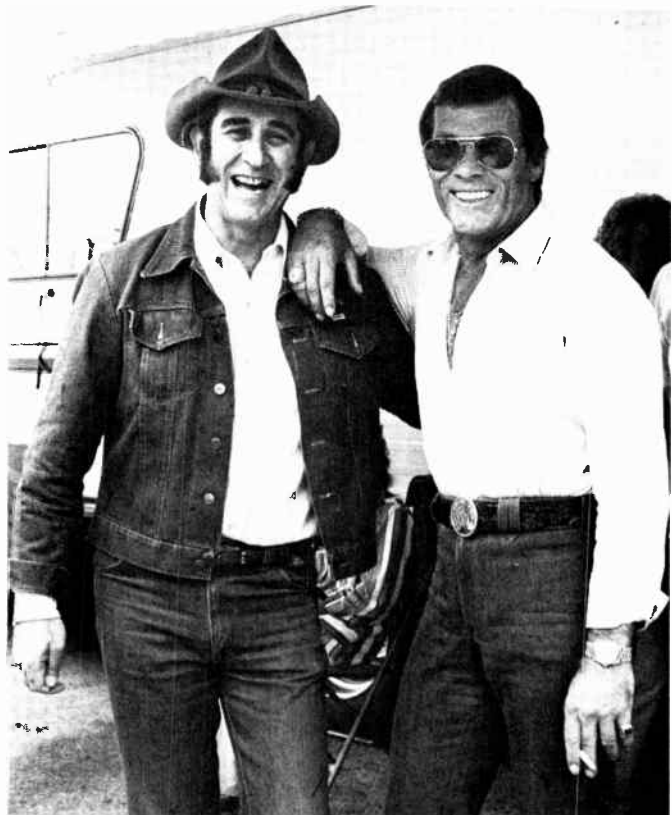
ting," says Don Williams. "Burt's been awful good to me."

"That picture—*Smokey And the Bandit*—was amazing," says Jerry Reed later that afternoon as we sat in the air-conditioned comfort of his limo. "It was just amazing. All the characters were so right for each other. When you go to a film, and an actor gives off . . . I mean, something gets on that film, and there's a love, an energy and an honesty that the people can see. People can see that there was a good time going on making that picture—right? Look how many people

copied the damn thing. . . . Cause everybody liked it."

"There's not another movie set like this in the world," says a publicist who has worked on eight Burt Reynolds' films. "And the credit's got to go to Burt and Hal. I mean, a lot of stars say they don't want to be treated like a star, then get offended when you *don't* treat them like stars. But the people on this movie set are real people, and they *act* like real people."

And this, oddly enough, is true. Most movie sets have the ambience of pressure cookers. The stars are prima donnas; the director is a Nazi; the crew races around in a frenzy, fearful of catching the wrong eye. The atmosphere around the Tiger Paw Inn, though, is just the opposite. Burt Reynolds, Sally Field, Dom DeLuise, Jerry Reed, Don Williams, and the rest of the cast wander here and there, laughing and talking to the crew and hangers-on. Hal Needham ambles around and, at the drop of a hat, begins discussing the scene he's just finished shooting. The hordes, to be sure, have the set totally surrounded, but even they have a low-key, down-home atmosphere. In fact, the set of *Smokey And The Bandit II*





The Statler Brothers sing two country music favorites in their debut on the Hollywood screen.

resembles nothing so much as a multi-million dollar home movie.

"This is nothing," says Burt Reynolds. "You should have been here last week when Jackie Gleason was here. Then we had a great time!"

Reynolds is between shots, resting in his motorhome parked outside the Tiger Paw. He is wearing a blue shirt and blue jeans, his hair pushed back in a good-ole-boy pomp. On the

It was Reynolds who showed that country music appealed to more than just a few hillbillies in Nashville, that it could be commercial in the movies. Reynolds has been responsible for opening up the door for numerous country artists.

whole, for all you fans out there, he looks smaller in real life than on the screen, and we talk for quite a while, much to the distress of the publicity person. (The text of that interview will appear in a future Country Music. Ed.)

"Before the Hollywood establishment discovered . . . well, when they were all walking around saying how they

listened to jazz and Johnny Mathis, I was a country music freak, you know," says Reynolds. "And I used to say it. I notice now—I guess in the last five years or so—that a lot of heavyweight people are country music fans. I mean, Clint Eastwood and I are very good friends, and we've been friends for 25 years. But when he did *Every Which Way But Loose*, he didn't even know who Mel Tillis was!"

The conversation drifts from the Opry to Jerry Reed, who, Reynolds claims, is the most energetic person on the planet, and having spent a little time around Reed I would have to agree. The call comes from Needham to spend a little more time in the smokey room, and we all troop out into the Florida heat once again. The bee smokers are fired up, and pretty soon the sickening sweet smell of incense fills the Tiger Paw Inn. Jerry Reed and Don Williams come in and take their place on the 'tonk's little stage, and Reynolds and Sally Field take a seat at one of the tables. "Everybody in?" shouts Needham. "Okay, shut off the fans and pump in the smoke."

"Need a little smoke up there on stage?" an aide-de-camp calls out.

"Very little," Don Williams replies, wiping his eyes. The marker snaps, and Williams begins his new song. In the course of the afternoon he'll do the first bars of that song many, many times. We all applaud enthusiastically each time.

Jerry Reed beams from the sidelines.

"Heck," Jerry Reed says later, out of the smoke. "I can act better than I can sing. I can't do this better than I can perform, but I can do this better than I can sing. See, I'm a stylist, not a singer. I'll qualify that for you: I'm a musician, then an entertainer, and a singer very last. Of course, the very last thing I ever will be is a singer.

"There's certain things I don't know if I could ever do in front of a camera," Reed continues, "that actors are called on to do from time to time. It takes a lot of concentration, and the more I'm in the industry and watching it, the more I realize how difficult it is."

With six film roles behind him, Jerry Reed has already established himself as a solid performer, especially in the bad guy role he played in *Gator*—one he'd like to repeat if a similar bad guy should ever show his head again.

"The concentration is hard no matter who you are," he says. "I mean, Sally (Field) is great, but even she has to command it and demand it from herself. They're so great; they're so natural. But to do them in that quiet atmosphere,

under that microscope, is very, very difficult. I mean, I can't cry. I don't know if I could cry. So I'll always be very, very careful about roles, simply because I'm not sure. I'm not tried and tested—it might scare me so bad I'll break out in hives or something."

Outside in the heat Dom DeLuise is signing autographs, mopping his forehead with a handkerchief all the while. He has, he said, decided to purchase a condominium near Burt's ranch in Florida, because, heat aside, the area kind of grows on you. "He's the nicest man in the world," a woman whispers to me as I sit on the hood of a car. "He'll just do anything for you, and we all love him."

The scads of extras begin trooping out of the honky-tonk, where many of them have been locked up all day. They blink furiously in the sun, trying to clear their eyes of the incense and the bright afternoon sunlight. The crew begins winding things down for the night, and people begin scattering for an early supper. "Things run so smooth here you wouldn't believe it," a crewmember comments as he rolls up some cable. "That's all because of Burt, you know. He's an okay guy."

Indeed.



The cast presented Jerry Reed with a guitar-shaped cake for his 25th anniversary in the entertainment business.

Thank You

(Volume 1)

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Peter Guralnick
Patrick Carr
June Carter Cash
Rich Kienzle
Leonard Kamsler
Ed Salamon
Mutual Broadcasting
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