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Hank Williams, Jr./Marty Robbins/Merle Travis

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Country Music is Back: Under Old Management

What happened to *Country Music Magazine*? That's the question hundreds of subscribers, friends, performers and colleagues in the country music business have asked me—by mail, by phone and in person—over the past year.

Most knew that I had started *Country Music* back in 1972 with my partners, Jack Killion and Spencer Oettinger. And most remembered that we had sold the company in late 1979; that I had stayed on as Editor, working for the new owners; and that the magazine was doing well, with circulation hitting 500,000 in 1980 (making *Country Music* the fastest growing magazine in America with over two million readers) and with advertising up more than fifty percent through the first half of 1981.

So, *Country Music*, celebrating its success and honoring the *Readers, Writers and Pickers* who helped make it possible, published its Tenth Anniversary Issue in September 1981. Shortly after that, the new owners turned management control of the company over to another publishing firm, and gave them an option until March 31, 1983 to buy the company. The new management announced that they had acquired the company. They closed our offices, moved us into their conference room, and changed our subscription service from Boulder, Colorado to Bergenfield, New Jersey. Then, after a few weeks, they fired me, and the Managing Editor (who had been with the magazine six years), and the Associate Publisher and Advertising Director who had worked for *Country Music* since before the first issue was published in 1972. They had plenty of reasons to want to fire me because I had made my opinion of their plans perfectly clear, both before and after the takeover, and it wasn't flattering. But it was hard to understand why they would get rid of other people who were very important to *Country Music's* success and credibility.

Even so, businesses are bought and sold every day, managers come and go. Such things aren't necessarily bad—and anyway, my opinion was just that: an opinion. But I didn't think that comments like, "Who cares who the writers are—country music fans can't read anyway, can they? Just put in lots of pictures," were very encouraging. Whether such a remark was just kidding around or not,

I didn't think the future looked too fruitful. And I was at least right about that. Within a few months, publishing was stopped and all the remaining staff fired. Some of the people fired didn't get vacation pay or severance pay. Subscribers were left without magazines and with no one to answer complaints. And many suppliers who provided printing and paper and the like to the company were stuck with lots of unpaid bills...like a million dollars worth. So, publishing was stopped. There was no money left in the company, certainly not the substantial amount that would have been needed just for postage to notify subscribers.

So, the company was left with no assets except the name: *Country Music Magazine*. We couldn't use that name, so I began working on a plan to start a new country music magazine. Former *Country Music* staff members and writers, long-time *Country Music* subscribers, publishing colleagues, country music executives such as Rick Blackburn, Jerry Bailey, Bruce Lundvall, Jerry Flowers and Jim Halsey, and performers such as Johnny Cash, Tom T. Hall, David Allan Coe and the legendary "Cowboy" Jack Clement, all gave me enthusiastic support to go ahead.

My plan was to publish a magazine which would be exactly the same as *Country Music* but with a different name; the same writers, the same photographers, the same style and design, and, I hoped, the same readers. I had done it once; why not again?

With this plan I began talking with friends and colleagues to see if we could raise enough money to finance the idea. Publishing friends Dan McNamee, Chip Block and Mike Michaelson all liked the idea and helped get it done. Working primarily with investors John French and Bahman Khosrovani and their associates, we quickly found enough interested investors.

As it turned out, however, we were able to re-acquire the *Country Music Magazine* name. When I left after the takeover my lawyers began preparing to seek a court injunction to force the new management to stop publishing—because my contract said that no one could be Editor, except me, until my partners and I were paid for the original sale of the company (payments were supposed to start later, in mid-1982). We were also attempting to negotiate the reacquisition of the *Country Music* name to use for our new magazine.

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—WHAT DO—
**WILLIE NELSON, GEORGE JONES,
PAUL SIMON, DAVID ALLAN COE,
ROGER MILLER, RODNEY CROWELL**
and **THE EAGLES**
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They have all written songs that appear on Willie Nelson's new Columbia album, "Take It To The Limit". It's a collection of five brand new Willie solos and five brand new Willie and Waylon duets.

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Many months of negotiation proved fruitless. Neither of these activities proved necessary in the end because, last April, when the options to buy the company ran out and control returned to the original stockholders, the company was put in the hands of a court-appointed administrator whose job was to sell the company's assets for whatever he could get. Since the company had no money, its only asset was the name *Country Music Magazine*. My investors and I made a successful offer to buy it. So, here we are, starting up our "new magazine" with its "original" staff, writers, design and style, through our new company, Silver Eagle Publishers.

But this time, I planned to publish the magazine as a part of a bigger idea: For years, I have felt that you and I and other serious fans, whose knowledge and love of country music is above average, should have a formal organization to serve our interests. Not something for just anyone to belong to, but something special for the kind of intense, loyal, long-time country music nuts who read *Country Music* and whom the magazine praised in *Readers, Writers and Pickers*. There are organizations for professionals in the business, such as the Country Music Association, which has championed country music expertly for 25 years, so why not one for us? We buy the records and tapes! We pay for the concert tickets! But how do we make our voices heard, our influence felt? By organizing. That's how everyone else does it.

So, to create such an organization we have started the Country Music Society of America, which already has thousands of members and is already bigger than any other country music organization. Members get a subscription to *Country Music*, at no extra cost. Plus, they get to express their opinions by voting, sending in questionnaires, answering polls: on the best performers; the best records, or the worst; what they want to see, hear or read, on TV, radio, records, movies and in *Country Music*. The results of these polls will be forwarded to record companies, radiostations and TV and movie producers, so they'll know what members think. Also, by combining members in an organization, the Society will have great buying power, so it can pass along savings and special discounts to its members on records, tapes, books, stereo equipment, insurance, travel... whatever the members need or want. There will be a special newsletter published for members, bringing news of Society activities in which members can participate. By year's end we expect 250,000 members—which will make the Country Music Society of America the largest and most influential country music organization in the world. We hope, of course, that the old subscribers of *Country Music* will all want to join the Society—thousands already have. They get a special Charter Member rate which is actually less than a subscription to *Country Music* by itself (you can read about that elsewhere in this issue. We hope you will join).

With this issue we pick up where we left off: Senior Editor Patrick Carr, who has been the chief chronicler of one J.R. Cash for this magazine since 1973, brings us a warm and revealing look at Rosanne Cash, who obviously shares her father's exceptional intelligence, unique talent, seriousness of purpose and fierce independence. Editor-at-large Michael Bane asks twenty irreverent questions of his favorite superstar child-of-a-country-music-

legend, Hank Williams, Jr., and gets twenty irreverent answers. Peter Guralnick tells us about "The Greatest Rocker of Them All." Bob Allen shares an intimate view of Marty Robbins's last days. Mary Ellen Moore shows a Louise Mandrell we haven't seen before (in more ways than one), and Rich Kienzle, looking for Buried Treasures, has found plenty of nuggets. Plus, our contributing editors offer lots of news and reviews. And our ace advertising executive since 1972, Leonard Mendelson, is back in harness and championing at the bit, along with ace photographer Leonard Kamsler who took the Rosanne Cash pictures for this issue and has shot Waylon and David Allen Coe for our next.

Ten years ago, *Country Music* published the first use of the term "outlaw" to describe Waylon and Willie and the boys and the music which became the core of country music's history in the 1970's. So, with this issue, we begin a present-day look at "the outlaws," beginning with an interview with an unusually talkative Willie Nelson conducted, by Nashville reporter Bob Millard. In our next issue, Nashville editor Bob Allen delivers a provocative report on Waylon in which the normally quiet fellow really opens up on the trials and tribulations of a superstar. Also, we will publish again Dave Hickey's prophetic 1974 *Country Music* article, "In Defense of The Telecaster Cowboy Outlaws," where the "outlaw" label first appeared in print. We think all this reflects the feeling we expressed in the Tenth Anniversary Issue about *Readers, Writers and Pickers*. That's why we do this. Like Willie says in this issue, "I knew...I wasn't in it for the money because I did it for so long without money."

If there is one thing which showed us that we had done it right, it was the letters we received from readers, writers and pickers on the occasion of our tenth anniversary. One in particular, from Jack Clement—who is a reader and a writer and a picker—was received here with great appreciation. It was published in an issue which did not have my name on the masthead, so I include it here, not only to make the point, but to thank its writer. I also include two other letters, and invite you all to write us, too.



Russ Barnard

Country Music Magazine has been an inspiration to me personally. I am a man who appreciates inspiration because that is something I need not only in my business, which is music, but also in my private life, which is not always as musical as I would want it to be.

Then there's friendship. That's real important to me also, maybe even more than music. *Country Music Magazine* has been a good friend to me, and I am a man who has some of the best friends in the world, some of whom are cantankerous but lovable and sincere.

I think the thing that has been most responsible for the success of *Country Music Magazine*, and certainly the thing which most endears it to me, is simply that the people who run it are people who love music, wherein

behind the scenes of the editorials we have the editors, our musical Musketeers, Russell, Patrick, and Michael, buddies of mine who like to hear a good country song sung right. When I sing, I sing for you.

Love your friend,

*Pinapple Jack Clement,
Formerly known as
the Bourbon Cowboy
Nashville, Tennessee*

Just read your editorial on the "First 100 Issues of Readers, Writers & Pickers," and found it very interesting. You are right! We are nuts on country music, long before "Urban Cowboy," which I never saw, but I went to Oklahoma City to the Diamond Ballroom in 1977 and danced to Mickey Gilley and fell in love with him and his band. I also remember falling in love with Jim Reeves in 1957—also Don Gibson and Patsy Cline—all at one time! And so many others! But, many performers are their own worst enemies. I went to a Johnny Paycheck dance and was so let down because he acted so terrible. We all requested tunes we all loved and he informed us he would play what he wanted to—no requests—plus he got drunk—not just tight—drunk! Now, I still like to listen to his songs, but I will never drive 320 miles to see him again. There are several stars I don't care for: Hank Williams, Jr., David Allen Coe, because I think they are too cynical. But, thank God, that is only my opinion—I love Marty Robbins, Gary Stewart, Bill Anderson, Eddie Rabbitt, Willie Nelson, Moe Bandy, and my very very favorite is Joe Stampley! A lot of this love is because at their personal appearances they are so caring and you know they love their fans and we, in return, love them. I live so far from anywhere that I have to rely on the radio and records, but they give me so much! When we can, we do go to personal appearances, we drive 100 miles or more to see them, but it is generally always worth it! Your magazine keeps me informed on our favorite singers and the new albums they are putting out. I go to town (Elk City, Ok.) once a month and stock up on them. My husband is a tool pusher in the oilfield and is a country music fan from way back—he even picks and sings to me in our kitchen while I do dishes—for 25 years now! You just keep up the good work! We enjoy every issue! Congratulations on your first 100 issues and the best wishes on your next 100! Looking forward to all of them.

*Alma Bentley
Durham, Oklahoma*

With great anticipation I welcome the return of *Country Music*. That void, left totally unsatisfied by an influx of periodicals dealing more with tattletale gossip and meaningless dribble than good journalism, shall, once again, be filled.

Having first subscribed to CM magazine after buying your very first issue on the newsstand, I came to regard it as a reliable sourcebook for accurate information, as well as my barometer on Nashville.

The true country music fan has not been well represented during your absence. That honest, intelligent, articulate approach to interviews and feature stories has been conspicuously missing.

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*John Courts
St. Petersburg*

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People

Hooray for Hollywood

Paul Richey Productions, in cooperation with Facts Productions, is currently casting roles for the new film, *The Witch of Hominy Hills*. Richey, former George Jones manager, will provide some of the musical score. But Paul's not the only country-cousin involved in the film. B.J. Thomas, Janie Fricke, Tammy Wynette, George Jones, Tanya Tucker and Johnny Rodriguez all contribute songs to the movie soundtrack and appear in the film. It's set in a small mountain town which is holding a musical festival. The festival takes place throughout the length of the film, and features performances by the stars as well as amateurs. Also appearing throughout the festival is the witch who plagues the place throughout the film. Ed Bruce is scheduled to sing the title song. The movie is looking at a release date of April, 1984.

More film news has it that Ed will also sing "The Ballad of Beauford T. Justice," for the *Smokey and the Bandit III* movie.

Another favorite screen idol, Willie Nelson, is working on the film *The Songwriter*. It's directed by Sydney Pollack and co-stars Roger Miller and Kris Kristofferson. After that, Willie goes into production with *The Red-Headed Stranger*, his epic 1975 album-turned movie. Scheduled to star in that one are Angie Dickenson and Tommy Lee Jones, who played Mooney Lynn in *Coal Miner's Daughter*.

On the Move

David Allan Coe bought a cave in Dickson, Tennessee about a year ago, and now has it in suitable living condition. Ruskin Cave used to be a socialist commune in the 1800s. Today, there's an olympic sized swimming pool, a stage, and bleachers. His bedroom is equipped with a waterfall.

Janie Fricke and husband/manager Randy Jackson finally moved into the farm house they bought in Lancaster, Texas. The house was being remodeled and they had been living in a trailer on the premises until the work was completed.



Gatlin Destroys His Own Myth

What's all this about Larry Gatlin not signing autographs? Even Johnny Cash knows about it. Cash once wrote an editorial for *Country Music* where he left a space for Larry Gatlin's autograph. Johnny said, "Wait three years and then sign it yourself." Well, three years have passed and Larry seems to have mellowed a bit. Here's Larry very graciously putting his John Hancock on an album cover for our Editor/Publisher Russ Barnard.



Johnny 99

Johnny Cash is working with producer Brian Ahern (Emmylou's producer/husband) on his new *Johnny 99* album. The lp features two Bruce Springsteen numbers including the title track and "Highway Patrolman."

Edited by Rochelle Friedman

People

Louise Mandrell is decorating her new Hendersonville lakeside home. And while not picking out wallpaper and fabrics she can be seen representing *Miss Goldie's Fried Chicken*.

Along with her many horses, **Karen Brooks** moved to a new farm on the outskirts of Nashville.

Shelly West also managed to move into her new home in the midst of Fan Fair.

Videos

Dolly Parton has completed a promotional video of her single, "Potential New Boyfriend." Directed in London by **Steve Barron**, who also directed **Michael Jackson's** "Billie Jean," and **Joe Jackson's** "Stepping Out," among others, it should prove to be a winner. Barron was the recipient of the American Video Award in 1982 for **Rod Stewart's** "Young Turks."

Tom Jones went behind the camera for his new video on his single, "It'll Be Me." You may remember that song, as it was a hit for its author, "**Cowboy**" **Jack Clement**, as well as **Jerry Lee Lewis**.

Same Ole Opry—New Owners

Opryland, U.S.A., including the Grand Ole Opry, the theme park and hotel, The Nashville Network, and WSM-AM and FM, will soon belong to the **Gaylord Broadcasting Company**. The pending sale (details to be worked out) will bring the Opry and the other properties involved into the hands of one of America's largest privately owned broadcasting companies. Gaylord, based in Dallas, is wholly owned by the Oklahoma Publishing Co. of Oklahoma City, which entered broadcasting in 1928 with the purchase of WKY in Oklahoma City, the oldest radio station west of the Mississippi. Today it operates TV stations in Dallas-Ft. Worth, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Seattle-Tacoma, Houston, New Orleans, Cleveland and Milwaukee, and publishes *The Daily Oklahoman* and the *Oklahoma City Times* in Oklahoma City.

Ed and Thelma Gaylord were welcomed to the Opry when the announcement of the sale was made at a press conference held on stage at the Opry

House. **Ed Gaylord**, chairman and president of Gaylord Broadcasting, said that his company intended "to maintain the separate identity of The Opryland complex, to operate it as a stand-alone entity within Gaylord and to maintain the continuity of its existing management and staff." The Gaylord company has become familiar with the Opry and the Nashville Network as producers of *Hee-Haw*. **Jim Terrel**, executive vice-president of Gaylord Broadcasting in Dallas, confirmed Mr. Gaylord's statement and added that he was "impressed" with the whole Opryland complex.

Opryland U.S.A. is currently owned by the **American General Corporation**. **Harold S. Hook**, chairman and chief executive officer of American General, said at the press conference: "Gaylord combines demonstrated success in broadcasting, entertainment and television production with the financial strength to support a business operation of Opryland's magnitude."

—HELEN BARNARD

Dolly's Not the Only Singing Parton

It was a busy summer for the Parton family: Together and separately they are coming on strong. Big sister **Dolly** is getting set to make a movie—going into production this fall—with none other than **Sly Stallone**. The movie, to be called *Rhinestone*, will feature Dolly as the manager of a country music nightclub, who says, "I'll bet I can make a star..." ...out of guess who? You guessed it: **Sly Stallone**, who will play a

New York City cab driver who has headed west. Dolly will be the musical director of the film, writing the original musical score and supervising its production. She will collaborate with Sly on any additional dialogue needed. "I am very excited and looking forward to a wonderful creative partnership with Sly," says Dolly. "From the beginning of my film career," she adds, "my goal has been full involvement and artistic control of the movies in which I work." Dolly's work on *9 to 5* and *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* certainly paved the way for this new venture. Commenting on his first venture into comedy and music, Stallone says, "There is no one I feel more secure with and inspired by than the incredible Dolly Parton."

Next in line is **Stella Parton**, with her new single "Legs" out on Wedge Records. Stella was all across the U.S. this summer in a summer stock touring production of *Best Little Whorehouse*... playing the lead role.

Also, there's a new single by **Randy Parton**. "Runaway Hearts" on RCA, and sister **Frieda** is working on an album to be released on Warner Broth-

ers/Bearsville Records.

Another Parton sister, **Rachel Dennison**, is keeping busy also. She's recording an album with The Entertainment Company, with brothers **Randy** and **Floyd** writing some of the material. The Entertainment Company produced Dolly's big album *Here You Come Again*. Rachel can be seen playing Dolly's role in the TV series spin-off of *9 to 5*.

—HELEN BARNARD



Stella Parton



Rachel Dennison

People

For Women Only

When a San Angelo, Texas, store owner decided to give a barbecue, he got a little bit more than he bargained for. More than 6,000 fans turned out for this intimate event, to see **George Strait** and his **Ace and the Hole Band**. So happy were they to see their favorite cowboy that they surrounded the stage, causing George's road crew and manager to move George to a safer location.

When **Conway Twitty** appears on stage, he usually gets the same reaction. But recently, at a concert in Greensboro, North Carolina, during a convention of Volvo/White Truck personnel, Conway opened the show with his standard; "Hello darlin'." He got no response at all. That line alone usually draws quite a reaction from his female fans. Conway was quite puzzled because the audience remained stone-cold quiet. Well, the mystery was solved when the house lights went up and revealed 400 men and not a single woman. Conway apologized to the gents for referring to them as 'darlin's' and explained that his shows were geared to women, and often his songs say what women would like to hear from their men. From that point on, the ice was broken, the men loved the show, and maybe even learned a thing or two.

Tidbits

Remember when pop/rock group **Flock of Seagulls** opened at the Opry? Well, another decidedly non-country act had the opportunity to open their U.S. tour there. **Men At Work**, the Australian band, kicked off their late summer tour on the Opry stage.

Ricky Skaggs is very busy lately and reportedly his schedule is so hectic that he's taken off quite a few pounds.

Dolly Parton took a trip to New York recently, just for fun. She visited the theatre and did some shopping.

Don Williams' *Yellow Moon* album reached number one in Zimbabwe, Africa.

Alabama is acting as National Membership Chairmen for the PTA. They presented awards to members at the Albuquerque Convention Center. There are 5.3 million members in the association.

Terry Gibbs' new album is produced by **Rick Hall**. Hall is also pretty busy these days. He's producing **Gus Hardin's** new one in Muscle Shoals.

Mike Post, writer of some of the most recognizable TV theme songs, including "Magnum P.I." and "Hill Street Blues," is currently coordinating a road show for **Ronnie Milsap**. (Continued on next page)



Not for Members Only

A full scale TV, print and radio campaign began last spring as **Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers** embarked on their sponsorship of the Members Only status fashion label line. The boys were featured in a series of TV commercials, magazine ads, and radio spots. They even graced posters on New York City buses. Gatlin wrote the original theme song, and the group performed it for the spots.

Seems that the Brothers liked the garb even before they signed to do the ads. On their *Sure Feels Like Love* album, you can see Steve and Rudy sporting their Members Only jackets. It also seems that the ads are working. The brand was sold in more than six thousand stores in the U.S. since they signed. And, recently they began a second round of spots to air this fall.

—ROCHELLE FRIEDMAN

The Everly Brothers—Together Again

It has been ten years since the **Everly Brothers** finally broke up in spectacularly public fashion on a Los Angeles stage. Now it seems that they have buried the hatchet. Don, 46, and Phil, 44, have announced plans for a reunion concert to be held at London's Royal Albert Hall in September. The event will be videotaped and recorded, and there is a strong possibility that more concerts will follow.

"We settled it in a family kind of way," Phil told the *New York Daily News*. "A big hug did it."

Since their breakup, neither brother has been prominent in the music business. They both made solo albums in the 1970s, but as Phil told the *News*, "I've loafed mostly. I've done some writing, but mostly just lived around

the house and watched the kids grow up."

Don, meanwhile, has been living in Nashville for the last few years. He has sung and played on various artists' records, using "Cowboy" **Jack Clement's** studio/publishing house as a home base, and two years ago he toured Europe with his **Dead Cowboy Band**.

The Royal Albert Hall is a fitting venue for the reunion. "One of my fondest memories was when we played there in '72," Don told *Country Music*. "We brought my father out at the end of the set, and he played about twenty minutes, and he brought the house down. It was an incredible evening. People were dancing in the aisles of the Royal Albert Hall!"

—PATRICK CARR

People

Monument—Reorganization and Rebirth?

It seemed like Monument Records was riding high. The incredibly successful independent label founded in 1958 by Fred Foster (and one of the few remaining Nashville-based independents) had their *Winning Hand* album at #4 on the *Billboard* charts. The album, a mixture of new recordings by Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson and Brenda Lee with duets overdubbed on some of Dolly's earlier Monument recordings, was clearly successful. Willie had originally conceived it as a reissue of his old work, but after conferring with Foster, decided to expand it. The result was a double album whose fortunes were helped by the label's distribution deal with CBS.

Yet in March of 1983 Monument Records filed for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy reorganization. Incongruous as it seemed, the label was in dire financial straits. Everyone wondered *what happened?*

"I can't really put the blame on anybody or any one thing," says Monument press spokesman Mike Hyland. "I think the economy hurt us some; we were probably somewhat underfinanced. There are a lot of factors involved in why all this took place. It's not just one thing you can put your finger on and say 'That's it—that's what happened to Monument.'"

Hyland, however, is decidedly upbeat about the label's future. "We're not

really reorganized yet," he continues. "There are some things in the works and it should be together definitely in two weeks—hopefully by next week." As for *The Winning Hand*, which sold between 140,000 and 150,000 units, he candidly admits that a shortage of advertising and promotional funds probably affected its sales, but adds "I don't think that album is dead yet."

Monument hopes to have another winning hand with their signing of a veteran artist of whom little has been heard in recent years—Connie Smith. Monument has issued one single by Connie, the Atlanta Rhythm Section's "Rough At the Edges" with the flip side, "Don't Let Me Dream," written by Bob Morrison, the man who penned Johnny Lee's "Lookin' For Love." She has an album in the works, and a duet with Kris Kristofferson is "already in the can."

Reissues have also been an active area for Monument. Their compilations, issued several months ago, include sets by Boots Randolph, Kristofferson, Charlie McCoy and Roy Orbison.

"We're real optimistic about the whole situation," concludes Hyland. "I think it's going to blow some minds, especially in Nashville, the plans we have in mind for the label." As for Foster, "He's very optimistic about the rebirth of Monument—one more time." Stay tuned.

—RICH KIENZLE

Rosanne Cash gave husband/producer/singer/songwriter, Rodney Crowell, a late 1930s Roadster for his birthday.

Tom T. Hall taped two shows for the 12-part series "Party With The Rovers," a musical variety series produced by Global TV. The series will air this fall over Global's Trans-Canadian Network. Ray Stevens will also appear on two of the shows.

New Albums

Bobby Bare reunited with his favorite songwriter, Shel Silverstein, and teamed up for his new album titled, *Drinkin' From the Bottle and Sinkin' From the Heart*. Shel and Bobby produced the album together and Shel wrote every cut but one. The album is due out in October.

Look for greatest hits albums on Crystal Gayle, Eddie Rabbitt and Larry Gatlin.

Mac Davis is working in the studio with producer Garth Fundis. The album is due out this fall. Later on Mac is set to tape a Christmas special for NBC-TV.

The Kendalls' new album, *Morin' Train* contains their hit single, "Precious Love," produced by Brian Ahern. Other cuts are produced by Blake Mevis, Jerry Gillespie and the Kendalls themselves. They have added Glen Duncan to their backup band, The Pittsburgh Stealers.

The Statler Brothers are releasing "Guilty," written by Don and Harold Reid, as their second single from their *The Statler Brothers Today* album. The Brothers recently made their first sym-

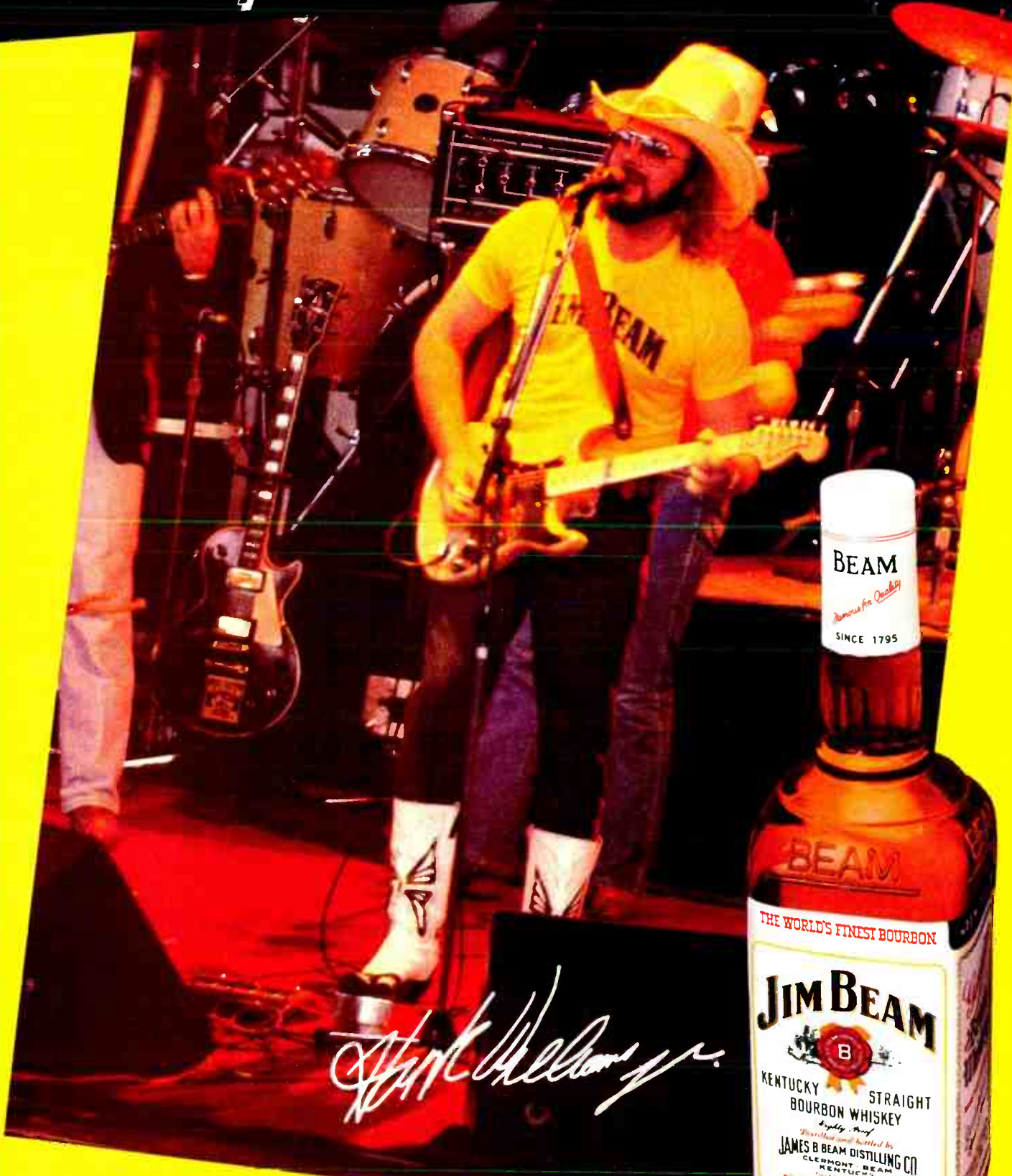
Cowboy's Dream Come True

When Mel Tillis spotted Kimberly McCarther in Granny's in Dallas, he knew he'd seen her before. He also knew that she'd be the perfect candidate for the new promotional poster for his upcoming single, "A Cowboy's Dream." Seems that Kimberly has appeared in pictures many times before. She was Miss January 1982 in *Playboy Magazine*, and has also appeared on their cover more than once. The single was produced by Harold Shedd, of Alabama fame, and is off Mel's *After All This Time* album. This is Mel's 52nd album, and his office says that if the poster is any indication, the record will be red-hot.

—ROCHELLE FRIEDMAN



00
"It's a family tradition."



Steve Williams



KENTUCKY STRAIGHT BOURBON WHISKEY 80 PROOF
BOTTLED BY JAMES B. BEAM DISTILLING CO., CLERMONT, BEAM, KY.

People

phony performance with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Their 14th Annual Happy Birthday U.S.A. Celebration was the largest ever. 72,000 people attended, and fans came from 39 states and nine foreign nations.

25 Years of Country Gold

Multi Media Program Productions is currently shooting a two hour special, tentatively titled *25 Years of Country Gold*. The special will be syndicated nationally, and air sometime in September. Joining host Robert Urich will be Waylon Jennings, Jerry Reed, B.J. Thomas, Earl Thomas Conley, Ray Price, T.G. Sheppard, Janie Fricke, Tammy Wynette, Lee Greenwood, Sylvia, Ricky Skaggs and Tanya Tucker. It's a look at the top hits through the years in a concert format. Singers will get a chance to sing some standards as well as their own hits. Ray Price is scheduled to do "For The Good Times," Jerry Reed, "Amos Moses" and "When You're Hot, You're Hot," B.J. Thomas does his "Raindrops" and Earl Thomas Conley sings his hit, "Your Love's On The Line" as well as "I Can't Help It If I'm Still In Love With You." Lee Greenwood does his self-penned, "Love Song," the ballad that was a hit for Kenny Rogers.

You may have heard of Multi Media before. They are the same people who brought you *The Louise Mandrell Special*, *The Annual Music City New Awards Show*, and *The Phil Donahue Show*.

Awards

Leon Everette's band, The Hurricane Band, won the Texas Proud Award for the Number One Traveling Road Band. Ceremonies were held at Opryland, where Leon and band performed along with Johnny Lee.

Alabama was voted Favorite Country Group in the second annual *Us Magazine* Reader Poll. The program was taped and syndicated throughout the country. They picked up another award as Best Group-Entertainers of the Year by the International Country & Western Association. The balloting for the award was in the leading newspapers in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, England, Germany, Belgium/Holland, Sweden, and Norway/Finland.

Charlie Daniels joined the likes of Tony Bennett, Aretha Franklin, Kenny Rogers and Billy Joel when he received the 1983 Creative Achievement Award by the Music and Performing Arts Lodge of B'nai B'rith. The \$175-a-plate dinner

Helen Get Your Gun

Helen Cornelius has always been a fairly straight-shooter, an attribute that's going to come in handy in her upcoming role as Annie Oakley.

She'll also be providing some (staged) competition for Sugar, since Dave Rowland will play her leading man in the road show production of *Annie, Get Your Gun*, the classic musical being revived by Bill Fegan Attractions of Dallas.

The producers are allowing the country music artists to translate the original musical score into their own styles, with a little help from their bands, who will also appear in the play, along with the two lumps of Sugar.

The petite housewife from Hannibal, Missouri, is in the process of signing with AMI Records and looking forward to the release of some singles prior to the January production of *Annie*, which will run through April on a cross-country circuit.

Helen is no stranger to the road, having toured steadily as a solo act during the several years since she broke up with Jim Ed Brown. But appearing in a musical is a bit different, and both



the producers and other country artists are going to be watching carefully to see if the medium holds potential for similar endeavors.

—MARY ELLEN MOORE

was held at the Sheraton Center in New York. Proceeds have been earmarked for causes supported by the Music and Performing Arts Lodge.

When George Jones performed at a recent benefit concert at the Franklin High School, the tables were turned, and George became the recipient of two awards. George was presented with his first career platinum album for *I Am What I Am* by Rick Blackburn, Senior Vice President and General Manager of CBS Records in Nashville. Tom T. Hall, the concert's host, presented Jones with a "100 Performance Award" which marked George's 100th consecutive performance since September 1, 1982. Proceeds from the concert went to the Williamson County Humane Society, Youth, Inc., and the high school's Athletic Booster Club.

Sylvia has become involved with a new organization called Dreammakers. Made up of volunteers, Dreammakers collects money to give to terminally ill children. Part of the proceeds of Sylvia's performance before a Nashville Sounds baseball game will go to Dreammakers.

Eight country music acts were inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame Museum in the Museum's Walkway of Stars. They include the Bailes Brothers,

R.C. Bannon, Aelyone Bate Beasley, Reba McEntire, Riders In The Sky, Carson J. Robison, Billie Jo Spears, and B.J. Thomas. Each performer will have his or her name displayed in a bronze star inlaid in terrazzo in the floor of the lobby of the Museum. There are currently 192 stars displayed. A \$1,500 donation in the name of the inductee is made to the Country Music Foundation to support its many ongoing projects. The donation is made by family and friends and/or fans of the inductee.

The Joke's on?

When Joe Stampley performed at the Double Eagle Club in Austin, Texas, he thought he was booked as a solo act. But in the middle of performing his and sometime-duet partner Moe Bandy's "Hey Joe, Hey Moe," Joe was surprised on stage when Moe joined in. Seems that the club owners secured Bandy as a surprise guest, to the delight of the fans attending the show. The boys went on to perform the entire repertoire from the Good Ole Boys show.

The shoe was on the other foot when Charley Pride performed in Calgary, Canada. Fans spotted a janitor mopping

People

Frizzells Won't Be Late For This One

David Frizzell, Allen Frizzell and Lefty Frizzell all on one new record? That's right, a unique track out on the Viva label is from David's album *On My Own Again*. The song, "We Won't Be Hearing 'Always Late' Anymore," was originally written by David to be sung by brother Allen. Then, under the aegis of Snuff Garrett, producer, it became a duet with David and Allen singing. Then dawned the idea of adding a track (owned by CBS) of Lefty singing. The harmonies are so close, it's hard to tell which Frizzell is singing.

This concept will be tried out again this fall in an album for CBS featuring various combinations of David, Allen and Lefty. Sounds from the past and the present.

—HELEN BARNARD

the stage before the show got underway, but the janitor looked a bit familiar. It was Charley playing a little joke on his unsuspecting fans.

Mary Poppins Country

Twenty years ago who could have ever foreseen what country albums would have done for the respective careers of Conway Twitty and Jerry Lee Lewis? Who could have predicted the incredible success of Ray Charles's twin classics, *Modern Sounds in Country and Western, Volumes I and II*? Who could have guessed that Bob Dylan—right in the middle of all the 1960's upheavels that would have seemed made-to-order for his social protests—would drop everything, go to Nashville, and cut not one, but two, country albums? Thus was born one of the most dauntless staples of the current music scene: the country album by the pop star. With these few exceptions, however, most pop-star country albums—generally conceived as last gasps of a faded career for an artist who has little or no identity with country music—make about as much impact as a bug flying into a windshield.

Now comes the latest at trying her hand at the country album game, and one of the most ostensibly unlikely—Julie Andrews.

"Julie has sold 25 million copies of soundtrack albums," said Jerry Nutting, her personal manager, "but she has never cut a solo album per se. I thought of



Oh, Say, Are Those the Oaks?

The Oak Ridge Boys helped open the American League-National League baseball All-Star Game in Chicago in July on national TV with their rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner." Fans appreciated their even handling of the beat of that great song.

recording her country as far back as five years ago, and approached Larry Butler about producing it. I got them together, they hit it off, and recorded 13 songs in 1978. Then this year they recorded 12 more songs, and the entire package will be released in a 25-song double album.

"We don't feel this is a 'gimmick' album. Julie is very sincere in doing it, very enthusiastic during the recordings and very hopeful of making a contribution to country music.

"The album was released in England earlier this year with a 5000-copy pressing. All of them were sold within a week. The next pressing was 30,000 copies, which is exceptional in England.

"As far as promoting the album, we hope the country stations will play it, but right now we hope to get it on the MOR

stations first, just as "I Can't Stop Loving You" by Ray Charles was first played on Top 40 stations. As a Swiss resident Julie is only allowed to spend 180 days a year out of the country, and her first priority is her family, the second is her films. So that doesn't leave a lot of time to go on tour. Also, Julie is not a person who is comfortable 'selling' herself. So if we do a tour promoting the album, it would be just in the ten major country markets.

"The album was not intended as an image-changing vehicle," Nutting said, responding to a question. "Julie's image will always be 'Mary Poppins' and 'The Sound Of Music'. But she has changed her image of herself in finding out that she is capable of doing something so different from Hollywood soundtracks."

—JOHN PUGH

Marty Robbins

*Something is dreadfully wrong, for I feel
A deep burning pain in my side.
Though I am trying to stay in the saddle,
I'm feeling weary, unable to ride.*

—FROM "EL PASO" BY MARTY ROBBINS

by Bob Allen

It was approximately 11:15 on the night of Thursday, December 8th, 1982, when Marty Robbins finally succumbed to the massive heart attack he suffered a week earlier.

Although the 57-year-old Robbins had a long history of heart trouble, nobody was quite prepared for the suddenness of his death, particularly since it came in the midst of the furious activity of a newly revived career.

Marty's schedule during his last days was typical of the hectic pace he had kept for much of the three decades of his professional life. Late on the Tuesday night of the week before his death, he was in the studio with producer Bob Montgomery, putting the finishing touches to what would be his last album. Then he climbed onto his bus for the all-night drive to Cincinnati, where he played a show the next night. That Thursday he planned to attend the premiere of *Honky Tonk Man*, the Clint Eastwood film in which he sang the title song and acted a cameo role.

But that was not to be. On Thursday morning, after he had returned from the Cincinnati show the night before, he woke up with severe chest pains and called out in desperation to his wife Marizona, who managed to get him dressed and rush him to St. Thomas Hospital. Realizing the severity of his illness, Marty told his wife as they drove along: "Lay on the horn, step on

the gas, and run every red light!" Marizona did; she could see for herself that her husband was turning a pallid gray and losing consciousness.

When Marty was admitted to the hospital, it was soon discovered that the damage to his heart was extensive, if not irreversible. Tests revealed major

**"If I could have slept
four solid hours a night,
I think I'd have been
all right."**

blockage to his main coronary arteries. Immediately, a team of twelve physicians began struggling through a nine-hour, quadruple-bypass operation. Marty survived the operation, but after a week-long vigil during which his fans and friends prayed and hoped against hope, his heart finally stopped beating.

A cold December rain was falling on the morning of Saturday, December 11th, when he was interred at the Woodlawn Memorial Park on the outskirts of Nashville. An overflow crowd filled the chambers and spilled out into the hallways of the Chapel of Roses, where the services were held. His casket was covered with pink carnations, and

surrounded by hundreds of wreaths and ornate floral arrangements. Among the pallbearers that overcast Saturday were Eddie Arnold, Ralph Emery, and long-time friends and band-members Jack Pruitt and Don Winters.

Iam convinced that Marty did not expect to go when he did. I spoke with him shortly before his death, and during the interview he was brimming with enthusiasm about the latest steps in his career—his new album, his venture back into the film and TV businesses, his recent induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame. It was as if he couldn't tell me quickly enough about all the new irons he had in the fire.

"I know I'm part of music history," he said, "but I draw bigger crowds than I ever did. I think I've still got a good fifteen years left."

Beneath the enthusiasm, there was also the strength and conviction of a man who had spent the better part of fourteen years in a painful and often very frustrating struggle against heart disease. He was never one to dwell on his illness, but he was always able to discuss it with a candor which was a comfort to many of his fans who had similar medical and emotional burdens to bear. And when he did talk about his

heart condition, he was very clear about the lessons he had learned from it.

"I never really did take my life seriously or really start to enjoy it until I had that first heart attack and operation," he once told me. "That was because I almost *lost* it."

The long struggle began for Marty back in 1969. He was riding through rural Ohio on his tour bus one afternoon when he felt a terrible pain begin to spread through his chest. He had absolutely no idea what was wrong at the time, and he was certainly not emotionally prepared for the long ordeal that lay ahead of him. All he knew was that suddenly he could no longer hear what his band members were saying to him, and he could no longer feel their hands as they tried to support his slumping body. His skin turned orange, then a deeper hue of red; then he gasped for breath.

"I felt like I was a hot dog ready to pop open," he recalled. "I thought I was going to die. So I started praying. I felt like I was in Hell, and the flames were up to *here*." He paused and gestured to his chin. "I just told God, 'I don't want to die! *Please!* let me live so I can testify!' As soon as I said that, the flames started going down. Now I'm a believer."

A couple of days later, when Marty got around to checking into a hospital, he was astonished when he was told that he had suffered a heart attack. "I told the doctor all the things I didn't do. I didn't smoke, didn't drink, wasn't overweight by but a few pounds. I didn't do dope of any kind."

With the exception of a wild period when he was a teenager (he had a few scrapes with the law, and he once told me, "I only drank for two years out of my whole life, but during those two years I drank enough for the rest of my life"), Marty had indeed steered clear of most major vices. The pace of his life, however, had been grueling, and he was a chronic insomniac. "I did my first tour in 1952," he recalled. "I was travelling by myself, working with strange bands till three or four in the morning and then making a four- or five-hundred-mile jump to the next place. It got to where I was doin' nothin' but driving and drinking coffee and taking NoDoz. That's rough on the heart. If I could have just slept four solid hours a night, I think I'd have been all right. But I seldom could do that. Even now, when I do a good show, I'm so excited I can't get to sleep for hours."

Old habits die hard, and that night at the hospital after his first heart attack, Marty, who was in the middle of a national tour, objected when the doctor told him that he should spend the night in the hospital for observation.



COLUMBIA RECORDS

JOHNNY CASH

I was in the Air Force at Lansberg, Germany when I gave myself a brand new Wilcox-Gay tape recorder for Christmas 1953. I set the recorder on the table in my barracks, set up the microphone and with the guitar, I recorded, played back and heard my own voice for the first time singing. The song I was singing was Marty Robbins' I COULDN'T KEEP FROM CRYING.

It sounded pretty good to me, so I sang another. It was Marty Robbins' CASTLES IN THE SKY. I still have that recording, but it's locked away in a bank vault because it is about as precious to me as Marty Robbins' memory is. The fact that he became a friend as well as an idol is one of the most remarkable events of my life and a great friend he was.



"I had to do a show that night," he recalled, "and I was determined to make it—chest pains or no chest pains. I talked the doctor into letting me go by promising him I'd go straight to Cleveland [the nearest big city] and take a plane to Nashville and check into a hospital there, right away.

"He finally agreed and gave me a shot and some pills for the pain. But instead of going to the airport, I went ahead and did the show anyway. I had a big time that night, jumpin' around all over the stage, even though it was, literally, a *half-hearted* effort." He smiled thinly. "I found out later that only half of my heart was still beating; the other half had stopped."

As the medicine wore off and the pain once again became unbearable, Marty quickly checked himself into another hospital, this one in Cleveland. He underwent extensive tests in the intensive care unit, then received the bad news: Years of compulsive eating had severely damaged his heart, perhaps beyond the point of repair. Cholesterol deposits clogged its three main arteries. Two of them were totally blocked; the other, three-quarters. Doctors told him that his life was "hanging by a thread," and gravely informed him that there was only a fifty-fifty chance that he would walk

back out of the hospital alive. It was a horrifying prospect for a man who thrived on physical activity.

Fifteen days later, Marty was transferred by plane to a Nashville hospital, where the doctors' prognosis was equally grim. They gave him three to six months to live. However, there was one ray of hope. They told him that he could undergo a then very new and very risky triple-artery bypass operation. But, they cautioned him, this surgery was still so experimental that, once again, the odds for survival were only fifty-fifty.

"I was scared, to say the least," he recalled. "The night before I had to decide whether or not to go through with the operation, I prayed and prayed that, regardless of what happened, my soul would be saved."

When he awoke the next morning, he was overcome by a strange sense of inner peace. "I had the answer," he remembered. "I told the doctors I wanted to have the operation as soon as possible."

At one point, as he underwent the hours of surgery, the team of doctors actually removed his heart from his body as veins taken from his legs were sewn to his aorta to replace the diseased and useless ones already there. When it was over, it took nine hundred stitches

to sew him back together again (including some heavy metal sutures to pull together the breastbone, which is split in such operations).

"Right after the operation, I was in *terrible* pain!" he grimaced. "At one point, I even said, 'God I don't think I can stand this anymore: Just take me right now!' But as soon as I'd said it, it dawned on me what I'd said, and I said, 'God, I didn't mean that! I'll just take all the pain, if you'll let me live!' And I know it wasn't 45 minutes after that till all the pain was gone."

Marty bounced back from his first attack and subsequent operation in characteristic fashion. Four weeks after the surgery, he was back on his 250-acre farm, near Nashville, tending to the chores.

"The first thing Marty asked for, as soon he could raise his hands, was a guitar," recalled Don "The Ox" Winters, who sang in his band for twenty years, and was also one of his closest friends. "Then he wrote some of the most beautiful songs he'd ever written."

It was only a year later, in fact, that against the heated objections of his wife and many of his friends, he once again returned to high-speed auto racing, one of his great passions in life. This time, he even ventured onto the high-stakes Grand National circuit to compete against professional racing buddies like Bobby Allison, Darrel Waltrip and Richard Petty. (In fact, he continued with auto racing until a month before his death, when he entered the Atlanta 500 and spun his car out against a wall.)

Like a cat with nine lives, Marty walked (or was carried) away from several potentially fatal mishaps on the track. One in particular, an incident which occurred in the late 1960s, before his "first" heart attack, should have told him something. Maybe it did; it was several years before he told anybody about it.

"I was driving in a 500-mile race in Charlotte, North Carolina, and it was one of the first times I had ever been on one of the big NASCAR ovals," he recalled. "At first, I thought I just had indigestion, but then the pain got worse, until I couldn't even breathe deep. In fact, it hurt just as bad as the attack which put me in the hospital and led to the operation. What I didn't know at the time was that I was going 155 miles an hour in my race car, with a heart attack goin' on!"

Marty's career—the hit records, the long concert tours, and the auto races—continued at a dizzying, sometimes exhausting pace until New Year's, 1981, when disaster struck again.

(Continued on page 22)



ADAMAS II: Imagination Becomes Reality.

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He had arrived home in the early morning hours from a show in Evansville, Indiana, and was watching a football game on TV when a headache and stomach pains reminded him that he had strayed once again from the low-fat, low-sodium diet the doctors had prescribed (his breakfast at the time would often consist of six, eight, even a dozen fried eggs with bacon, and over the course of a long evening he would put away five or six bowls of cereal topped with a syrupy mix of whipping cream and sugar).

At first, he wasn't sure if he felt bad on account of the junk food he had gulped down while on the road, or as a result of the big New Year's dinner he was still digesting, or because of his lack of sleep the night before.

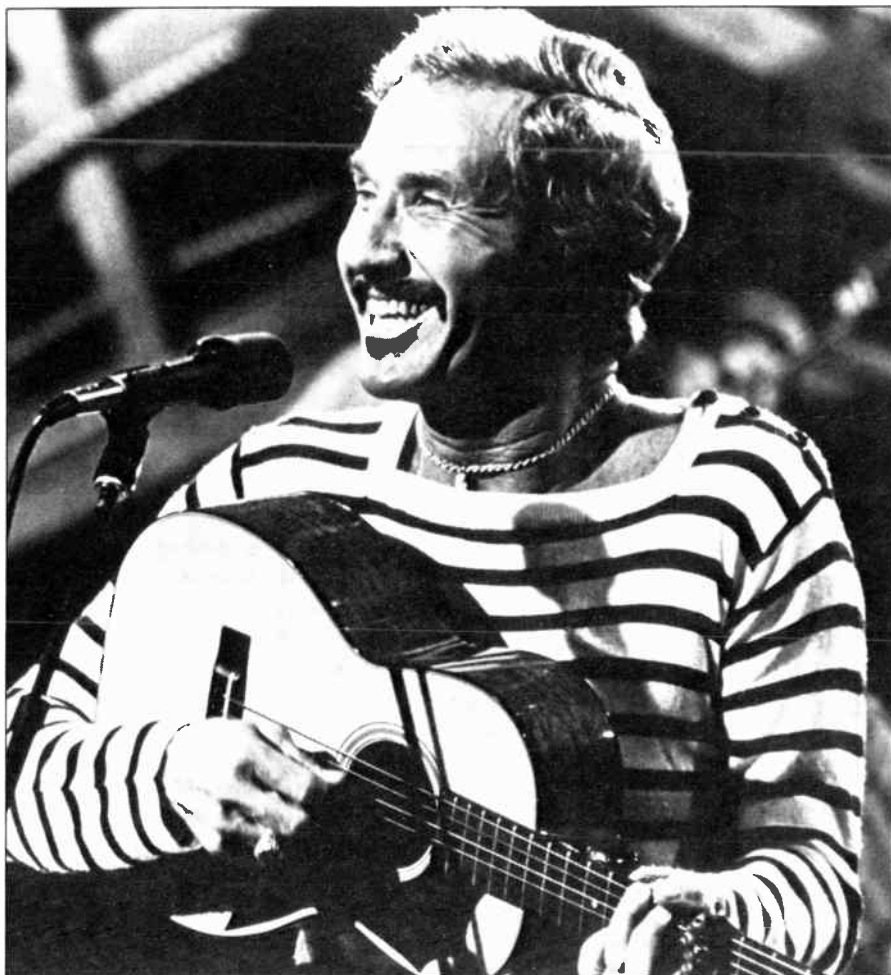
Gradually the dull, gnawing pain spread upward into his chest, and the headache developed into one of the worst he'd ever had. "I thought my eyes were actually going to pop out of my head," he said later. When he took six aspirin and a prescription pain killer, the agony finally subsided. He shrugged off the incident and went back to watching football.

Two days later, he taped a performance for an NBC television show that was being produced in Nashville. But after another two days had passed, he still felt terrible. "*What in the world did I eat to mess me up like this?*" he wondered. Finally, he called his doctor. When he described the symptoms over the phone, he was ordered to come into the office at once.

"It was really kind of embarrassing," he admitted. "I went down to my doctor's, thinking he'd just give me a routine check-up. I was dressed in my blue jeans and cowboy boots and a big ol' straw cowboy hat. But as soon as I got there, he called an ambulance and made me lie down. The ambulance attendants put me on a stretcher and wheeled me right out past all the people in the waiting room!"

Marty soon learned that he'd suffered another attack. Although this one was milder, and would not require an operation, he was sternly instructed to suspend all activities for at least sixty days. Still, his reaction was neither fear nor bitterness nor depression: "You know, it's funny," he recalled just a few weeks later, "but when I had that second attack, I *wanted* to have another operation. I was almost disappointed, in fact, when the doctors told me they didn't think I needed one. Now, I admit that's a dumb feeling. But I really was ready for it. After all, all the doctors can do is cut you and sew you back up. But it's up to you and God to put your body back together."

"I know a lot of things don't seem fair in life," he shrugged, speaking in soft,



Marty in his element; 'Austin City Limits,' 1981

measured tones, "but it all depends on how you believe and how you accept life. I don't know why God lets me go on living, but He has. I've experienced death so many times that I should be dead. But always, there was just a fraction of a second when it all went through my mind, and I always had time to say, 'Not yet, God!'"

True to form, Marty was soon back in action again. Within two months he was on the touring trail; and in 1981, I was fortunate enough to be able to accompany him to his first show since the operation—in Saginaw, Michigan, which at the time was still deep in the throes of a harsh Northern winter and deep economic recession. The audience where he played that night, in a small college auditorium a few miles outside the snow-swept city, was packed to the rafters with more than three thousand people—most of them unemployed working people from the nearby farms, sugar beet mills and auto parts factories who were hungry for some good music to take their minds off the bleak winter and even bleaker economy. "Aw," Marty couldn't help but note with sarcasm before he headed for the auditorium. "Most of 'em probably came just to see if I'd drop dead on stage!"

When he took the stage that night, though—just eighteen months before he was fated to enter a hospital for the third and last time—it was amazing to see how his introspective offstage reserve slipped away. Greeted by a standing ovation, he seemed to actually rise up on the waves of enthusiasm rolling forward from the crowd until he was beaming with enthusiasm and happiness (it is difficult, in fact, to call to mind another performer who experiences the kind of euphoria that came over Marty in front of his fans).

"I'm so glad to be here tonight," he told that audience at the end of the show. "The way you've made me feel, I may be able to go on for another thirty years!"

A few hours later, as his bus rolled silently across the dark landscape en route back to Nashville, Marty's thoughts turned once again to his many trials and his long road towards self-realization.

"You never know—I may just become an evangelist," he confided to me as he stared out the window into the night. "After all, God has been good enough to keep me around this long and pull me through all sorts of trouble. I don't think He did it for nothing." ■

Anything can happen.



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Louise Mandrell

*"I've reached the point where I can still be
a Barbara Mandrell fan and still be Louise..."*

by Mary Ellen Moore

Hazy skies have muted the normally brassy brightness of Clearwater, Florida, subduing even the springtime green of the driving range. The single bright spot on the landscape, in candy-striped shorts and a pink tee-shirt with *I'm Golfin'* dripping across the front, is intent on her swing, the little white ball and the impending impact.

She swings.

Turf flies.

The little white ball has not budged.

As her entourage stifles giggles, Louise Mandrell looks up with a queenly expression on her face and declares regally, "I meant to do that."

The fact that Louise is even out on this driving range hitting golf balls (for the record, she did hit more than she missed) is representative of the demands she makes on herself. The practice precedes the Chi Chi Rodriguez Celebrity Golf Tournament in which Louise and her husband, R.C. Bannon, will play. Rather than simply agree to the benefit tournament and show up, which would satisfy most celebrities, promoters and audience members, Louise is determined to be at her best, so she has squeezed this practice and warm-up between our interview and photo session and the afternoon tour-

namment. At her side, giving her tips, are R.C. and a golf pro.

Louise Mandrell is, of course, Barbara Mandrell's younger sister, who rocketed to national visibility if not stardom with the two-year run of the television show, *Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters*.

Like her sister, she is running at a non-stop pace to further that stardom, a pace which recently took its toll at the Country Music Association's annual Fan Fair, when she was temporarily hospitalized for exhaustion. But the pace is paying off, with her single, "Save Me" (co-written by her husband) becoming her first top-ten hit and her bookings including premier spots such as The Nuggett in Reno.

Somewhere during all this running, she also found time to sit down and write a book (with Texas advertising executive Ace Collins)—*The Mandrell Family Album*.

"I wrote the book for a combination of reasons," Louise explains. "Barbara has done a lot of things that nobody would ever know about otherwise. And I wanted to set the record straight."

With apologies, she explained how she found it difficult to understand the inaccurate articles written about the Mandrells, citing the oft-repeated statement

that the television show was cancelled because of bad ratings.

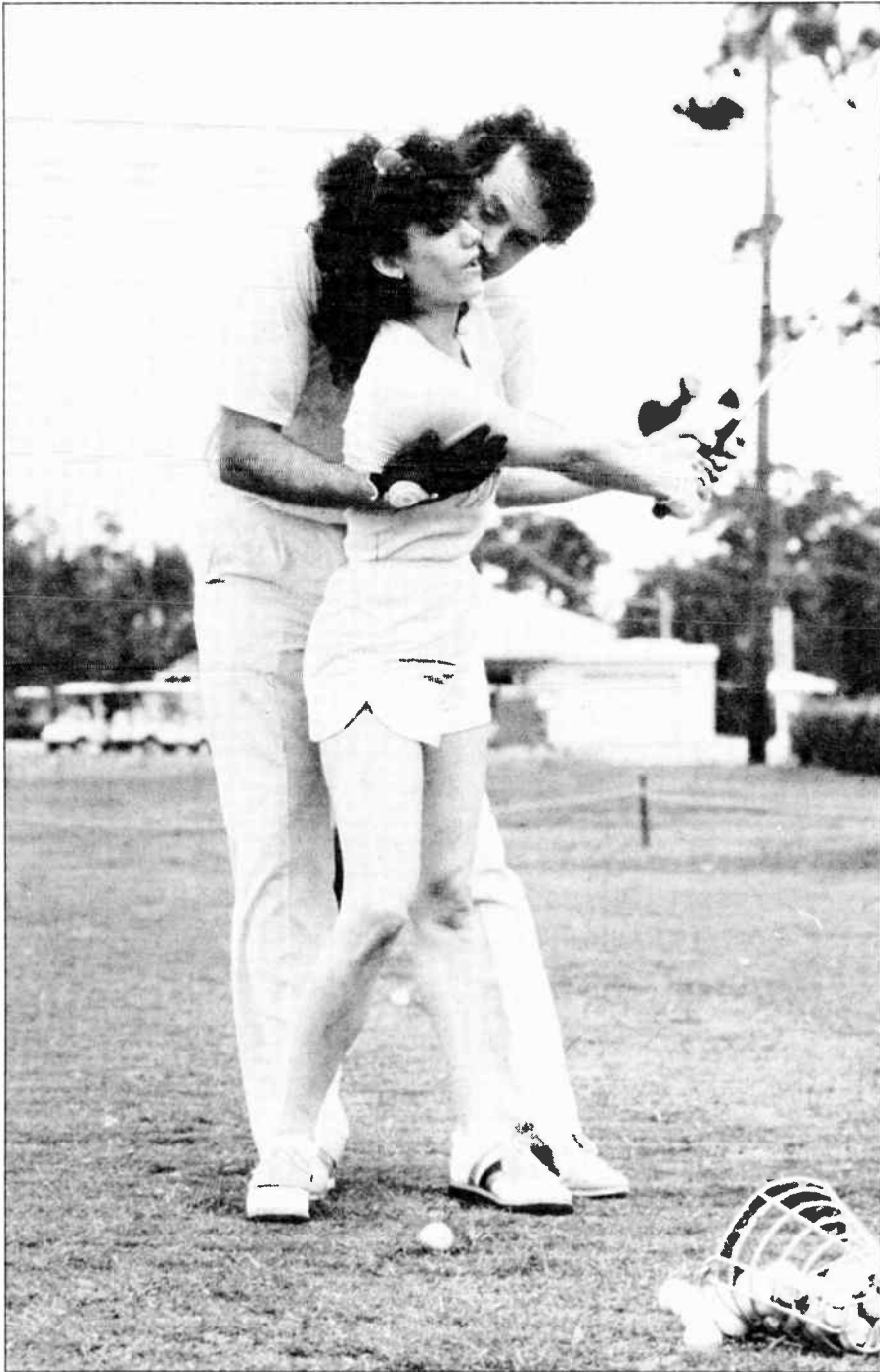
"We cancelled it," she says, her voice squeaking with indignation. "The ratings weren't bad."

Primarily, however, the book explains the tremendous influence Barbara had on both Louise and youngest sister Irlene, frequently sounding like a public testimonial to "one of the most special people in [Louise's] life—Barbara."

She relates numerous anecdotes concerning Barbara who, five-and-a-half years older than Louise, was considered a "little mom" by her younger siblings. All the encouragement with which Barbara provided her, not to mention all the bossy demands, Louise laughs, gave the naturally shy middle sister the courage to believe in herself.

"Everything I've ever done," Louise says simply, "Barbara's known I could do it before I did."

The entire Mandrell family is extremely close-knit and supportive of each other. Because of Barbara's early consuming interest with music, music became "a key to this family togetherness," Louise writes. Singing, playing various instruments, putting on musical performances under the critical directorship of Barbara, all contributed to Louise's own



Louise, with help from husband R.C. Bannon, readies for battle.

musical education.

When Barbara turned pro at the ripe old age of eleven, Louise's exposure to performers such as Red Foley and Gordon Terry continued contributing to her interest in music, and she considers Terry a great influence on her fiddle-playing style.

Gifts such as accordians and drum sets increased Louise's own skills, and today's performances still include exhibits of her expertise on the fiddle, banjo, piano, drums and bass.

When compared to Barbara, Louise was an old lady before she started her own professional career. At age fifteen,

she joined Barbara's touring show playing bass. Several dates later, Irlene joined them on drums, with the sisters becoming Barbara's first official backup band.

In 1974, with Barbara's encouragement, she left her sister's band and began backing up Grand Ole Opry star Stu Phillips. Later she joined Merle Haggard's show as a back-up singer with a featured spot.

Louise has been a part of the music business ever since, with a few time-outs for personal reasons—like marriage and divorce. Six years ago, when she was just getting restarted on her singing career, I was with her and Barbara on a bus trip.

They spent hours together, closeted in Barbara's room. Later Barbara would tell me that much of the time was spent encouraging Louise. But one thing in particular was angering Barbara, and that was the press's insensibility to Louise's two divorces.

Every article written about the new artist, Barbara raved (as much as five-foot-two can rave), blithely mentioned the divorces, not understanding how painful those periods were to Louise, who looked at them as signs of inadequacy on her part. And each time Louise read about her own life, she apparently felt the sense of failure all over again.

So I was curious as to whether Louise would mention the marriages in her book—not that they have anything to do with her musical career, but as a public personality now, her whole life has become public property—regardless of her own sensitivities.

"If you're going to write a book about your life," Louise says seriously, "you can't leave out a big chunk like that. I found it very difficult to write about—it was as hard for me to write about as it was to live through. I still love my ex-husbands, and it was hard to write about them because I still care about them."

Laughing off the serious note, she adds, "I have a saying: *The Mandrells aren't perfect—they have me.*"

On the morning of the golf tournament, Louise talks about her singing career and the demands she is making on her voice and her body.

"I've only been singing six years," she explains, "and I really think it's important to take care of your voice." She warms up her voice before a show, just as she warms up her body for the strenuous dancing which is part of her act. (In fact, her reputation for working out preceded her to a guest spot on *The Richard Simmons Show*, and Simmons asked her if she'd mind bringing her workout clothes. Louise, always cooperative and thinking she would just be following her host's exercises, obliged—and ended up leading the exercises while also attempting to read the cue cards. Her attempts to illustrate her predicament were hilarious as she tried to balance on her bottom, swing her arms and kick her legs, meanwhile searching frantically for her cues and trying to look as if such activities were all old hat for her.)

In 1977, she made the move that would train the spotlight on her, signing with Epic Records. Despite her experience and her membership in a spotlight-conscious family, the move was not easy.

"I had no faith in me," she recalls, pausing in her careful application of the make-up that turns an already beautiful face into a "public" face. "My knees

shook, and I was scared to talk to the audience. Everybody would tell me, 'You have to talk more, Louise.' After a while, though, they'd tell me, 'Louise, shut up and sing.' But I'd have to say that now, I'm more confident."

Contributing to this confidence (which is still being worked on) were two major events: her marriage to singer-songwriter R.C. Bannon four years ago, and the aforementioned television show.

The marriage created the ideal duo in terms of both career and romance. Recording hits such as "Reunited," albums such as *Me and My RC* and *You're My Super Woman, You're My Incredible Man*, and performing on the road and occasionally on the television show together, eased the way for Louise's eventual solo career. That career began officially last Christmas when R.C., the author of such hit songs as "Only One Love In My Life" (recorded by Ronnie Milsap), "retired" from his singing career in order to spend more time on his songwriting.

"I waited 'til the point where she didn't need me on the road to take care of her and her problems," R.C. explains. To replace him, the couple found Rick King, a band member and "road coordinator" who can handle any problems that arise.

"Daddy goes on the trips where he thinks he'll be needed," says Louise, "and R.C. goes on the trips that look like they're gonna be fun." This explains why R.C. is with her on this beachside, golf tournament date in Clearwater.

"Daddy" is, of course, Irby Mandrell, the Mandrell who has achieved almost legendary status as the daddy-manager of his girls. Mother Mary holds down the fort in the Nashville office.

R.C.'s retirement does not keep him out of the studio when Louise, now with RCA, records. And although he is not Louise's sole songwriter, the songs he writes, such as the newest release, "Too Hot To Sleep," (co-written with lyricist John Bettis), are largely responsible for Louise's growing reputation as a singer of sexy songs. His presence in the studio, in turn, is largely responsible for her ability to make them *sound* sexy.

"I'm not just singing a song," Louise explains. "I'm really *into* singing. I like singing sexy songs. I like singing to my husband." A trace of her old shyness is evident as she voices this last statement, and her voice dwindles off as she once again concentrates on her make-up.

"Is it easier to sound sexy when you're singing to your husband?" I ask.

"It's because we sang so long together," she explains. "When R.C.'s in the studio, he makes me feel at home, more comfortable. And it's nice to have the writer there."

While Louise may still seem a trifle uncomfortable with her sexy image (it runs in the family; Irby once quipped about one of Barbara's first daring photo



She told the bikini-clad beach audience this was the first time she had played to an audience which was wearing fewer clothes than she was.

sessions for *Country Music Magazine*: "The only thing sexy about Barbara Mandrell is her daddy"), the image is an outgrowth of the television show. In this label-loving culture, Barbara became "the talented one," Irlene "the funny one," and Louise "the sexy one." All three sisters, however, live up to all three labels.

But television has an undeniable effect on those who appear on it, and the sexy label stuck. Louise is aware of it, too: As she told the bikini-clad beach audience at her Florida show, this was the first time she had played to an audience which was wearing fewer clothes than she was.

After the TV show ended, says Louise, "I was afraid I'd stop learning. But since it ended, I've learned just as much as I did then. I was determined to learn."

The learning included putting together a road show in one month and a Louise Mandrell television special in ten days. Her road show includes three costume changes for both herself and her dancers, members of her band selected as much for their ability to participate in the choreographed dancing as for their musicianship.

As a result of the television show, she has included the dance numbers, involv-

ing energetic lifts among other steps, because she believes the fans expect it. Although her costumes have sometimes cut the hands of her partners, and she can point to the bruises on her legs received during the numbers, she's determined to maintain them as a part of the show.

Before the show, however, Louise "never even went out on a date and went dancing. I just did what Barbara made me do." Barbara, returning home from a date, would drag Irlene and Louise out of bed and make them dance with her, or watch her dance. "Mostly," smiles Louise, "we watched."

At the height of the show, Barbara explained why there was no jealousy among the highly competitive sisters. "I had just won *Entertainer of the Year*. My name would make people watch. My sisters would make people be entertained. Now people know Irlene Mandrell and Louise Mandrell."

The recognition factor provided by the television show is almost *too* good. Although Louise is completely considerate of her fans — she will remain after a show for hours signing autographs, and will, when accosted by fans in restaurants or other public places, let her food grow cold rather than disappoint them — she and R.C. wouldn't mind a little privacy in their own home, or while ensconced in the motel and hotel rooms that are their homes away from home. They recently moved from one Hendersonville, Tennessee home to a bigger one on Old Hickory Lake, and within weeks, fans were coming to the door to take photos and wandering around the grounds hoping for a glimpse of Louise.

But Louise will not say a word against her fans, a trait for which her "teacher" is famous. Another familiar trait is the boundless energy with which Louise seems imbued.

"Barbara used to always say, 'Go, go, go,'" she laughs. "Now she calls me up, and she's worried about me because I don't take any time off. I've had two days off since Christmas. I'll eventually take time off, but I'm at the stage where I can't stop, I've got too much to do."

That last point illustrates Louise's recognition of the fact that she is no longer in the shadow of Barbara Mandrell. She tells the story of how, after one recording session, her producer, Eddie Kilroy, asked her what she thought Barbara would think of the session. Louise, who felt good about the session, answered proudly, "Oh, I think she'd really like it."

"Good," she remembers Kilroy responding. "Now get back in there and sing it like Louise Mandrell."

"I've reached the point," says Louise, "where I've finally accepted me for Louise Mandrell. I've reached the point where I can be a Barbara Mandrell fan and still be Louise Mandrell." ■

Twenty Questions with

by Michael Bane

Hank Williams, Jr., is a hard man to reach these days, which is not surprising. He is riding an unprecedented string of hits, a hit television movie about his checkered life, and a road schedule which would have done his Daddy proud. We caught up with him before a show in Charlotte, North Carolina, and corralled him, barely, for 20 questions.

ONE

Do you think Nashville's still afraid of you?

Probably. I guess so. I mean, we're filling up civic centers like beans in a Van Camp can. Selling records. Selling t-shirts. And this new record looks awfully good—you can't plan that stuff, but there are a couple of songs on there that could cross over *soooooo* easy. They can be afraid of me if they want.

TWO

What was it like watching yourself portrayed on television?

Uhhhhh... Well, it got the point

across to me, so I think it did everybody else.

THREE

Did you get a twinge watching yourself fall off the mountain?

Well, what they showed of that was nothing. That was a laugh to me. Compared to what really happened, that looked like falling in a skating rink. I did get kind of a twinge when Richard Thomas was in that hospital room, though. I think that was one of the best parts.

FOUR

Do you think Richard Thomas did a pretty good job with your life?

He worked hard on it, no doubt about that. It was the biggest movie that week, and the network was pretty happy with it, too. It put meat in the seats! Maybe I should do Volume Two, the night Merle Kilgore... (laughter)

FIVE

What sort of music are you listening to now?

Well, to tell you the truth, I've been listening to myself on this new album for about a month. A lot of work that people don't think about goes into these albums. When I get a chance, I still listen to the Allman Brothers. Z.Z. Top, people like that. I'll tell you who I've been listening to—Johnny Cash. Old Johnny Cash stuff.

SIX

Are there any people you'd change the radio station to avoid hearing?

A lot of 'em. A whole lot of 'em. A *real* lot of them in my business right now. Like maybe seventy-five percent, probably. Can't listen to that stuff.

SEVEN

Who do you think sings the best versions of Hank William's songs?

There's been many a person doing his stuff, hasn't there? I'd have to say George Jones and Ray Charles.

EIGHT

Is there anybody you'd like to cut a duet with?

Yeah, as a matter of fact. Linda Ronstadt. She's got a great voice. Or Leon Redbone. We're trying to get him on the next album. Be kinda fun to do, say, "Lovesick Blues."

NINE

If you could hunt any animal in the world, what would it be?

Probably the animal I'm going to hunt this summer. Cape Buffalo in Africa.

TEN

What's your favorite place to hunt?

Montana, Alaska and Africa—no, make that Africa, Alaska and Montana.

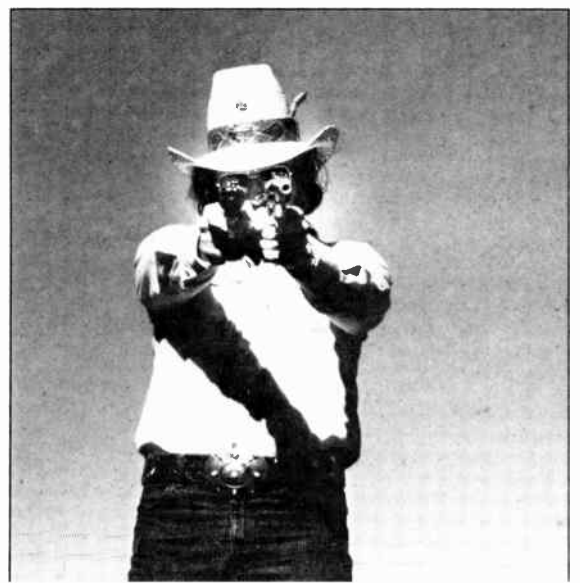
ELEVEN

If, out of your not-unsubstantial collection of handguns, which I know for a fact is at least a million (laughter), you could pick only one, which one would it be?

To keep? Oh, a brass-framed Ruger Super Blackhawk single action in .44 magnum. I'm stuck in a rut. Or, how about



World Radio History



HANK WILLIAMS, JR.

this? My new 1921 Thompson submachinegun in its luggage case might be a good one to keep. Five drum magazines, full automatic; \$4500 worth of Thompson, in mint condition. It came out of some police department in Minnesota.

TWELVE

Why did you agree to do a commercial for the National Rifle Association?

Oh, I was glad to do it. That was back when they were fighting Proposition 15 in California, but I'd do one anytime they wanted. Television, magazine, anything.

THIRTEEN

What irritates you the most about anti-gun people?

Their lack of common sense. Simple as that. If you think whiskey was something on Prohibition, try .38 Specials.

FOURTEEN

What do you like most about being on the road?

Truthfully, I like filling up those civic centers. It's fun to

turn people on. What I like about being on the road... hmmm... beautiful women. Buying guns out of *Shotgun News* from motel rooms. I also like it when the concessionaires report their t-shirt sales every night! But what I really like the best about being on the road is Merle Kilgore.

FIFTEEN

What do you like least about being on the road?

Squirrels.

SIXTEEN

Is it true that women on the road are different from women at home?

Yes, as a matter of fact, they are. It's amazing.

SEVENTEEN

What does Hank Williams, Jr., do to relax? What's your absolute favorite thing in the world to do?

I like to go fishing, or go to Africa hunting. I want to have a big barbecue like Granddaddy used to do. I'm going to have a big band summertime

party. I got this black guy from Birmingham, used to be a fighter in Chicago, about fifty-five years-old, he knows how to really barbecue those hogs. Whew! Where you do it all night long, you know? We're gonna have us a real blow-out party on the lake in Cullman. Fishing, hunting, reloading, partying.

EIGHTEEN

Any other questions lying around that you haven't been asked?

No, but I heard that I haven't been invited to the New York City Chamber of Commerce party. (laughter.)

NINETEEN

Do you still draw good crowds in New York City after all the nasty things you've said about it?

I don't *know*. I drew pretty well at Westbury, which is near New York. I don't know why, because they were all a bunch of jerks. They yelled out at my opening act, a woman singer, "Show us your tits, you Southern bitch!" When I went on stage, I said, "Most of y'all are real nice, but some of y'all

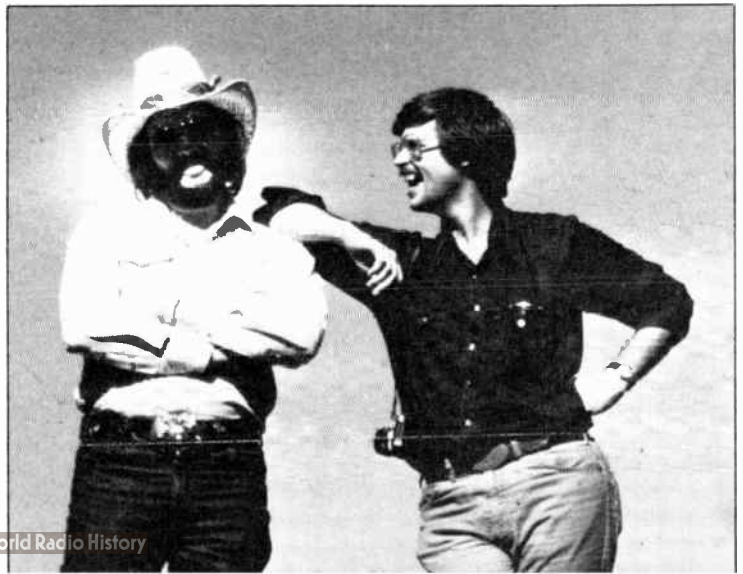
...leave!" That's for Tom Jones up there grinding his ass across the stage, not for me up there with seven pieces trying to do a show. That just don't make it. But we do it in Baltimore, and it's great.

TWENTY

Why do you think your music is holding up so well when so many people who got a head start on you are falling by the wayside?

Maybe I'm writing songs, being constructive and doing things. Maybe I'm hungry. If my name's on it, when you buy that thing, I want it to be damn good. Strong stuff. And that's what the next album is. I thought about calling it *Stronger Stuff*. It's fun, but some of it's still scary. We played Jackson, Mississippi, the other night, and it was sold out, packed. They were just quiet as hell. I was starting to get kinda worried. Then the other places, they just stand up and shout.

Twenty Questions expert and Country Music Magazine Editor-At-Large Michael Bane is the co-author of Hank, Jr.'s, autobiography, "Living Proof." His gun collection is not as large as his subject's.





World Radio History

ROSANNE CASH

FAME & FAMILY

*"Having babies really blew me away.
It just overwhelmed me with responsibility. I had no idea
you loved your kids like you do."*

On Rosanne Cash's *Seven Year Ache* album there's a Glen D. Hardin song called "Where Will The Words Come From?" It's a beautiful, awfully sad song, as sad in its way as "She Thinks I Still Care" always sounds to the hard-country ear, and it's double-edged: Rosanne is singing from the point of view of a lover who has to give you up—the love's gone, she doesn't know how, but this has happened to her too many times before, and now she's wondering aloud how she'll be able to tell you—and so you, the listener/lover-on-the-way-out, feel the pain of both her disillusionment and your own rejection. This is a sharp twist, and the song is very real, not cute at all, and Rosanne's clear, serious, hurt, riveting delivery conveys the impression that she both feels what she's singing and *(Continued on next page)*

by Patrick Carr



Youngest daughter Chelsea gets to play with mom and pets, Sam and Dave.

knows whereof she sings. You have already been informed by other songs on the album—"My Baby Thinks He's a Train" and "Seven Year Ache" itself, for example—that she possesses a high level of interpersonal savvy, humor, and musical taste in the matter of singing about relationships (and she can rock), but "Where Will the Words Come From?" goes beyond all that, plunging into the real pain of the love game. So, for that matter, do the album's other sad songs, and altogether you get the message, in no uncertain terms, that this woman is something far more than just another girl singer.

That should come as no surprise, for Rosanne's vital statistics are interesting. The daughter of Johnny and Vivian Cash, she was raised in California. She

majoring in creative writing in college, then was trained in drama at the Lee Strasberg Institute. She writes some of her own songs ("Seven Year Ache" and "Blue Moon With Heartache," for instance), has until recently managed her own career, and is keenly interested in video. At the age of twenty-eight she is married to the greatly talented singer/songwriter/producer Rodney Crowell, and is the mother of two daughters.

It's a shock when she saunters out of the Nashville house to greet us. This is not the soft, bushy-haired, big-eyed, rather wistful person who looks out from the record jackets and publicity pictures; it's a pixie, small and spikey and taut and hip, very *moderne*, hardly

country-classic.

The house, on the other hand, is more or less what one might expect of an affluent young music business family. Although newly constructed, it incorporates much venerable wood and is solidly, comfortably rustic in theme, the kind of expensively funky domicile, antiques furnished and casually dotted with children's toys and gold records (no platinum), which graces many a secluded spot in Woodstock or Marin County or around the canyons of Los Angeles.

We walk into the kitchen, where a bluejeaned young woman helper is preparing a vegetarian lunch. On the wall above her head hangs a plaque which reads, *Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Fortunately, this is not difficult.* It is signed *The Management*. Rosanne laughs. "Rodney signed it that way," she says.

The question of the name, of course, is something else, and Rosanne acknowledges that the name may not have hurt her.



This makes a nice joke, but the plaque and the remark do raise an issue of substance. Rosanne sings a number of Rodney's songs, and Rodney produces her albums, and there is some sensitivity on the point. On the one hand, CBS Records is and always has been most anxious that Rodney not figure largely in stories about Rosanne—it is, as they point out, Rosanne who sings, she's their artist, *she's* the star—while on the other hand, many of Nashville's ol' boys of all sexes often vent the opinion that if Rosanne did not perhaps gain access to the music business on the strength of her father's name, then maybe she stayed in the music business on the strength of Rodney Crowell's talent.

It's an irksome issue, this, a white elephant and a sacred cow and a red herring and a can of worms all in one, and it must be addressed. We're settled

in the den with baby Chelsea, and have been talking for a while, when I begin it by asking Rosanne if she has ever considered working with a producer other than Rodney.

"Well yes, sure," she says, "I've considered it, but Rodney and I have an unspoken communication which is very conducive to working well."

She pauses for a moment, obviously considering something weighty, then raises the main issue.

"Y'know," she says, quite angrily, "everybody thinks that Rodney does everything on the records, and then I go into the studio and put my pretty little voice on there. That's bullshit."

She doesn't stress the word "bullshit;" her anger has gone now, and she sounds weary.

"We make records *together*," she says. "We pick the songs together, we pick the musicians together, and we mix together. I always mix the vocals, and he mixes the band. But really, no kidding, if the question has anything to do with anything but the vocal performances, people ask 'Is Rodney going to do *this*?' 'Does Rodney want *that*?'"

I suggest that perhaps, given the time and place of the activity, this is not entirely surprising.

"Sure, you're right," she answers. "But really, it's sexist and it's rampant around here. I mean, women in country music are forced into particular roles. Men are given a choice—they can be the good guy or the bad guy—but *we* can't sing about getting drunk and picking up guys in bars. Can't do it. We can be the Madonna, or we can be the Victim, and that's it. I have a crusade for woman as non-victim here. I mean, I don't get involved with the women's movement because I think those people don't have a sense of humor, but *really*!"

It seems like the right time to address the other item in this business—her father's power and influence as it relates to her career—and she answers succinctly: As far as she knows, Johnny Cash first heard about her recording deal with CBS Records when she mailed him some rough mixes of her first album. The question of the *name*, of course, is something else, and Rosanne acknowledges that the name may not have hurt her.

I tell her that the last time I saw her father's show, he introduced himself by saying, "You may have heard of me. I'm

Rosanne Cash's father" (this in reference to her evident ability to get Number One hits, in contrast to his own seeming inability), and she laughs. "He really says that? That's cute. He's sweet."

Rick Blackburn, the president of CBS Records' Nashville division, recalls the circumstances of her signing to the label.

"I was out at John's house, and we were playing records and stuff," he says, "and John started playing me Rosanne's Ariola album, the one she cut in Germany. The phone rang, and he got on it, so I started spot-checking the album. There was a song on there called 'You'd Better Start Turning Them Down'—a Rodney Crowell song—and I loved the song, and I *loved* her cut on it. I said 'John, have you *heard* this?' He said sure, and told me about how Ariola wasn't doing anything with the record, so I just pursued it from there

"This is kinda painful. She wanted Rodney to produce her, and I was reluctant. 'I don't know,' I said. 'He's a pretty good writer, but...' So I told Rodney to cut three or four sides and let me hear the rough mixes—you know, proceeding with caution before putting all the money up, that kind of deal—and he came back with four fantastic cuts, and it went on from there. Rodney's a *fine* producer."

I ask Blackburn to be more specific about that first listening session at Cash's house. Is he sure that Cash wasn't promoting his daughter?

"Rosanne was brought to my attention *accidentally* by John Cash," he says. "He wasn't pushing her, like 'This is my daughter. I wish she were on Columbia Records,' nothing like that. It was more like, 'You know Rosanne, and she's done this album in Germany; what do you think of it?' I didn't even like the first track he put on.

"You know, Rosanne *is* such a great singer," he says. "I'm a softie for stylists. We've got nothing but stylists round here usually, and she just fit."

This leaves us free to discuss other matters. Chelsea, absorbed in her own thoughts and adventures, is not listening to us.

Rosanne Cash does indeed possess a *very* "pretty little voice"—it is difficult, in fact, to bring to mind any other female country singer of her age who can truly match her—but primarily she thinks of herself as a writer. Even when she was studying



Above, the lady of the house with her charges. Below, taking care of business.



acting, her first great enthusiasm, the eventual goal was to be the author. Now she sits in this well-appointed den, grasping after what she is trying to do with her writing.

"I'm not really interested in writing story songs," she says. "I can't really do that, I don't know how, don't want to.

What I want to do is capture an attitude.

"It's like when you're going along, and you smell something, and all of a sudden a memory is back in your head—but it's so short, it's just a fragment, and you want to capture it so badly, but it just slips away before you can really think about it. That's the kind of thing I want to do with songs, evoke a mood that'll hit you so profoundly, if only for an instant, that it'll stir something up that'll chain-react into something else. That's it."

The approach is obvious in her work (her own songs are the most impressionistic items in her repertoire), and it is consistent with her background; the daughter of a thinking and writing man, the teenager who grew up with the allusional music of the Doors and the later Beatles blasting from her stereo, the creative writing student, the young woman who re-connected with the country music of her childhood when, while on the road with the Johnny Cash Show, her father gave her a list of one hundred essential country songs to learn.

One wonders how Rosanne is doing with her writing these days. Not too well, she says, but it's understandable. She has a young family.

"Having babies really blew me away," she says. "It just overwhelmed me with responsibility, and overwhelmed me with

my feelings for them. It shook me up. I mean, I didn't have any idea about anything. I had no idea you loved your kids like you do.

"I was a completely selfish person, and then all of a sudden I was married and I had to be un-selfish. If I got an hour to go to exercise class, that was *it* for my own thought forms for the day. Now, I'm really prone to anxiety, and if I let it spiral, it'll take me right into panic. So I've been whining a whole lot lately, complaining that I haven't been writing—as if somebody's going to do it for me, right?—but I'm starting to come out of it, take control of it, insist on my own time. I think I'm heading into a creative period."

Now, in fact, she has made a resolution: She will not attempt another album until she has written the bulk of it herself, and is satisfied with the material. While remembering the worth of *Seven Year Ache*, she also recalls the relative failure of her last album, *Somewhere In The Stars*, made while she was pregnant with Chelsea ("In that condition, I wasn't at all uninhibited or flamboyant or willing to take great risks, which is necessary for the kind of work I do") and is determined she will not repeat the mistake.

The resolution has its problems. The country divisions of major record companies do not, as a rule, become ecstatic

"I shouldn't have to schedule my life around putting out records. That's ridiculous! I mean, how can you compare a record to a baby, a human being?"

over artists who deliver "product" on their own schedules. Nor, for that matter, are they thrilled when an artist refuses to spend great amounts of time on the road "supporting" that product with personal appearances. Lack of "promo" tends to result from such situations.

The problem concerns Rosanne, but it doesn't overwhelm her. "They go through their runs, y'know," she says. "For a while they'll be real hot on one person, then they'll move on to somebody else, and then maybe they'll come back to you. The whole thing upset me before I realized that. In fact, I confronted CBS about it. I said 'What about *me*? Last year I was your little princess!' So then they more or less told me how it was."

She laughs, then says, "But this is my *life*! I shouldn't have to schedule my life around putting out records. That's ridiculous! I mean, how can you compare a record to a baby, a human being!"

So no, Rosanne will never be a major touring performer. Her mother and father split up when she was twelve, but she remembers the years before that when Daddy was never home. Perhaps the memory colors her attitude.

It makes Rosanne uncomfortable to talk about herself for long periods of time, and one of her human beings is demanding attention anyway, so we stop talking, and the grownups entertain the kids. Rosanne at play is very much a pixie. Plays with the best of them.

Rosanne and Rodney moved to Nashville two years ago because Nashville seemed like a good place to raise their children (Chelsea, her older sister Caitlin, and Hannah, Rodney's daughter from a previous marriage), and things seem to have worked out well. The household is gentle and harmonious, and Rosanne, having lost some forty pounds since Chelsea's birth, become a vegetarian, and generally cleaned up her act, is the picture of health. "Don't get me wrong; I can still roar when I want to," she says, "but I never knew people *felt* this good!" She takes ballet classes, and musician friends come by the house, and there is a hot tub on the back porch. Life is good. Previously the home was in Los Angeles, and Rosanne misses the edge of city life, wants to find an apartment for visits to New York, but what the hell? This can be done, as can many things. And Rosanne will probably achieve her current professional ambi-

tion, which is to create video pieces and run a video production company; there's nothing to stop her. Things will work out.

She is aware of this, and is therefore pretty relaxed, but she is a relatively serious person (as her work suggests), and as she says, she is subject to her fair share of anxiety. In its most extreme form, the anxiety follows her too frequent realizations that very probably, she—and everyone else in the world—is going to end up either nuked or poisoned. "You start to feel euphoric about your life, and then—oh, ho!—there it is," she says. She is quite unequivocal when she states that she will not bring any more babies into the world to suffer such a fate.

"Sissy Spacek and I were sitting around the other night talking about this—Sissy's working on a film about it—and at one point, we looked at each other and just started weeping," she says. "I mean, all these Republicans who think that war's okay because it's good for business—they don't realize that this time it'll only happen once. That will be it. And then they store nuclear waste, which lasts ten thousand years, in barrels that last two hundred years. What do they think? We've got another planet to go to?"

"We're so helpless. It's horrible, thinking about your children dying of radiation burns. It's insane. It makes me *really* crazy."

Indeed, she is quite distraught, so we have to make light of the subject—yup,

that one sure goes well with a hangover, right?—and quit talking about it. We start talking about books.

The next day, Rosanne arrives in her Volvo at a Nashville photo studio to pose for the magazine's cover. She's frazzled at first—has a headache, feels nervous about something—but as the session progresses the rhythm of the event begins to take her over and she becomes more and more animated. She is, as she has said many a time, a born performer, a real actress, and posing for photographs is something she both enjoys and does well. She makes suggestions where appropriate, she alters expressions when needed, she holds poses for as long as the photographer wants. She tells me a totally obscene and very funny joke about Princess Margaret, she hums to herself, she's on.

Her performance recalls something she said at the house about missing girl friends, not being able to go out and raise hell with the girls now that she's married and maternal. It's a great notion, the idea of Rosanne out on a spree—you wouldn't mind meeting her at all, but you'd better be sharp when you do—and it reminds you that this girl can dance. Obviously she is a caring mother, and she can perform the sadness with authority, more convincingly than any number of her peers, but she also has the sass, she's got those toes. It's an attractive balance. ■



The writer, the artist and the photographer share a quiet moment.



WILLIE

Interview by Bob Millard

Now that everybody who watches TV or lives within fifty miles of a newsstand knows all about Willie Nelson's taste in breakfast food and his feelings about double dating and the color of his bathtub, we thought that, as in the past, we would let you country music fans know what the man thinks about more substantial matters—music, for instance, and the odd path by which he arrived at his current super-celebrity. This time Bob Millard caught up with Willie in Nashville, and the following discussion took place:

CM: Tell us a little bit about when you got to Nashville. Obviously you were ready to do some new things, but did you know what you were going to do?

Willie: I really didn't know that much when I came to town. I knew a lot less than probably what I thought I did, really. But I felt like I knew what I wanted to do, and I felt like I could write songs pretty good, and I felt like I could play the guitar, and I felt like I sang okay. I wasn't here too long, though, until I began to get my confidence shook a little bit and started thinking, "Well, maybe I'm not as good as I thought I was"—and maybe I wasn't, you know. But you can get sobered up pretty quick when you come to Nashville expecting things to happen overnight. You find out fairly soon that it doesn't work that way.

CM: So there was a rude awakening at some point?

Willie: Well, it was definitely an awakening that it was going to take longer than I thought to do what I had in mind, and I didn't know whether I had that much time or not, really.

CM: Why? Did you think you were going to run out of bucks?

Willie: Well, I thought I'd run out of time. I was pushing forty and things weren't exactly happening. I'd had a lot of success as a songwriter, but I wasn't selling any records, so I'd just about come to the point where maybe I wasn't going to sell any records and maybe that was it.

Maybe I should be satisfied being a successful songwriter, and let it go at that.

CM: But you didn't.

Willie: No, I didn't. I decided to go back to Texas. I knew that I wanted to play music. I knew that I wanted to sing and wanted to get out there with my band and travel around. Whether I was selling any records or not, I knew I still wanted to do that, and it just made more sense to go back to Texas where I could do that—work Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and make the circle a little smaller. You know—"I'm still doin' what I want to do and I'm still not makin' a great deal of

It's still difficult to do things the way you want to do them. There's always somebody out there tryin' to get you to do it the way they want.

money, but I'm makin' enough money to keep the band together and pay my bills, and the songwriting money is still coming in, and if I can every now and then get a few songs recorded by a couple of major artists, well, I can make it okay." And that was what I'd really decided to do.

CM: Were there one or two people in Nashville who really helped you get going, helped you do what you wanted to do here?

Willie: Well, Billy Walker and Hank Cochran were the ones that first opened up their doors and said, you know, "Come on in and we'll feed you and give you a place to stay until things start happening." To me, now, that's the kind of help that you never really forget.

CM: You worked with Chet Atkins while you were at RCA. He and Don Law and a couple of other people in town brought

the horns, the strings and the voices and everything to Nashville, and they called that "The Nashville Sound." That didn't work too well for you—or did it?

Willie: No, it didn't, but it worked great for a lot of other people. It was a way for a lot of other people to go. By the time I got to town, I think it had been used a lot, excessively, and it was not as powerful a way to do it by the time I got to town. I think by then it had got to the point where it was time for the pendulum to start swinging back the other way and go from more to less.

CM: That sort of production didn't really allow you to do the sort of unique phrasing things that you like to do, did it?

Willie: No. I feel that the way that I can be heard best is as close to voice and guitar as I can get, with just a few things to complement it in the background—nothin' elaborate, because I think what I'm trying to sell is a lyric and a style which can be covered up real quickly and easily if you're not careful.

CM: When you were looking around in Texas and seeing your audience changing, you sort of decided to help that gel with your 4th of July Picnic, didn't you?

Willie: Well, another kinda gut feeling I had was that those outdoor concerts were a great way to bring together a few of the young country music fans and put 'em in with some of the older country music fans, and let everybody get a look at each other. I saw that working at the first Dripping Springs Reunion there in Texas, and decided that that would be a good vehicle for that, and also a good way for me to be heard by all these different people. Guys like me and Kris Kristofferson and Waylon Jennings and Charlie Rich and Billy Joe Shaver, Jerry Jeff Walker, Lee Clayton and all of the people who were trying to get something started back in those days—that was a way to get everybody together to listen to what we were doing.

CM: You really broadened that. You brought in people like Leon Russell. . .

Willie: Yeah. Leon was a big help to what I was trying to do back then because he had the young people listening to him and he was the big rock and roll star at that time, but he also did an album called *Hank Wilson's Back* where he sang all those country songs, so he found out too that there were a lot of young long-haired country fans out there. And he loves country music. So when I was puttin' on this first 4th of July Picnic and asked him to come down, he came almost immediately because he wanted to sing to those people too. He saw the same thing that I saw happening.

CM: I've got to ask you about this story; I just read a reference to it. Here in Nashville you were married to a Cherokee lady who didn't like your drinking, jumped into your bed and beat the hell out of you one time?

Willie: Yeah. I was here in Nashville when all these crazy things happened. But she's a great lady. She and I get along fine—we got three kids together, they're grown, they've got kids of their own—but back then we were young and I was crazy, and I was always comin' home, getting way out of line. So one night she decided she'd had enough of that. I came home drunk and passed out—we'd had a big fight and I'd passed out on the bed—so she sewed me up in the sheet and beat the hell out of me with a broomstick, packed all her clothes and mine, and left. By the time I got out of the bedsheets, she'd already gone. I didn't have anything to wear except the shorts that I had on, and it was snowing, cold. She knew how to handle me.

CM: *Red Headed Stranger* put you way up there. How did you come about doing that? That was, I understand, kind of an orphan project over at CBS.

Willie: Well, that was my first album for CBS. And it was the first time they let me do it the way I wanted to do it. When I got through with the album, I turned it in, and I said "This is it: Put it out." And it was a little bit different, I think, from what they expected. They expected a big production, you know, and it wasn't that at all. It was the very opposite from a big production. I'm sure that to a lot of those guys it sounded like a demo session, so they didn't take it very seriously. Fortunately, they went ahead and put it out and promoted it, and it did okay.

CM: Wasn't that a big gamble?

Willie: It probably was, but I didn't have anything to lose anyway. It was my first chance to do something and to show CBS that I could do something in the studio, and I believed in it that much. I believed in the song "Red Headed Stranger," and I believed in the story, and also I thought that what I had put together made sense. I believed in it a lot. I believed that if CBS got behind it and promoted it, it would sell. I knew that if it did, the next one would be easier and the next one would



We just had to show up with our long hair and our beards, and all of a sudden, 'There's another outlaw!' And that's great.

be easier still. But I knew this one was going to be difficult to get through because it was simple, it was not anything that CBS was expecting. I can understand why they were kind of taken aback when the tape came in and it sounded like a demo session, but fortunately, they went ahead and got behind it and it all worked out.

CM: They didn't want to say "Oh, c'mon, Willie, let's put some strings on this"?

Willie: Well, they may have wanted to say that, but they never did say that to me because they knew how I felt about it and they knew that when I handed it in, that was the way I wanted it. So no, they didn't try to influence me in any way. Whether they agreed or disagreed, they were either gonna prove me right or wrong—and either way, you know, they couldn't lose.

CM: The will to take the risk at that time has to be part of what looms in your "rebel" and "outlaw" legend. Do you feel much like an outlaw now?

Willie: As much as I ever did. Yeah, you know, it's still difficult to do things the way you want to do them. There's always somebody out there tryin' to get you to do it the way they want you to do it. Which is okay. It's normal, and I know how to live with that, but I still feel that the problems are there today as much as they ever were.

CM: The *Wanted: The Outlaws* album sort of hung a name on you. Did you care for that name at all?

Willie: Oh, I didn't mind it. Up till then, they wasn't hanging anything on me. So at least they were talking about me, and they were talking about Waylon and Kris and Tompall and all those and calling us "outlaws," and that was great. At least we had a side to fight on then, and there was a team developing—whereas up until then it was just a lot of different guys out there trying to do things separately. Once we got together and started trying to do them, then we were "outlaws." They put a label on us, and we were more effective.

CM: That wasn't just a marketing term?

Willie: I think it started out to be a marketing term, but it wound up to be a very good tool for us to use. I mean, we didn't have to say the word "outlaw"—we just had to show up with our long hair and our beards, and all of a sudden, "There's another outlaw!" And that's great. At least we got some recognition and some attention.

CM: When you got back to Texas, you were looking around and seeing long-hairs in your redneck crowds and red-necks in your longhair crowds. Where did you start putting two and two together?

Willie: Oh, places like Big G's in Round-rock, Texas, which was probably one of the strongest cowboy-redneck strongholds in the world. When I saw young cowboys coming in there with their hair down to their shoulders, I knew that things were changing and that here were some more rebels or some more outlaws—if you want to call it that—that were venturing out there doing what they wanted to do, taking a chance on being ridiculed or causing some trouble or whatever. But it was just some people that believed in freedom and that weren't afraid to live their own lives and do what they wanted to. And I saw this type of movement and I naturally wanted to be a part of it because I could relate to it very well.

CM: So it wasn't just you saying "I think I can sell this." It was reinforcing your own. . .

Willie: Absolutely, yeah. I knew that I was not alone, that there were other people out there that had the same problems in different areas and under different circumstances. Basically, the same things that I was running into in the music business, they were running into in school, in college and in their daily lives.

CM: Those pop ballads and concept records that you've done—"Always On My Mind," *Stardust*, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"—they seem so far away from the mystical cowboy thing that *Red Headed Stranger* was. . .

Willie: Well, they don't to me. I see all

those things related pretty well. The *Stardust* album to me was just as much an outlaw movement as *Red Headed Stranger* because here were a group of pop standards being recorded by a country outlaw, and it's kinda hard to understand how that could be successful. But on the other hand, in my mind I knew that those were ten of the best songs I've ever heard in my life, and I couldn't imagine anyone with any ear for music at all that couldn't hear those songs as being incredible songs. The young people that I was seeing scattered out in the audience, who were listening to music and listening to what I was saying—they liked "Funny How Time Slips Away" and they liked "Nightlife." Those songs had some chords in them, and they were fairly progressive, so why wouldn't those same people like "Stardust," and why wouldn't they like "Georgia?" This is what I was thinking about. I knew they would. I knew that if they thought *my* songs were good, wait till they hear some of Hoagy Carmichael's songs, or wait till they hear some Johnny Mercer, or wait till they hear some Irving Berlin! If they think I can write songs, wait till they hear *these* guys write.

CM: You've sort of taken all the Hoagy Carmichaels and the hard-country cats and the Django Reinhardt guitar people, and you've really melded a lot of things into your own stuff, made it your own. You take left field and reinvent it, and it's right there where everybody wants it once it comes out.

Willie: Well, I don't believe that I'm that much different from anyone else. I don't think that my musical likes and dislikes, musical tastes, are that much different from the normal guy walking down the street—whether he's white, black or striped. I think our basic emotions are the same, and I believe that he will like a lot of the things that I like, so I figure that all I have to do is record what I like.

CM: Works pretty well.

Willie: So far.

CM: You got real sick a couple of years ago. Your lung collapsed on you. You hadn't really been doing a whole lot of songwriting for four or five years immediately before that. Did that really change your perspective? When you came out, man, you went into the studio. You couldn't tour, but you just really went to work.

Willie: Well, I had all that energy and I wasn't touring. When I got sick, I cancelled a whole slew of dates, and I was only sick for a couple of weeks, and there I had six months of dates cancelled. I'm a pretty active guy. I can't just sit around. So I did a lot of writing and I did a lot of studio work, just to keep busy and keep moving. And during that time I did a lot of things. I did an album with Roger Miller, did one with Webb Pierce, did one with Merle Haggard, did one with

I knew a long time ago that I wasn't in this for the money because I did it for so long without money...that I do what I do because I enjoy doing it.

Waylon, and did a couple of my own.

CM: Your accident. When you were out there in the surf and your whole side collapsed and it looked like you might drown, did your life flash before your eyes?

Willie: No. (laughs) I pretty well knew what had happened and I don't know why—I just felt like my lung had collapsed—and I was close enough to the shore where I knew I wasn't going to drown, and my two kids were there with me, so I wasn't really worried about dying. I was hurting like hell and anxious—*very* anxious—to get out of that water and get to the beach and lay down, which I did. I laid there for about thirty minutes before I could get up and get enough breath together to walk back to the motel room, and then the paramedics came and took me to the hospital. But no, I wasn't worried about dying really.

CM: About a month after that, when you were pretty well out of danger, Lee Clayton came into a party with a big bag of "Maui Wau" saying "You gotta try this, it's the same shit that collapsed Willie's lung" (laughter).

Willie: You know, I smoked about three or four packs of cigarettes a day—regular cigarettes—for 25 years, which I know weakened my lungs a lot. But I quit smoking those cigarettes, and I didn't smoke a lot more weed, because smoking is just alot of picking something up and putting it in your mouth anyway. In the end I decided to double up on the weed and cut down on the cigarettes. I figured it'd be healthier for me. And in the long run it probably is, 'cause I know those other cigarettes will kill you.

CM: Maybe having the energy and having nothing to do is why you got real creative again?

Willie: I think so. I think that's exactly what happened—plus I wasn't smoking nothing. For several weeks there, I didn't take a hit of nothin'. So I had a lot of energy there that I wasn't used to, and my mind was clear, and I was lying there saying "Well, now what are you gonna do for the next six months?" So I started writing and I started getting very active in thinking about writing and studio work, and I got a lot done in that period of time that I would normally have not gotten done. So all in all, it was a very successful sickness that I came up with.

CM: Are you still on that hot streak, writing a lot?

Willie: Well, no. I've settled back to not writing much again, which is okay 'cause I got a lot out of my system on *Tougher Than Leather* and I quit going around telling myself I'd never write again. At least *that* thought is out of my mind. At least I know I will write whenever there's a reason to do it or time to do it.

CM: What makes you want to write now? Anything?

Willie: No. I haven't got any burning desires to write today (laughs).

CM: Do you have *any* burning desires? You know, you're lauded all over, and you're at the pinnacle of your career. Is there anything left to challenge you?

Willie: Well I'm sure there is. I couldn't put a name on it right now. I mainly want to keep doing what I know how to do, keep working those tours and making records. I know eventually the records won't sell as well as they're selling now and the tours won't draw as many people as they're drawing now, but right now we're doing real good and I'm enjoying it all and I'm just going to ride it as long as it lasts.

CM: So there's no thoughts of saying "Well, I've had quite enough of this" and rockin' back and going to live in the Rockies somewhere?

Willie: I can't do that. I'll take off for a while, but then I'm ready to go back to work again. I knew a long time ago that I wasn't in this for the money because I did it so long *without* money. I know that I do what I do because I enjoy doing it.

CM: So that song "On The Road Again" is real true.

Willie: Yeah. It's very much true.

CM: Were your folks musical?

Willie: Yeah, my parents and grandparents were all musical. My grandparents taught me a lot about music, music theory, chords and rhythms and what have you. They used to sing gospel along with the Stamps Quartet and the Stamps Baxter Quartet and all those old books, all those old songs. I used to sing out of those books, too, and we used to get together and sing gospel songs a lot. I enjoyed that.

CM: There's a lot of country stories about "Boy, if my folks ever caught me slippin' off to that honky tonk. . ." I guess if you were nine years old when you got into your first band, your folks must have encouraged you?

Willie: Well, my grandmother was not too happy about me playin' around those beer joints, you know. But on the other hand, she knew I loved to play music, she knew I was gonna play music and that's what I was gonna do, so she didn't try to stop me. She *did* ask me if I wouldn't go on the road until I got grown, you know—so here I am, nine years old, playin' in this Bohemian polka band, and I go six miles down the road to play for this

dance, and she's upset because now I'm goin' on the road. (Laughter) Six miles down the highway is on the road to her.

CM: In Texas, were you influenced by Mexican music?

Willie: I'm sure I must have been, because I was exposed to it all the time. I lived across the street from Mexicans and listened to their radio all the time, so I'm sure I must have been influenced by it. And besides, I really do like Spanish music and Spanish-flavored music.

CM: Which led you naturally to the polka band that you joined. . .

Willie: Well, around that part of the country, around Abbot, there were a lot of Czechoslovakians and a lot of Bohemians, and their music was polkas and waltzes—that's what they loved to dance to, and they would have big dances, wedding dances or anything that come up. Any kind of special occasion, they'd throw a dance, and so there was always a lot of Bohemian dances. If you wanted to play Bohemian dances, there was a lot of work. So I started out playing in this Bohemian dance band, playing a non-amplified rhythm guitar along with a lot of drums and horns—so it was several years before anybody found out that I wasn't really that great a rhythm player.

CM: After that, you went on to work with your brother-in-law, didn't you?

Willie: Well, my brother-in-law was a guy named Bud Fletcher, and he had married my sister when she was still a junior in high school, and we formed a little band. He would book us into clubs, schoolhouses and what have you around Central Texas—in fact, all over Texas.

CM: I understand that you played a lot of tough little clubs. It must have been kind of rough for a kid that young.

Willie: Well, I saw a lot of fights. There was usually always somebody gettin' drunk and starting a fight or throwing a beer bottle. But it didn't involve me—I mean, I was a kid, and you know, nobody was fooling with a kid. But you could get in the way and get stepped on a lot. That was about the most dangerous thing that could happen to a kid like me. But there were a lot of rough clubs back then.

CM: Were any of the clubs the kind that have chicken wire and stuff in front of the stage to keep you from getting beer bottles between the eyes?

Willie: That was later on, after I moved out of the area around Abbott, when I moved up north to Fort Worth and started playing in clubs up there. Those were really rough clubs up there, and I was older too, so I was more involved in everything that went on. There was one particular club where not only did you carry a pistol in your guitar case, but the musicians insisted that there would be some chicken wire put up in front of the bandstand so that we could play our music without having to worry about people out there throwing beer bottles at



The flashpoint: Willie with Tex Ritter, Dripping Springs, 1972.

each other and hitting us.

CM: Hank Williams, when he changed band members, used to take them down to the pawn shop and let them pick out their own blackjack when they were gonna go play Texas.

Willie: (laughs) Yeah.

CM: You didn't really come up the easy way then, did you?

Willie: No, I can't remember anything being easy. It was all pretty tough back then.

CM: You got sued last year, I think, for playing a three-hour set at a State fair. Did people there complain about you playing a long set?

Willie: The people never complain. Occasionally, one of the promoters might complain. Sometimes, working those fair dates, if there's a complaint, it normally comes from out on the midway somewhere where the guy who's running the ferris wheel or whatever would like for the show to let out so he can get some of the people through there. Casinos in Vegas and different places normally want you to do a short show so that the people can get out there and start losing their money quicker. But the people themselves never complain. They'll appreciate it if you give them a nice show.

CM: Your new album, *Tougher Than Leather*—doesn't that sort of take off from *Red Headed Stranger* and get even more mystical?

Willie: I guess you could say that. It deals more directly with reincarnation and that theory.

CM: Where did you get reincarnation as an idea?

Willie: I grew up in church. I grew up in the Methodist Church, and switched over to the Baptist Church when I was a teenager, and then I started lookin' around at other religions of the world. I came

across all the reincarnation religions and started comparing them with the religions that I had been involved in, and found out that they were the same. There was really no difference—basically, they all followed the golden rule "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and "You reap what you sow." Those were the main bottom-line ideas of all religions that I ever got involved with. I really felt like I could relate more to the ones who outwardly believed in reincarnation; I really saw that that was a more just belief. To say that we're all born equal and live one time and die just didn't show the merciful Creator—to me it showed a very unmerciful Creator. To look around and say "Well, let's let this million or so be goin' blind over here, and we'll let this million or so people be born in a depressed area, and then we'll let these nice folks over here be born to rich parents"—I saw a lot of inequality going on there, and I didn't believe that that was the way that the great Creator intended for it to be, and the only other thing that made sense was reincarnation.

CM: You're in a good incarnation now. Steve Young is into this, and he believes that he was a Confederate officer who got killed. Do you have any beliefs about where you may have been before?

Willie: Oh, my imagination, you know—if I want to let it run away, I can imagine all kinds of things, and very possibly they're all true, but mainly I'm concerned about what I'm doing this time more than I am about what I did last time or what I'm going to be doing next time. I think all those things take care of themselves, and since there's no way to know for sure, then I don't worry about it. But I do know what I am doing this time, and where I am this time, and to me that's more important. ■



MEET...

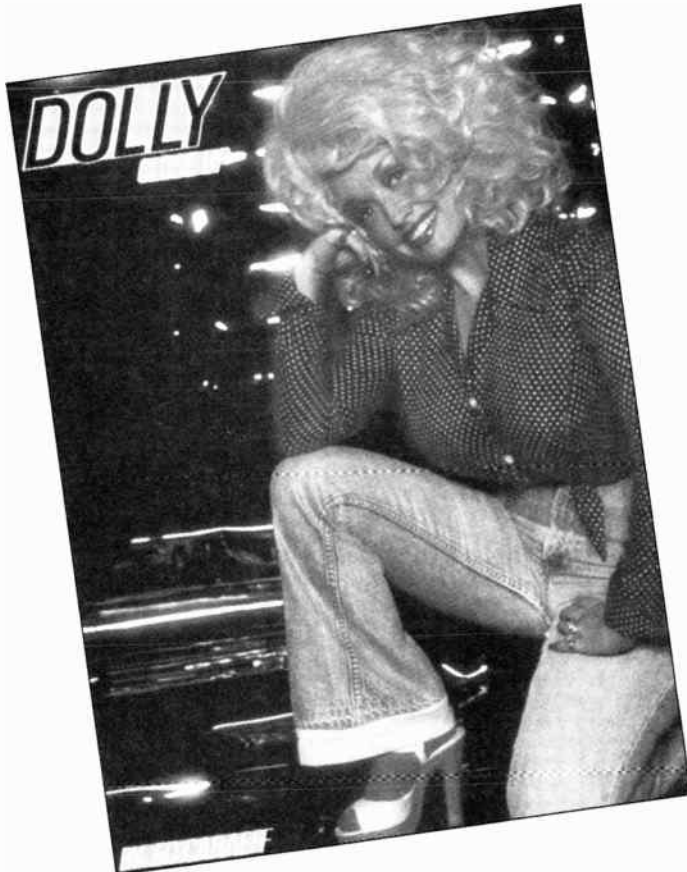
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Jerry Lee Lewis

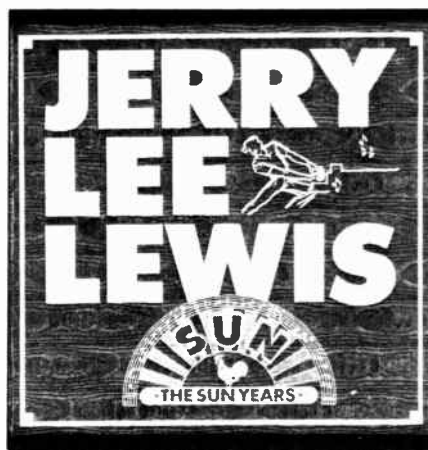
The Greatest Rocker of Them All

by Peter Guralnick

Save your money. If you buy one record this year—or if you only have the money to buy twelve—pick up *Jerry Lee Lewis: The Sun Years*, the twelve-record boxed set on the English Charly label (it goes for \$95). I know that we are so used to the extravagant claims made for popular culture that it's impossible for superlatives to impress, let alone retain credibility, but here is one of the few essential records in the history of rock and roll. Along with Elvis Presley's Sun sessions, Little Richard's Specialty sides, and Chuck Berry's *Golden Decade* series on Chess, this set compels historical respect; it rises above these other classics, though, not only as a coherent portrait of the artist as a young man but as a complete portrait of the art in its infancy. There is no single record or collection that can tell you more about the origins, or the potential, of rock and roll.

If you find superlatives disturbing, this is the place to stop.

Jerry Lee Lewis is the greatest rocker of them all. That's easy enough to say, and I suppose if you're a Jerry Lee Lewis fan (his fans take on many of the characteristics, and much of the bonhomie, of their hero, who has gone on record as allowing: "There have only been four stylists. The first was Al Jolson, the second was Jimmie Rodgers, the third was Hank Williams, and the fourth was Jerry Lee Lewis"), you'll say, "So what else is new?" What's new is this set. When I first hefted this thick blue box, felt its weight, examined its 36-page booklet, I must confess my reaction ran along ho-



**Here is one of the
few essential records
in the history of
rock and roll.**

hum rock-scholarly lines. It'll be interesting, I thought in my semi-jaded way, to trace the derivation of some of the songs, to hear variants of "Breathless," "Great Balls of Fire," and "High School Confidential," plus a raft of lesser tunes I would be hearing for the first time. I've been through this before, I thought, because this is, of course, the age of the instant (and multiple) replay. It is not healthy always to be looking back.

Little did I know. When I actually listened to the records, I discovered that, far from putting Jerry Lee Lewis in a

false perspective by exposing his every flaw and fault—by sacrificing the editing process to the omnivorous god of completeness—this set could only enlarge the extravagantly high regard in which I already held Jerry Lee. *The Sun Years* brought home to me how much of the fantasy that has been woven around Jerry Lee Lewis was actually true.

No other rocker could stand up to such sustained scrutiny. No other rocker could work so many variations on so apparently limited a stylistic base. With Elvis and Little Richard it was a matter of intensification; with Chuck Berry it is more a matter of a clear reading of the text. With Jerry Lee Lewis, though, every take is an all-out effort; every approach brings with it its own delights and surprises; time and again, the performer goes out on a limb, vocally and instrumentally, with only the rollicking boogie-woogie-piano underpinning to bring him back—and always with a feel that differs from moment to moment, take to take, song to song.

The *Sun Years* is, indeed, a monumental undertaking. There are approximately 150 separate titles (of which only 65 were issued on the original label during the years 1956-'63, when Lewis recorded for Sun), plus 60 alternate takes, for 209 cuts in all. There is studio conversation that ranges from eloquent expressions of theological doubt (the whole history of rock and roll is summed up in the discussion with Sun owner/producer Sam Phillips that pre-

cedes the cutting of the presumably blasphemous "Great Balls of Fire") to more mundane enthusiasm over the prospect of certain X-rated activity. There is material that covers a similar breadth of territory, from instrumental versions of "Dixie" and "The Marines Hymn" to blues, gospel, R&B, and rock and roll standards. There is an illustrated booklet that extensively documents Lewis's career. There is a brilliant and witty musicological analysis, by Hank Davis, Colin Escott, and Martin Hawkins, of every track on the album. The sound is admirable, the programming is imaginative; in short, it's an ideal package that could only point up hitherto unsuspected weaknesses in a lesser performer.

Jerry Lee Lewis alone could welcome this kind of exposure. It was Lewis, after all, who contrasted his life with Elvis's and declared over and over again, "Elvis has kept himself pretty isolated. Too much, if you ask me. Me, I'm going to do just what I damn please." It is Jerry Lee Lewis who, time after time, on record and in performance, has taken on the masters—Elvis, Carl Perkins, Fats Domino, Chuck Berry—and beaten them at their own game. And it is Jerry Lee Lewis who has worn his entertainer's heart on his sleeve for 25 years, shared every doubt and joy and trauma with his audience, employed every happenstance to the advantage of his art (when he was hoarse, "Hang Up My Rock 'n' Roll Shoes" took on even greater urgency). If, as in later years, his voice coarsened and diminished in range, he used that, too, to portray pathos and a darkening palette of emotion, with songs like "Who's Gonna Play This Old Piano" and "Middle Age Crazy." Throughout it all, he has maintained his aplomb; throughout it all, he has maintained the self-belief that ori-

ginally propelled him into the recording studio, and onto the world stage, without a doubt that he had something to say.

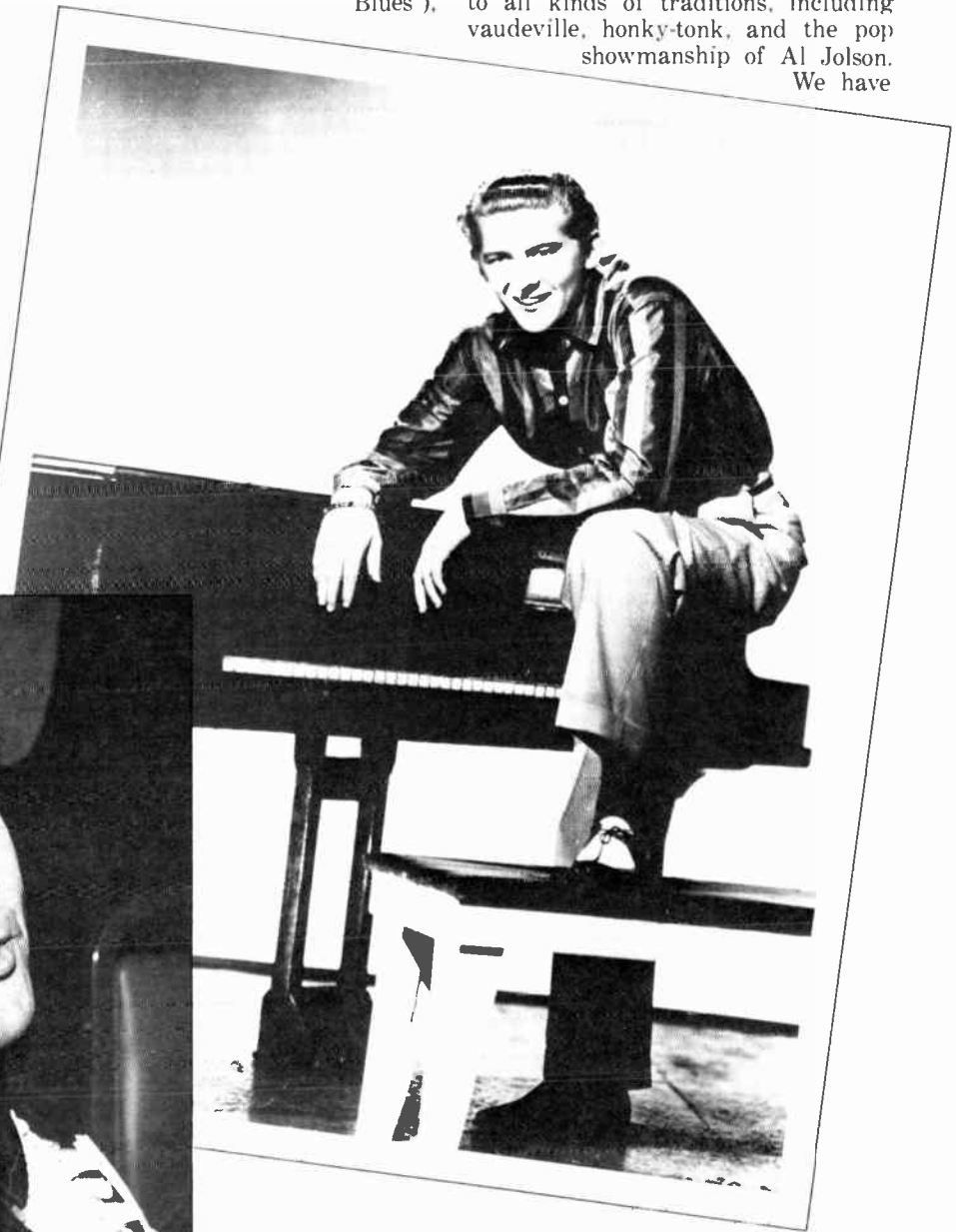
Imagine the young Jerry Lee Lewis, 22 or 23, a veteran of the Natchez and Ferriday, Louisiana, honky-tonks but otherwise as benighted and free of worldly influence as anyone to whom Memphis is still the big city. He enters the studio from which Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, and Johnny Cash have already emerged as stars and, far from being overawed by the company, puts on the kind of bravura performance that makes the others sit up and take notice (let the records show). There is nothing that he is not anxious to take on. His first song, "End of the Road," is a self-composed masterpiece, one of the handful of originals that he contributed in his career. His first sessions include legitimate country ("Crazy Arms"), pop ("You're the Only Star in My Blue Heaven"), blues ("Deep Elem Blues"),

and gospel ("Will the Circle Be Unbroken") classics. And this is before he even got to rock and roll, with his recording of "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" in February of 1957. Among his strongest performances—even without the leavening of age and experience—are his heartfelt interpretations of the deepest and most abiding of country lyrics, including definitive versions of many of Hank Williams's greatest songs (no one has ever improved upon Jerry Lee's interpretations of Williams).

In fact, what we learn as we listen to the set is that none of our preconceptions about the artist or his art are altogether true. We think of Jerry Lee Lewis as an unregenerate rocker, and yet half the material on these albums is unabashedly country, or rural in origin. We take rock and roll as an upstart music that thumbed its nose at tradition, and yet we find here the most good-hearted, ingenuous tributes to all kinds of traditions, including vaudeville, honky-tonk, and the pop showmanship of Al Jolson. We have



RAIPH DOMANQUEZ





EMERSON/ICSW

come to view Jerry Lee Lewis (largely through the literature about him) not just as the Peck's bad boy of rock but as demonically possessed. And yet what we find here is a young man possessed by *music*, enthralled by it, consumed by it, in the most unrestrained, openhearted, and enthusiastic of ways. This is a kid in love with the possibilities of art, eager for the world, wrapped up in himself. Which doesn't mean that every song is a triumph or even a wise choice. By the time we get to the twelfth record—recorded after his inexorable fall from grace—there is a certain edge to the proceedings, a sadder-but-wiser tinge perhaps, but never a diminution of enthusiasm, never a drying-up of that phenomenal creativity that seemed to spring full-blown from the Ferriday dirt. On the last record alone (sessions from summer of 1962 to summer of 1963, his final days at Sun), "Good Rocking Tonight," "Be Bop a Lula,"

"How's My Ex Treating You," "Good Golly Miss Molly," "Seasons of My Heart," and "Teenage Letter" can all take their place amid my selection of Jerry Lee's Greatest Hits.

"Let's cut it," we hear the impatient Jerry Lee declare over and over again. "Are y'all ready to cut it? Here we go!" Words, technology, other musicians are all irrelevant as Jerry Lee Lewis storms through song after song, undeterred if he should forget the lyrics, since he can improvise ones just as good ("Everyone is rocking, everything is shocking," he declares aptly in one variant of "High School Confidential"); ready to rely upon voice and piano alone and rock just as hard as an entire band, as he proves convincingly with one whole side of solo rocking. He is the true naif, the consummate artist, unconcerned with whatever storm happens to be breaking around his head.

What all this tells us, I think, is something that we've known all along, and something that applies not simply to folk or popular art, but to more carefully considered art as well: that it is not the notes but the spirit that predominates, that the artistic achievement is something that can be neither quantified nor explained. What is it that you hear in the notes themselves? If someone copies Jerry Lee Lewis, or Elvis, or Carl Perkins, note for note (and it has been done), the result is not even close, or perhaps it is more accurate to say the result is sometimes close enough to confuse but never to inspire. What is lacking is the intangible, the unmeasurable, the individual voice. Which is precisely what is always present in Jerry Lee Lewis' music: the strident individuation, the unquestioning self-belief, the sense that it could never be anything or anyone else. Sometimes you can still hear it even today. There is a moment on one of his recent Elektra albums (which, for the most part, are sadly lackluster, with the patented glissando substituting for coherent inspiration), when Jerry Lee takes on Charlie Rich's "Who Will the Next Fool Be?" Toward the end of the song, he gives up singing altogether, improbably *whistling* a chorus, then apostrophizes, as if brought back to himself, "Can't you imagine a cat with khaki pants on, walking down the street and whistling that?" Well, the thing is, we actually can. At that moment we can picture the cat in khaki pants, we can envision the whole scenario, and *that*, I believe, is Jerry Lee's art, as much as it was for him to suggest, "Wiggle it around just a little bit, that's when you got something" in "Whole Lotta Shakin'" or to gurgle with knowing sexuality for that memorable moment in "Mean Woman Blues."

More and more, there is the need to freeze what we know in words or in pictures, to document our past, as if there were something precious and unrecoverable in what has gone before and not in what is yet to come. This is not what *Jerry Lee Lewis: The Sun Years* is about. Jerry Lee Lewis's music is alive; it leaps out of the groove; it urges us on to thought and action in the way that the best literature, the best film, the best music is meant to do. Don't approach this music in even a remotely scholarly mood. Don't listen to it with a sense of obligation. Jump in anywhere, dabble freely in its splash of colors and hues, and take away from it the sense of living, breathing, noble-spirited presence: Jerry Lee Lewis, in his own words, "a rompin', stompin', piano-playin' son of a bitch" who will *never* hang up his rock 'n' roll shoes. ■

For information on how to get a copy of Jerry Lee Lewis: The Sun Years see Buried Treasures on page 63 of this issue.

Waylon Jennings and Jerry Reed

A Match Made in Nashville

by Bob Allen

Without a doubt, 1982 and 1983 should go down in the country music record books as the years of the duets; there's been Merle and George, Willie and Merle, and even a couple of new duet albums from the boys who seem to have started it all, Waylon and Willie.

And now comes yet another country tag-team; Waylon Jennings, the former spiritual leader of country music's ill-fated "outlaw" movement, and Jerry Reed, guitar-picking wild-man and alumnus of the Burt Reynolds school of light-weight cinematic action comedy.

In recent weeks, these two have been spending time together in the studio, and have emerged with a number of high energy tracks, including their recently released duet single, "Hold On, I'm Coming," a song which was originally popularized by soul singers Sam & Dave back in the 1960s.

The two veteran RCA artists have also embarked on a 27-city tour together, which is sponsored by Maxwell House. The tour is particularly unusual in that Maxwell House has agreed to donate up to ten thousand dollars to a designated charity in each of the 27 cities. (At their August 13th show in Huntsville, Alabama, for instance, part of the proceeds went to the Downtown Rescue Mission).

Although this is Waylon's and Reed's first time touring together, their friendship, as Jennings explains, goes back nearly two decades, to the first time they worked in the studio together. "It was around the time I first came to Nashville," he recalls, "Chet Atkins, who produced my early sessions for RCA, brought Jerry in to play guitar on them. And I could tell right away that Jerry genuinely liked what I was doing, which made me feel good, and helped me relax.

"When the idea for this (Maxwell House) tour first came up, they came to me with the names of some other artists," Waylon continues, "but I asked for Jerry, because there just wasn't anyone else that I felt as comfortable with as him."

In recent months, both Jennings and Reed have also breathed new fire into their solo recording careers. After a long

dry spell, Jennings was recently back on the charts with a number one single, "Lucille (You Won't Do Your Daddy's Will)." Reed, for his part, recently bounced back with two chart-topping singles, "She Got The Goldmine, And I Got The Shaft," and "The Bird."

Reed, who's appeared in *W.W. & The Dixie Dance Kings*, *Gator*, *Smokey & The Bandit*, parts *I & II*, and who has a major role in the recently released Walter Matthau-Robin Williams comedy *The Survivors*, was nearly beside himself with enthusiasm when presented with the idea of recording and touring with his old friend Waylon; "I remember when they first came and asked me about it, I just smiled and said, 'Well, son, what do you mean would I like to record with Waylon? I'd love to!' And the next thing I know, we were sitting in the studio, and it was just like it was back in the old days, back when I was playing guitar on his sessions: We were just boogeyin' and having a lot of fun."

Behind their equally misleading public images and beneath their deceptive good old boy exteriors, Jennings and Reed are united by yet another common bond; their sense of musical perfectionism.

"I remember when Jerry played as a session guitarist on (the 1966 cut) 'Stop The World (And Let Me Off),' one of the first songs I recorded in Nashville," Waylon laughs. "I was playing lead and he

was filling in around me with his guitar. He was using a thumb pick, and I was using a straight pick, and I could get in one more lick than he could. I remember Chet (Atkins, the veteran RCA producer who launched both these men's careers) was over there, laughin', because Jerry was trying so hard to get that extra lick in and make it perfect, that he was breaking into a sweat!"

Waylon, in the meantime, also has another project of his own in the works—one that ties in, to some extent, with his new association with Reed. He's planning an album called *Waylon & Company*, which—if all goes according to plan—will feature appearances by a host of his illustrious musical sidekicks, including his wife Jessi Colter, Willie Nelson, film star James Garner, and of course Reed.

"The real reason I like working so much with Jerry," Waylon explains, "besides the fact that he's crazier than a bedbug and a whole lot of fun to be around, is that we seem to spark off of each other, in the studio or on the stage, and bring out the best in each other. There's never any sense of competition either. In fact, without ever saying a word, Jerry has a way of encouraging me to go on and play my best.

"What it all boils down to is that we just work well together, and there's nobody else that I'd rather be on stage with than ole Jerry." ■



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Record Reviews

Willie Nelson

Tougher Than Leather
Columbia QC 38248

Willie Nelson & Waylon Jennings

Take It To The Limit
Columbia FC 38562

Willie Nelson & Merle Haggard

Pancho & Lefty
Columbia FE 37958

You have to understand, your Nashville record producer approaches ideal beauty rather in the manner of a Mexican busdriver. Confronting a piece of product and finding it lacking in those qualities of groove, story and grace which would qualify it as an "effing go-rilla," he has a single instinctive solution: *Add*

something. Where your Mexican bus-driver, finding his bus inelegant, might add a couple of *santos*, some fuzzy dice, linoleum mud-flaps or drapes, your Nashville cat will add strings, voices, dobro, synthesizer, harmonica, or all of the above—which is really amazing, since to my knowledge this accessorizing procedure has never succeeded in doing anything but inflating the budget. But then some rocket-scientist at Columbia-Epic came up with the ultimate accessory. Lame product? "What's-it-the-tune-to" songs? Jaded musicians? Plummeting sales? It's all so simple: *Add Willie!* Willie? *Right!* *Willie Nelson!* Oh yeah. It just might work.

Thus did our favorite outlaw-cum-movie-queen become the most important secret ingredient since lanolin (no more bulky string sessions; no more hippies with electronics de-greases; just a little touch of

Willie in the night) and so it is that the initial adventures of Waymore and Willard on the *Outlaws* album have spawned a virtual festival of male bonding—a kind of hillbilly "buddy system." Only the feckless or foolish venture into the pool alone these days. And what with Ray Price and Roger Miller and George Jones and Waylon and Merle and Patty Hearst (for all I know), ol' Barbarossa's dance-card has stayed pretty full.

The results, I hasten to add, haven't been all that disappointing. With Chips Moman and an elite corps of session musicians providing the nucleus, these records have not been nearly as heartless as their opportunism might lead you to expect. Yet, somehow, all of them amount to less than the sum of the talent involved in their production, and sometimes even Willie himself, who used to wear so well, wears a little thin. The two most recent "dynamic duo" productions demonstrate both the faults and virtues of the genre.

Willie & Merle's *Pancho and Lefty* and Willie & Waylon's *Take It To the Limit*, each have some fine moments, and both of them would probably be good records for a record buyer on a budget to own. When the material demands it, the arrangements have some zip; when it doesn't, of course, they enter that twilight zone between laid back and narcolepsy where only Willie seems to flourish. But the most disappointing aspect of the records is also the quality which recommends them to the budget buyer. All of the really top-of-the-line material on these records will be familiar to the most casual enthusiast of American songwriting. The entire Willie & . . . series, in



fact, is kind of a K-Tel "Underground Hits of the Seventies." They're collections of songs the artists couldn't or wouldn't record when they were new. The title track of *Pancho and Lefty* is a superb version of Townes Van Zandt's great narrative of friendship and betrayal, and then there are Larry Williams' "All the Soft Places to Fall," Stuart Hamblin's "My Mary," and Willie's own "Opportunity to Cry."

Willie and Waylon's *Take it to the Limit* is even more of a hope chest, featuring David Allan Coe's "Would You Lay with Me," Rodney Crowell's "Till I Gain Control Again," Red Lane's "Blackjack Country Chain" (which Waylon used to do live every so often), George Jones' "Why, Baby, Why" and the Troy Seals-Donny Fritts jewel "We Had It All," which Waylon has recorded before although not nearly so successfully. These Nashville favorites are further enhanced by W-W versions of Paul Simon's "Homeward Bound" and the Eagles' great waltz, "Take it to the Limit."

This all does make you wonder, though, where the great songs of the Eighties are. If Willie or Waylon or Merle don't record them, I don't know who will. It might be, of course, that there *aren't* any great songs out there, but I think it's more likely that these singers' ever-increasing fame has



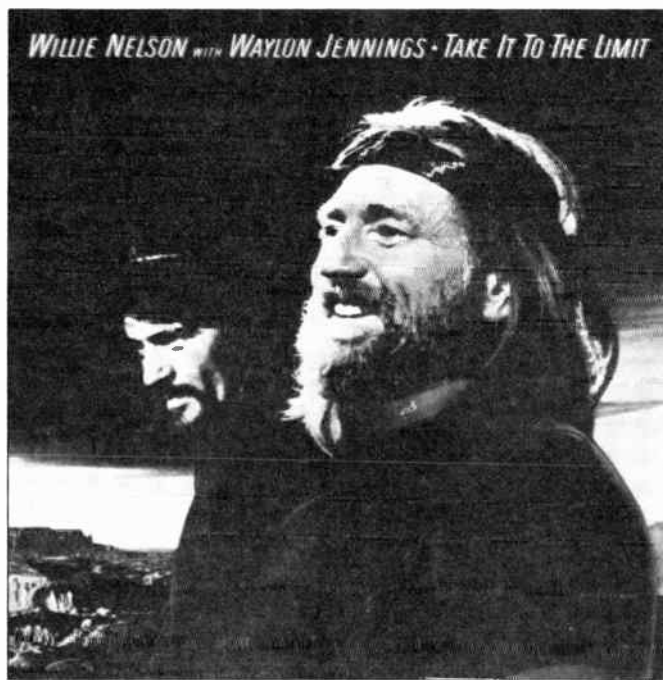
Record Reviews

gradually isolated them from the people who are writing them, while also denying them the privacy to write their own.

The most obvious thing you notice about these duet records, however, is just how theatrical and mannered country singing has become as its setting has become more and more homogeneous. Basically, all Nashville records contain the same music, played by the same musicians, to the point where a record is only distinguished by the eccentricities of the artists' vocal styles. This has never been more obvious than on *Pancho and Lefty*. Over the years, Willie and Merle have developed vocal styles so mannered and unique that they literally can't sing together. They both phrase and slide off the note in ways which would intimidate Anita O'Day, but *never* in the same ways. So as good as the individual singing is, the blend is even less successful than that of Barbra Streisand and Barry Gibb, hitherto the least accommodating duo on wax. So disparate are Merle's and Willie's styles that you can't help feeling like you're listening to two records simultaneously. It doesn't take long to realize that this isn't just a superficial mis-match of timbre: It finally comes down to the fact that Willie and Merle create completely different emotional universes with their singing. The results are disconcerting to say the least.

Willie and Waylon fit a little bit better, but this is less because of an emotional affinity than because Waylon, who sounds like he hasn't slept since '79, seems content to occupy a supporting role, taking an occasional verse and providing harmonies on the choruses.

Willie's latest individual effort is another animal altogether. Recorded in Texas with his own band (plus Johnny Gimble—a big plus), *Tougher Than Leather* is a "concept album," or, more accurately, an "aural movie" after the fashion of *The Red Headed Stranger*, dealing with Fate, Justice,



Karma, Guilt and Revenge in a manner somewhere between John Ford and Louis L'Amour. Whether you like it or not pretty much depends on which Willie Nelson you like. If you like the Passive-Aggressive-Movie-Star-Folk-Hero-Guru Willie Nelson, this is just your stuff. If you are like me, however, and you like the man

whose songs had the simplicity of epitaphs carved in stone and the intensity of dirt-poor, zero-option pain and loss, then you'll probably be disappointed—a little let down. The songs *are* simple, but the newer ones have the simplicity of haste and carelessness. Only "Summer of Roses" and "The Convict and the Rose" songs

which predate both the Outlaw and Movie Star segments of Willie's career, have that old lapidary intensity which I discovered on *The Willie Way*. Too many of the others feature that all-too-familiar Austin Waltztime Melody "A", drifting once more into that area where relaxation approaches coma.

Of course, nobody would ever wish a man whose life has been as troubled as Nelson's back into the gulf of despair, just for a couple of songs, and Willie is damn sure deserving of his success and serenity; I just kinda wish he would toughen up his music, rather than his facade. Being "tougher than leather" has its advantages, of course, but not for songwriters. They have to really *feel* something sometimes, to make *us* feel rather than just admire.

There's a pretty good chance that Willie knows this, since it is one of the themes of the album. It must be depressing to realize that the success which provides a refuge from pain attenuates all the other emotions as well.

—DAVE HICKEY

Waylon Jennings

It's Only Rock & Roll
RCA AHL1-4673

It's been a while since Waylon Jennings did much to catch my ear—more than a while, to be honest, a good five years at least. He seemed locked into his own increasingly stilted pose, and despite the occasional catchy single, his albums were badly overproduced. So *It's Only Rock & Roll* really came out of the blue. The album has its problems, but for the most part, *this* is the Waylon Jennings who turned country music upside down nearly a decade ago.

I offer as evidence his stirring version of "Lucille (You Don't Do Your Daddy's Will),"

the richly-deserved hit single. This was originally done by Little Richard as a frantic, barrelhouse rocker, but Waylon slows it down and turns it into a sigh of deep, burning pain and resignation. He transforms the song so completely that you might not even



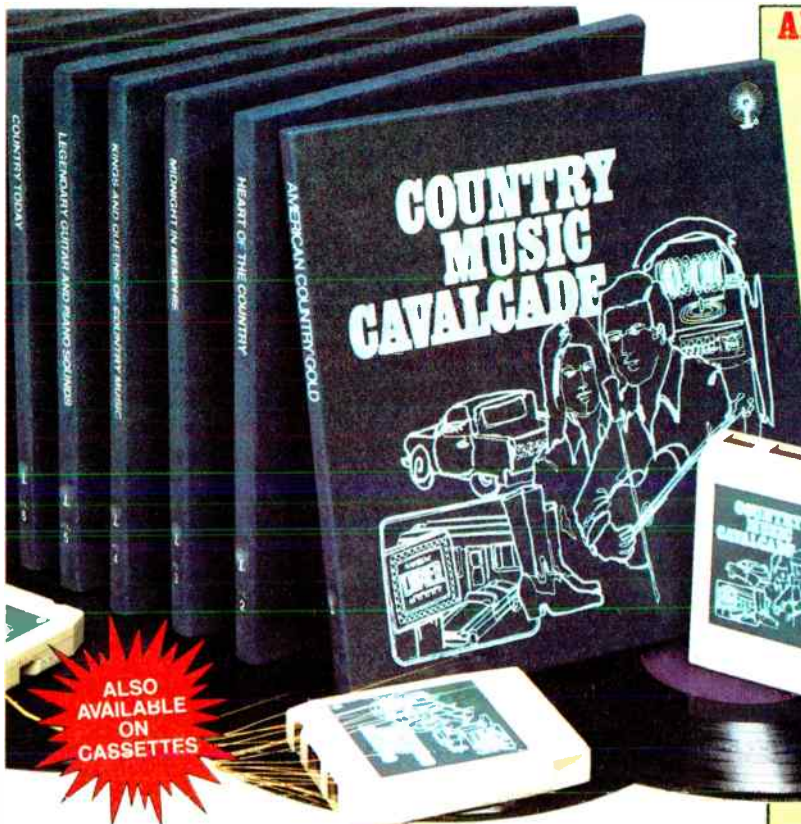
recognize it at first. But that was always the man's strength—he could reshape any song into something all his own.

"Living Legends (A Dyin' Breed)" offers further clues to Waylon's condition. It's a pointed, sardonic talking blues, perhaps a little too presumptuous in places, but basically it's a comment on music business hype, about how the industry elevates the mundane, and about how artists can and can't live up to their reputations. Waylon takes a few jabs at himself along with his other targets, and it's good to see he's not taking himself so damn seriously nowadays.

Waylon's voice is strained and not up to the task in a few places, and songs like "Let Her Do the Walking" and "Love's Legalities" are pretty slight to begin with, and his "Medley of Hits" is wholly superfluous. On the other hand, his remake of "Mental Revenge" is by no means super-

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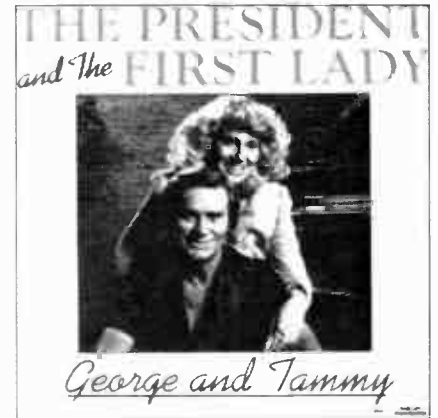
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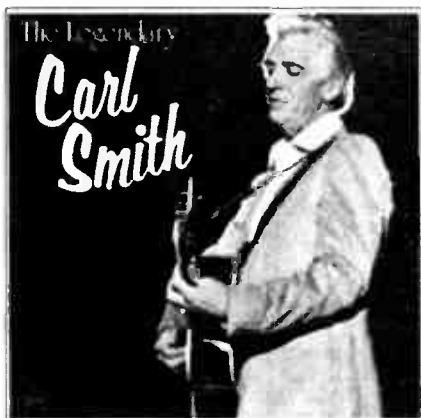
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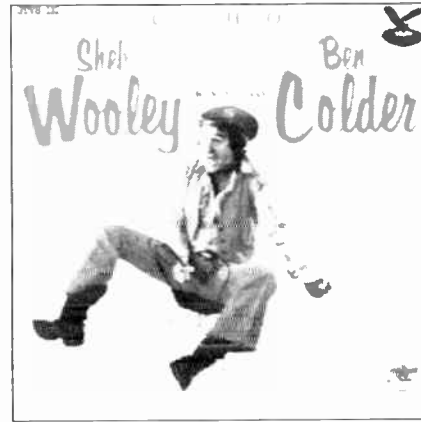
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Record Reviews

fluous. Also on the plus side, the uptempo songs are marked by the rocking rhythm section and rolling electric guitar which always distinguished Waylon's West Texas country, and the ballads are haunting. Hurting songs like "Breakin' Down" and "No Middle Ground" are not over-done this time out. The material makes very few concessions to pop, and Waylon and Randy Scruggs offer a sparse, clean production, eliminating all those strumming acoustic guitars which glommed up the Chips Moman productions.

With so many excesses held in check, *It's Only Rock & Roll* proves to be the most satisfying Waylon album in years. It also leaves me looking forward to the next one. I bet he may even have another *This Time* or *Dreaming My Dreams* in him. —JOHN MORTHLAND

Rank and File

Sundown

Slash 23833

Rubber Rodeo

Rubber Rodeo, She Had To Go

Eat EPs 009 & 014

Beat Rodeo

Beat Rodeo

Coyote EP 002

Jason and the Nashville Scorchers

Fervor

Praxis EP 6654

The notion *Punk rockers invade country music* may suggest: a) Roy Acuff's worst nightmare; b) a *National Enquirer* headline; c) Bobby Bare's latest Shel Silverstein song; or d) all of the above. In truth, however, it's just one of those less-than-sensational, natural musical occurrences. But before you wipe your brow and sigh with relief, a little history is in order.

When punk rock's spikey

little head butted its way into rock and roll in the mid-1970s, it broke up a party that was a little too cozy and smug, all the while reasserting (in theory at least) the solid imperative of making honest, unpretentious music for the people (which, oddly enough, is one of country music's main foundations). The "New Wave" which followed in punk music's wake dredged up and recycled one old musical style after another—rockabilly, R&B, Sixties pop, psychedelia, polka, even disco—so it was inevitable that country would crop up on the new musicians' hit list sooner or later.

The time has come to pass: In Austin, Boston, Hoboken, and even on the streets of Music City, USA, itself, proponents of the new school of musical thinking are applying punk's conceptual switchblade to country. And while they're not out to trash the Opry or give Dolly a Mohican cut (hmmm...), these upstarts might just light a fire under Music Row—something it's missed since the emergence of "outlaws" like Waylon and Willie and renegade country rockers like Gram Parsons.

The Austin, Texas-based band Rank and File, the most visible exponents of the genre, are refugees from outfits such as the Nuns, the Dils, and Sharon Tate's Baby (now, that's *punk*), but their first album, *Sundown*, might be the most courageous, compelling, and challenging country album this year.

At Rank and File's core are Chip and Tony Kinman, two brothers with that Delmore/Louvin/Everly genetic magic. Tony sings with a classic Man In Black baritone and walks tall on bass; Chip's winsome, tender tenor shines solo or in tandem with his brother, and along with guitarist Alejandro Escovedo he plucks hot-wired riffs rich with the bluegrass *brio* and tic-tac funk of the best backwoods rock. Marched along by the snappy, sparse drumming of Texan Slim Evans, Rank and File boil

with the straightforward, out-front commitment of punk, verging sometimes into political commentary—"Coyote" blasts Mexican border "wet-back" smugglers who leave their high-paying "freight" to die in the desert, while "Rank and File" is an industrially uptempo anthem to the working man featuring a curious country-populist/radical-leftist dualism—but even then they quote Ernest Tubbs, not Karl Marx.

Country fans are advised to listen first to *Sundown's* B-side, which displays the roots, ingredients, and proof of the pudding at the very get-go on the title tune, a homage to



Lefty Frizzell and Johnny Cash and "the two-beat sound." Then, after the timelessly airy ballad "Lucky Day" and two speedy, electric hill-country chicken-pickers, one might be tempted towards the band's flipside, hearty bar-band roots rockers like "Amanda Ruth" and "(Glad I'm) Not In Love." Throughout, Rank and File remain country by adhering to the philosophy of "real music for real people" implied by their name. They use time-tested styles cut from the hard country core (no steels, strings, or backup singers here), and their lyrics, direct and sincere, are delivered like they mean it.

Boston's Rubber Rodeo may not mean it quite as seriously—perhaps they are just camping in the country, not really living there—but they do show loving respect and nifty imagination. Those traits become vibrant on their haunting cover version of "Jolene" and their original "How The West Was Won" (key line, "I wonder

how the West was won by men the likes of you!"). This is due for the most part to singer Trish Milliken's *bel canto* tones and "Easy" Mark Tomeo's



laughing, gassified steel guitar. Their instrumentals ("The Theme From Rubber Rodeo," "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds," and "The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly") are wonderfully bizarre, too. When singer Bob Holmes steps up with the synthesizers, however, the band sounds like England's fashionably *moderne* Roxy Music. Currently, they are recording in the U.K., and they will probably follow the Roxy cue to considerable success in rock and pop, not country. Let us hope that while doing so, they also keep throwing their engaging funhouse-mirror vision of country back our way.

In their New York-area gigs, Steve Almaas's Beat Rodeo hit a more country note than was evident on Almaas's previous EP. The four songs on the *Beat Rodeo* EP are Buddy Holly-esque love rockers delivered through a Brit-pop filter, but anytime Almaas decides to apply his considerable song-writing talents and boyishly emotive voice to more country fare, the South should rise and listen.

Last on this list of country punks are Jason and the Nashville Scorchers, and their *Fervor* EP is just what it says it is—a well-stoked musical melee, full of sweat and feeling. Jason Ringenberg's twanging echo of a voice, fluttering with the tones of the late Gram Parsons, is pure country-fed and fattened. The Scorchers prowl and pounce on the rockers, but all this punky ferocity

(Continued on page 54)



Roy Rogers



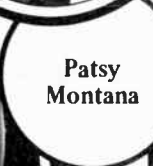
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Record Reviews

follows a fairly standard song structure. And while Jason's song verses are potent neo-Dylan-esque poetry, his refrains are pure Americana. Jason and his Scorcherers may slash and burn, but the songs, stomp, and stamp are nothing but country. Situated as they are on the country establishment's doorstep, this vibrant and visionary act should be embraced and encouraged.

For those still stonewalling the very idea of "country punk," a sentiment from Rank and File's "I Went Walking"—about a stroll down St. Mark's Place, the main street of the punk scene which rejected the band as unhip—might be appropriate. "The line's been drawn," sings Chip Kinman. "It don't mean a thing."

—ROB PATTERSON

Roy Orbison

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Monument Signature Series
KWG2784-38384-1*

I always felt that if there really *was* such a thing as country-politan that worked, there were exactly three people who did it right: Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, and Roy Orbison. To me, Orbison was

always a rockabilly (his first sides were made for Sun in 1956) who never quite fit into his milieu as well as some of his peers. His RCA sides never caught on, either. It was with Monument, under the guidance of producer Fred Foster, that Roy found his own voice.

Foster brought lush production values to Orbison's music: softly chiming vibes, choruses, and swooping string sections. Instead of burying Roy's voice within these elements, Foster used them to frame that exquisite vibrato with a sense of taste and finesse which some of today's slickie producers would do well to emulate.

Everything worth having is here, from the soaring majesty of "Only The Lonely" to the smooth rock of "Uptown" and "Dream Baby." There's the hit version of Willie Nelson's "Pretty Paper," and there's "Workin' For The Man," which anticipated the sound of Creedence Clearwater Revival. There's "Candy Man" with its laconic delivery and stop-time arrangement, and of course there's the muted brilliance of "Blue Bayou."

Since I've heard that Monument is having problems, it's a sad irony that this superb re-issue came when the label was

celebrating its contribution to American music. The album is proof positive that both Orbison and Foster knew what they were doing—and that what they were doing holds up twenty years later.

—RICH KIENZLE

John Anderson

*Wild and Blue
Warner Brothers 23721-1*

John Anderson's last two albums took a varied approach: a fair amount of honky-tonk, a couple of ballads, and maybe a rocker or two thrown in for good measure, all performed with consummate integrity and only minimal pandering to country-politan trendiness. Such mixing of material permitted him to explore a variety of moods.

This time, however, Anderson has steeped himself in nearly total melancholy. There is a weariness here, not in his performances, but in the overall mood of the music. It is an album of loss, where even an ancient pop tune like "The Waltz You Saved For Me" (performed with Emmylou Harris) takes on a sadness far

removed from the syrupy romance normally associated with it.

The title track is an anguished cry to a lover in the fast lane, argumentative but weary. "Honky Tonk Hearts" is a confessional of the low-rent romance variety. His reading of Lefty Frizzell's 1959 hit, "Long Black Veil," might seem imitative on the surface, but his vocal is no Lefty ripoff (in fact, it owes more to George Jones than to Lefty). "Disappearing Farmer" is an understated, moving elegy to the passing rural scene. Two of the strongest tracks, however, are originals he co-wrote with his songwriting partner Lionel Delmore. "Goin' Down Hill" celebrates a dissipated lifestyle, and "Swingin'," with its sixties Memphis R&B arrangement, is a thinly-veiled piece of raunch.

There's no doubt that Anderson is pursuing his artistic vision admirably, but I wish he'd use more of his own material, and he needs a string section as much as 7-Up needs caffeine. But here he has abandoned diversity—successfully—to create an album far more blue than wild.

—RICH KIENZLE

Ronnie Milsap

*Keyed Up
RCA AHL1-4670*

Ronnie Milsap was always in one of the toughest positions in country music. While his overwhelming strength has always been his ability to fuse Memphis R&B with old-line honky-tonk country, as in "The Girl Who Waits On Tables," his prowess as a hitmaker has rested on the softer ballad arrangements, *a la* Las Vegas.

While there's a lot of the old Las Vegas on *Keyed Up*, there's also (thankfully) a hard dose of R&B. In fact, if the only song on this album were "Stranger In My House," the album would still be worth its

price. "Stranger" is a killer, a classic R&B arrangement carried off to perfection by Milsap's voice. The background never runs rampant over either the superb vocals or the dominant keyboards.

The rest of the album, with one exception, features the softer ballad material. Milsap does this stuff better than anybody in Nashville (and heaven knows, there are a lot of people who do or try to do it), but "Stranger" is so powerful that it blows everything else away.

The exception worth mentioning is "I'm Just A Redneck At Heart," which is a pretty standard us-versus-them anthem with a neat twist—the arrangement is straight R&B showtime, like midnight in a Memphis bar. I like that.

—MICHAEL BANE





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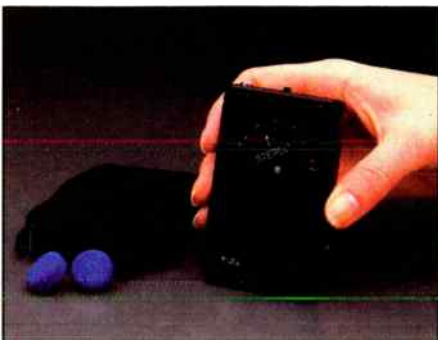
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Record Reviews

George Jones

Burn The Honky-Tonk Down
Rounder SS 15

The thirteen long-buried gems on this new Rounder reissue package are not songs likely to be found on any of George's recent "greatest hits" albums. Less than half of the cuts were released as singles (and only one, "Good Year For The Roses," made it as far as the Top Ten). Many of them were previously available only on long-out-of-print albums hurriedly recorded and released on the Musicor label between 1965 and 1971, a period during which George recorded almost three hundred songs.

It's a carefully chosen selection featuring, among others, "Where The Grass Won't Grow," "The Selfishness Of Man" (an oddly compelling old Leon Payne song), "Milwaukee, Here I Come" (a rousing 1968 duet with Brenda Lee), and "Small Time Laborin' Man," an Earl "Peanut" Montgomery song which is as eloquent a tribute to the working man as has ever been written.

Just having these songs available again is a treat, but there's another point about them—the spirit and conviction with which George sings them. His vocal performances shine with a hard-country brilliance which is delightfully free of the self-conscious histrionics and verbal acrobatics which have crept into some of his recent studio efforts as he has struggled to live up to the "world's greatest country singer" reputation with which he has been saddled. This album offers a spirited alternative to *Shine On*, his most recent, sadly enervated Epic album. While you have to listen a bit more carefully to his vocals because of the occasionally dated and maudlin "early Nashville Sound" arrangements which accompany them,

the energy does come through.

Burn The Honky-Tonk Down offers us a glimpse into one of the more obscure yet important phases of George's three-decade career, and the glimpse is refreshing indeed.

—BOB ALLEN

Ricky Skaggs

Highways and Heartaches
Epic FE 37996

I wouldn't have wanted to be in Ricky Skaggs' shoes when he went into the studio to cut his follow-up album to *Waitin' For The Sun To Shine*. That one, after all, was such a revelation, such a powerful debut, that it became a milestone in the neo-conservative country movement of the Eighties.

It would be unrealistic, then, to expect *Highways and Heartaches* to match the galvanizing impact of that first album—for one thing, Skaggs' concept of tradition in a modern package is now a familiar ingredient of the country music scene—but the bottom line is that if *Waitin'* delineated and defined his ideas, *Highways* shows them fully realized.

The success of "Heartbroke," the leadoff song, proves the depth of his vision. The rockabilly-cum-swing beat, the high, lonesome vocal, and the melody with its fusion of tradition and innovation, create a performance long on integrity and short on pretension. The rest of the album falls right into place. "Don't Think I'll Cry" is solid Western Swing; Zeke Manners' "Don't Let Your



Sweet Love Die" fuses a warm, plaintive vocal with an exquisite bluegrass arrangement; "Nothing Can Hurt You" is a superbly crafted ballad; and Skaggs' rendering of Bill Monroe's "Can't You Hear Me Calling" is infused with blues overtones which provide a welcome dynamic tension. Finally, Rodney Crowell's "One Way Rider" releases that tension in a churning, exhilarating jam which shows off Skaggs' rockabilly leanings and highlights his band, one of the very finest in the business today. Ray Flacke's Telecaster solo lines and Bobby Hicks' fiddle are outstanding.

Ricky Skaggs has clearly reached his goals, and if he can maintain the standards he has set for himself, he should prove to be an artist of rare and welcome consistency.

—RICH KIENZLE

Delia Bell

Delia Bell
Warner Brothers 23938-1

So far, this is the left-field album of 1983. Delia Bell comes off the bluegrass circuit, but her major-label debut is not purist bluegrass. Neither can it be called "newgrass," "progressive bluegrass," or whatever else the going term these days might be. This is simply mountain music, plain, soulful and sorrowful, and among the current glut of country-politan releases, it stands out like a log cabin in the middle of a new development of condos. Two factors probably contributed to its existence.

The first is that Ricky Skaggs, who also emerged from the bluegrass scene, has been cleaning up lately, which makes major labels more inclined to try artists of a similar bent. Aside from the most obvious difference—gender—Delia is older and wiser than Skaggs, but her music has that same mix of acoustic and electric, traditional and modern. The second factor is that

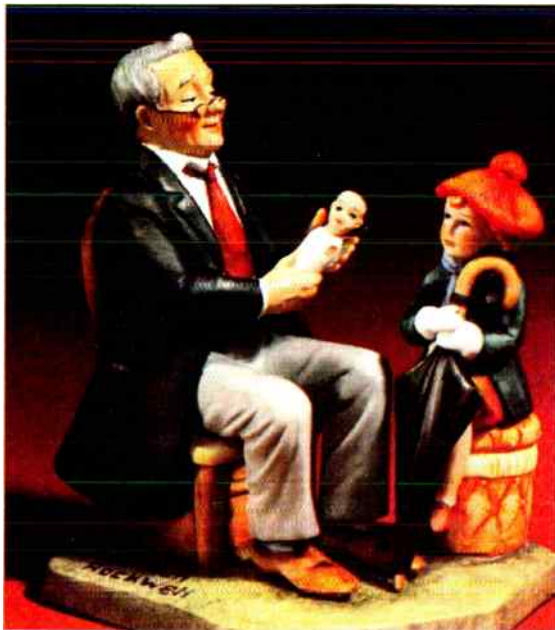
Delia has one very powerful sponsor in Emmylou Harris, who more or less discovered the woman and who also produced this album; Emmylou sells millions of records for Warner Brothers, and if she wants to take a shot at producing a new singer, the company is very likely to keep her happy.

Delia deserves the break. Emmylou has described her as sounding like the hypothetical daughter of Hank Williams and Kitty Wells, and I can't improve on that. She has both the thin, mournful sound of Kitty and the pained, swelling cry of Hank.

The songs are an apt mix for someone trying to make this kind of music commercially viable in 1983. Both sides end with Carter Family songs, "Wildwood Flower" and "Will You Miss Me." Carter Stanley's great "Weary Heart" kicks off side two, and "Lone Pilgrim" gets a fresh new arrangement. But there are also some classic cheating songs like "Back Street Affair" and "Don't Cheat In Our Hometown" ("I don't mind this waiting/Don't mind your runnin' round/But if you're gonna cheat on me/Don't cheat in our hometown"). And Delia and Emmylou have not only found an obscure George Jones song in "Flame In My Heart," they've also gotten label-mate John Anderson to do his best George impersonation on the duet.

Elsewhere, Emmylou turns in sparkling harmonies, which should come as no surprise since that's always been her strongest suit. What is a little surprising is the deftness of her production. Having learned all about recording this kind of music on her own *Roses In the Snow* a few years back, she gets everything right here, from the sweeping fiddle and swooping banjo which open the album on "Coyote Song" to the faint tambourine that adds a fatalistic touch to "Wildwood Flower" and the use of Chet Atkins on "Good Lord A'Mighty" and "I Forgot More (Than You'll Ever Know About Him)." Chet's solo runs

(Continued on page 58)



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Record Reviews

away from the pack on that track. Familiar names like Byron Berline (fiddle, mandolin), Carl Jackson (banjo, acoustic guitar, harmony vocals, mandolin), and Glen D. Hardin (piano), among others, add more sparks. Good moves, Emmylou.

You too, Delia. Especially you. —JOHN MORTHLAND

Dolly Parton

Burlap and Satin
RCA AHL1-4691

Remember the big flap several years ago when Dolly Parton made her announcement that she was going for bigger and better things than just being a country music star? And remember how everybody said she was "forsaking" her country fans? Myself, I always thought, "If she can move onward and upward, more power to her." As time went on, however, a rather formidable obstacle seemed to loom in her path: quality. Almost all of Dolly's forays into pop, disco, sound tracks, etc. were uniformly disappointing.

That's why I was very heartened when I first glimpsed the song titles on *Burlap And*

Satin. The inclusion of "Send Me The Pillow You Dream On" and "I Really Don't Want To Know" and her own "Appalachian Memories" seemed to portend the kind of album that would harken back to her early years in Nashville, with perhaps a healthy dose of her latter-day Emmylou Harris-Linda Rondstadt influence sprinkled liberally throughout.

Alas, such is not the case. The country tunes are buried under insipid arrangements, and the other songs hardly merit mention. The whole album is so bewilderingly poor that it almost seems as if Dolly is parodying herself. "OO-EEE" is a throwaway which the 1910 Fruitgum Co. would be embarrassed to cut; "Send Me The Pillow" features an arrangement which sounds like background music to Saturday morning kids show; "Gamble Either Way," which could have been a good story song, comes off as disjointed pap; and so on.

Perhaps Dolly has gotten to the place now where she really doesn't have to care, doesn't even have to try. It's just that one wishes that she would. The loss is ours far more than hers. —JOHN PUGH



Chet Atkins

Work It Out
Columbia FC 38586

I don't jog. Frankly, I'd rather walk five miles than risk arthritic knees and ankles, not to mention having to spend all that money on special clothes. But let's face it: Fitness is *in*, and Richard Simmons makes a helluva lot more money than I do, and if Jane Fonda can spin out product for the fitness market, why not Chet Atkins?



After all, Chet hasn't just been on top of the trends for years; he's created a few himself.

The thing is, however, that this is Chet's first album for CBS Records since he left RCA last year, and the laws of logic dictate that debut albums be blockbusters. *Work It Out* is no such thing. The concept is simple: music to jog by. Tape this record onto a cassette, slap it in the Sony Walkman, lace up those Adidas, and GO!

The music itself consists of incongruous medleys like "Cross Country Medley," which combines "Take Me Home, Country Roads" with "Jersey Bounce," "Physical," and "The Army Air Corps Song," among others. All of it is impeccably arranged and perfectly played, elevator or waiting-room style.

Why Chet of all people would automatically narrow his audience with such an album is incomprehensible to me. I'm still waiting for your *real* debut, Chet, and I hope it is a blockbuster. —RICH KIENZLE

Guy Clark

Better Days
Warner Bros. 23880-1

I have, on occasion, said some unkind things about Guy Clark's singing. Maybe he got better. Maybe I got smarter. Maybe the combination of Guy Clark's songwriting and singing and Rodney Crowell's producing turned the trick, but here's the truth: *Better Days* is a great little album. It's upbeat in some parts, heart-rending in others, unpretentious and absolutely entertaining throughout.

I could tell you about the wacky humor of "Homegrown Tomatoes" or the understated Caribbean feel of "Supply & Demand" or the rolling good times of "The Carpenter." I'm not going to, though. Instead, let me tell you about just one song, "The Randall Knife."

As a songwriter, Guy Clark's genius is his simplicity, the

ability to see in everyday events the universal truths around which our lives revolve. "My father," Guy Clark sings, "had a Randall knife. My mother gave it to him, when he went off to World War II, to save us all from ruin."

The lyrics go on, simple, almost conversational. Yet in a few simple lines "The Randall Knife" touches the mystical, rites of blood and rites of passage, a son growing up and in some way coming to grips with the death of a father. Consciously or unconsciously, we wrap our lives in symbols. Sometimes, as with the Randall knife of Guy Clark's song, we leave those symbols untouched for years, "sort of like Excalibur, except waiting for a tear." A songwriter the caliber of Guy Clark can touch us on that symbolic level, reminding us of the many things filed away and waiting.

I think I'm going to get a copy of "The Randall Knife" for my father.

—MICHAEL BANE

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Dot 2008—Way Love Should Be
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GENE COTTON

ABC 983—Rain On

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Camden 2476—Snowbird
Camden 2552—Kiss An Angel Good
Morning

BILLY CRASH CRADDOCK

ABC 777—Two Sides
ABC 875—Still Thinkin' Bout You

FLOYD CRAMER

RCA 3533—Only the Big Ones
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DANNY DAVIS

RCA 4571—Super Brass
RCA 4627—Brass Turns to Gold
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RCA 4305—Speaker of the House

JIMMY DEMPSEL

Power Pak 244—Greatest Hits
Power Pak 708—Gospel Guitars
Plantation 10—Picks on Johnny Cash

ROY DRUSKY

Mer 61336—I Love Way You've Been
Lovin' Me

DAVE DUDLEY

Mer 61365—Original Traveling Man

CONNIE EATON

Chart 1049—Something Special

JOE EDWARDS (Great Fiddle)

CVS—The Fiddlin' Fool

DICK FELLER

U.A. 094—Wrote

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Dot 2025—Narvel Felts

FREDDY FENDER

Dot 2061—Ever in Texas

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Pick 3308—Amazing Grace

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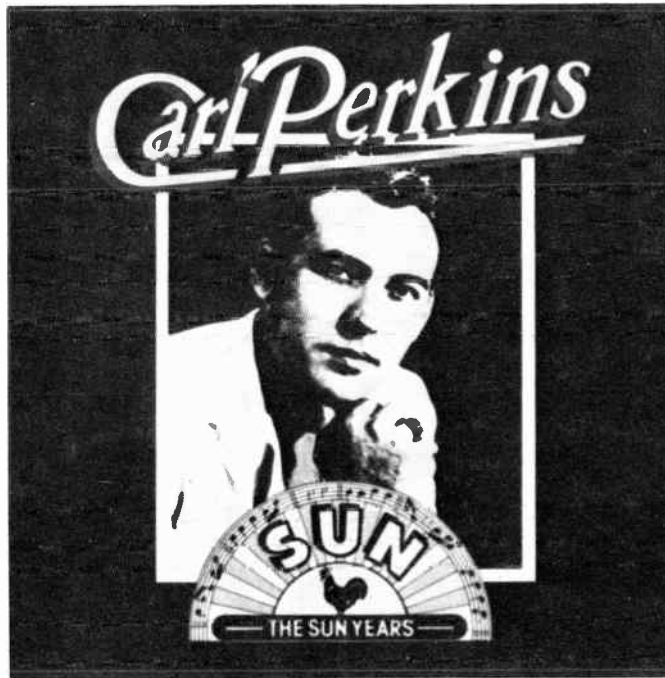
Re-issues, Rarities and the Hard-to-find

by Rich Kienzle

Welcome to the new *Buried Treasures*, expanded for a couple of reasons. Firstly, popular music—country included—is in the midst of an unprecedented reissue boom involving both small labels and the majors. The packages are of top quality most of the time, a huge improvement over earlier reissues. Secondly, such material deserves more substantial analysis than a mere sentence or two. We'll still look at new releases on small labels from time to time, and on occasion we'll even point out releases *not* worth your money.

Marty Robbins's tragic death last December has brought forth the inevitable reissues, but among the usual tacky repackages, two have been outstanding. Time Life Records' Country Classic Series recently issued *Marty Robbins (TLCW-10)*, a three-album, forty-song retrospective of his Columbia recordings. This comprehensive sampler covers Robbins's entire career from his first 1951 recording to his 1978 album *The Performer*. The hits are here, and so are obscure and unreleased tracks.

The package permits one to trace Robbins's musical evolution from an obscure Arizona C & W singer to one of the idiom's true eclectics, the great liberating factor being the sinewy, smoky voice that let him sing not only country, but rockabilly, Hawaiian, pop-rock and the Western ballads he loved. As with all Time-Life packages, a booklet is included; this one features a fine biography by Patty Hall and superbly researched notes on each song by the Country Music Foundation's Ronnie Pugh. It is,



without a doubt, the single best Robbins set on the market today.

Germany's Bear Family Records had begun a Robbins reissue series before he died, licensing material from CBS. Aside from their *Rockin' Rollin' Robbins* series (which we'll cover later on), there is *The Marty Robbins Files Volume 1 (BFX 15095)*. The first of four projected volumes of early Robbins, it assembles *all* his recordings, released and unreleased, from 1951 to 1953. Robbins concentrated on ballads on these early sessions, and though seventeen ballads is a lot on one album, the best of them have a charm and intimacy few other artists could equal. The fiddle/guitar/steel/piano/bass backing (Johnny Gimble fiddles on the 1952 session) is sparse but sympathetic. Ronnie Pugh again contributes fine notes and session

data of exceptional quality.

The rockabilly boom has finally gone public with the popularity of pretenders to the rockabilly throne like the Stray Cats, but one welcome spinoff is the recent boxed sets of virtually all the classic Sun recordings by Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins. Perkins's *The Sun Years (Sun Box 101)*, produced by England's Charly Records, is the definitive look at Perkins's trailblazing—and brilliant—legacy.

As the three albums progress one can hear Perkins's development. The sessions begin in 1954 with a stone country performer playing solidly within the mainstream of the time. His sharp, sputtering guitar style is there, and he hints at his future on the unrelenting, pulsating "Gone, Gone, Gone." Yet the other tracks are credible, and his vocal on

Johnny Bond's honkytonk waltz "Drink Up And Go Home" is tight and expressive.

His metamorphosis comes into focus on Side Two. One can marvel at the three takes of "Blue Suede Shoes," the first two showing him changing a phrase here, an inflection there, to develop the song as we now know it. Anybody who believes that such great musical moments appear like magic need only hear these three takes to conclude that it ain't so. The same thing happens with "Honey, Don't."

All of Perkins's 52 Sun recordings are here, including hilarious studio chatter, demo sessions, and unreleased tracks. On two such unreleased numbers, "That Don't Move Me" and "Somebody Help Me," he is picking savagely, performing with a hurricane-like ferocity which few of his commercial releases captured. A tragic car crash and alcoholism held Perkins back for a decade, but this set and the exhaustively documented booklet which accompanies it truly do him justice.

If you think that Western Swing began and ended with Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, you are wrong. In Texas in the late 1930s there were scores of smaller bands whose music equalled or surpassed that of the Playboys in their early days (between 1935 and 1938 they were often appallingly sloppy).

One of the very finest of such outfits was Jimmy Revard and His Oklahoma Playboys, and *Oh! Swing It (Rambler 108)* is an outstanding chronicle of their 1936-1938 recordings. Rev-

ard, a bassist, had a strong rhythm section and an ebullient personality to boot, and although his band did not boast many virtuoso soloists, they never failed to produce a cohesive, contagious joy in the music. Listen to the title track of this collection: It's so exhilarating that you expect the needle to fly off the disc. Their 1936 "Ride 'Em, Cowboy" is no less exciting, and their version of "Trouble In Mind" cuts the Wills version dead. As with all Rambler releases, the sound is pristine.

the cover graphics the best around, and the liner notes solid and entertaining. That's not all, either: Revard, now in his spry seventies and leading a fine Oklahoma Playboys band in San Antonio, has just cut a new album which Western, Rambler's sister label, will release later this year.

When Jim Reeves first started in the music business he was an obscure singer and deejay who announced acts on the Louisiana Hayride. "Mexican Joe," his 1953

hit on the Abbott label, launched him as a recording artist, and he made dozens of records for that label before joining RCA in 1955. Most of his Abbott recordings have long been unavailable, but now British RCA has reissued *The Abbott Recordings Vols. 1 & 2 (INTS 5222 & 5223)*. Volume 1 is his only Abbott album, to which five tunes have been added; Volume 2 includes five previously unreleased tracks.

This is not the mellow, disciplined crooner who still sells

millions of records worldwide; singing in a higher, louder voice and performing a wide variety of material (including several "Mexican" novelties recorded in the wake of "Mexican Joe") backed by Floyd Cramer and Jimmy Day, then members of the Hayride house band. Even on the ballads, there is little hint of his later style. These two albums are welcome chronicles of Gentleman Jim in his formative years, and most of the tunes wear well today. ■

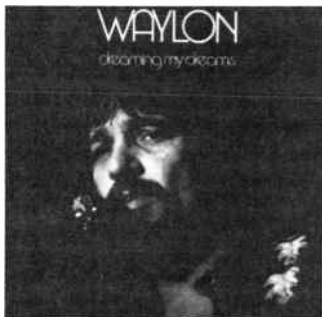
The Essential Collector

The Editors' Guide to Classic Country Albums

Waylon Jennings

Dreaming My Dreams
RCA APL 1-1062

There is disagreement among critics about which album is Waylon's masterpiece, but most of them vote for *Dreaming My Dreams*. Featuring songs like the brilliantly



ironic "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way" and the heartbreaking "Dreaming My Dreams with You," it was Waylon's first and only collaboration with producer Jack "Cowboy" Clement. As Patrick Carr put it in our 10th Anniversary issue, the album is "a sublime meeting between recording artist and producer. Jack Clement set out to prove that Waylon was the country singer, and, mainly by cutting waltzes on him, he proved it. Waylon came out so smoothly, with such clarity and depth (and pacing and material) that even his fans were stunned by the gentle magnificence of it all. The sensuous spell cast by this record is unique among

Waylon's or any other country singer's work."

Merle Haggard

A Tribute To The Best Damn Fiddle Player In The World
Capitol ST-638

On April 6th, 1970, Merle Haggard went into a California recording studio with the Strangers and several original members of Bob Wills's Texas Playboys, and in three days cut the most authentic and spirited "tribute" album ever made. This was the album which kicked off the Western Swing revival of the 1970s, drawing attention to Wills's original recordings and encouraging young contemporary bands like Asleep At The Wheel.

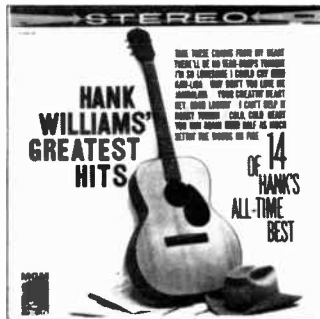


Merle and the Strangers and Playboys were up to the task: To some ears, *A Tribute To The Best Damn Fiddle Player In The World* sounds even better than Wills at his peak.

Hank Williams

Hank Williams' Greatest Hits
MGM E3918

The songs of Hank Williams have been packaged and re-packaged endlessly since his death, but for our money, this



is the collection. The songs are: "Cold, Cold Heart," "Jambalaya," "You Win Again," "Kawliga," "Take These Chains From

My Heart," "There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight," "Settin' The Woods On Fire," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Hey, Good Lookin'," "Honky Tonkin'," "I Can't Help It (If I'm Still In Love With You)," "Why Don't You Love Me," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," and "Half As Much." Not a bad list.

Jerry Lee Lewis

The Sun Years
Sun 102

This astounding, recently released, twelve-record boxed set of all the Killer's Sun recordings (including re-takes and some hilarious studio talk) is reviewed in detail by Peter Guralnick on page 42 of this issue. As he says, "Here is one of the few essential records in the history of rock and roll."

How to Get These Treasures

If you would like to buy any of these records, they are available from Nashville Warehouse, P.O. Box 236, Hendersonville, Tennessee 37075. Send your order with check to them. (A 10% discount can be deducted by Country Music Society of America members.) *Marty Robbins (TLCW-10)* \$19.95, *The Marty Robbins Files (BFX 15095)* \$9.98, *Carl Perkins The Sun Years (Sun Box 101)* \$25.50, *Jimmy Revard Oh Swing It (Rambler 108)* \$8.98, *Jim Reeves The Abbott Recordings Volumes I & II (INTS 5222 & 5223)* \$7.98 each, *Waylon Jennings Dreaming My Dreams (RCA APL 1-1062)* \$7.98, *Merle Haggard A Tribute To The Best Damn Fiddle Player In The World (Capitol St-638)* \$7.98, *Elvis Presley The Sun Sessions (RCA APMI-1675)* \$7.98, *Hank Williams Hank Williams' Greatest Hits (MGM E3918)* \$7.98, *Jerry Lee Lewis The Sun Years (Sun 102)* \$79.95.

The Perils of a Country Picker

It was about half-past ten in the morning. We were at home, Dorothy and I, and just getting used to waking up without Randy McNally hangin' around with his map, reminding us how many Stuckey hamburgers we were from the next show date.

It had rained the night before, and Oklahoma's Lake Tenkiller and the blackjack oaks on the Cookson Hills that surround our place looked as pretty and fresh as Barbara Mandrell.

Then the phone demanded attention with its obnoxious little monotone bell.

I picked up the receiver and a joyous voice blasted in my ear, "Hey, there! Y'know who this it?"

Borrowing a phrase I've heard Ernest Tubbs use, I answered.

"Right off hand I don't believe I do. Refresh my memory."

"It's Bill, ol' buddy, Bill! Over here at my store in Tulsa!"

Placing my hand over the mouthpiece to shut out any sound, I asked Dorothy, "Do we know a 'Bill' who has a store in Tulsa? Evidently he's an 'ol' buddy.'" I could see her mind racing all over the Oklahoma Oil Capitol of the World . . . darting in and out of stores, mentally searching for a man named Bill. "Beats me," said she.

"What's on your mind, Bill?" I inquired. "Oh, I just wanted you to run over and have lunch with me this coming Friday."

"Bill, I'm gonna level with you," I began. "I never was much for going out and having lunch with folks. Here's why. If we get into an interesting conversation, I couldn't tell you to save my life what we had to eat after the meal. And if I tie into some kind of food that knocks me out, I have no idea what we talked about when it's over."

"You ain't gonna get off that easy, ol' friend," he assured me. "I've got some people I want you to meet. They're great guys. You'll love 'em."

"Now, Bill, you know me," I said mildly. "I'm shy, by nature, and, to tell the truth, uncomfortable as the dickens around a bunch of strangers. Let's just the two of us get together sometime and visit." I suggested.

by Merle Travis



"But that wouldn't work, Merle," Bill said, causing me to figure I wasn't his bosom buddy any more, switching to my first name and all.

"Just how do you mean it wouldn't work?" I asked.

"Well, you see, these guys are all big businessmen," he explained, "who never heard of you. That's why I wanted to introduce you to 'em."

"Tell me, Bill," I asked him, "are they country music fans?"

"Oh, I doubt that very much," said my friend. "That's why I wanted you to bring along your electric guitar and amplifier."

"But what if they hate country music?" I asked him. "They'd throw me out of wherever it is you want to take me."

Bill had an answer waiting. "Don't worry about that! They won't pay a bit of attention to you. They'll be busy eating and drinking while you're up there on the stage."

"On the STAGE?"

"Oh, sure! They've even got a P.A. system."

For some unknown reason I began to get a little edgy.

"Look, Bill. I've been doing this sort of thing since 1937," I began. "My wife and I have just started to get rested up from a long tour. Why in the world would you ask me to drag out my gear and go do a show, ninety miles away, for a bunch of people who wouldn't even hear me. . . as you said?"

"Now, Travis, you've got it all wrong," he let me know. "I don't expect you to 'do

a show, as you put it. I just want you to run over here in one of your fancy costumes, hook up your electric guitar, get up there and pick and sing. . . and tell a few jokes. You wouldn't have to stay up there but an hour or so. . . just 'til the businessmen start leavin'!"

Dorothy brought over a Kleenex and mopped my brow. My knuckles were white from gripping the telephone receiver so tight. It was then I tried out ol' Bill's reasoning power.

"By the way, Bill," I soft-pedaled, "if you knew a doctor who whittled on folks all week long, then had a day off, would you call him and say, 'Hey, Doc, ol' pal, you ain't workin' at the hospital today, so how about gettin' your gear together, pickin' up a couple of nurses and droppin' by the house. You can take my kid's tonsils out. It wouldn't take you very long, and I'm sure you'd enjoy it.'"

"Doctors? Why, I wouldn't ask them bastards for nothin'. They won't lift their little finger without chargin' for it!"

I started to rest my case, but was a little too worked up. I brought up the case of carpenters, mechanics, plumbers, bird imitators and a couple of palm readers. Bill allowed as how none of them people would work without pay, but my case was different, as there was no work to what the likes of me did. It crossed my mind to suggest that he call Conway Twitty, Janie Fricke, Eddie Rabbitt or maybe the Gatlin Brothers. But I didn't.

"Bill, this all started out with just the two of us having lunch," I moaned, "and ended up with me doing a free concert to a bunch of clattering plates. What's the deal?"

"Well, you see, I'm on the board of directors with this group, and it fell my time to get the entertainment, so I called you."

"When was the last time we met, Bill?" I inquired.

"Oh, I never met you in my life," said Bill, "but you'll run into me over here in Tulsa one of these days. Ever'body in town knows ol' Bill, you'll run into me."

Looking out the window at our four-wheel-drive pickup truck with the extra-heavy-duty front bumper, I said, "I sure hope so, Bill. I sure hope so." ■

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Dust. Mud. Rocks. Snow. The new 1983 Toyota 4x4 SR5 Long Bed Sport Truck can do it all. Taking you and your gear just about anywhere you want to go. With a sharp sense of style. And a fuel efficient sense of thrifft.*

The tough, durable 2.4 liter SOHC engine, working with a 5-speed overdrive transmission, steel radial mud and snow tires, and steel skid plates protecting vital parts, overwhelms the surface you've chosen to challenge.

But as tough as it is on the

roads, this 4x4 is easy on you

Reclining bucket seats. Wall-to-wall cut pile carpeting. Even an AM/FM/MPX stereo. And if you're the kind of guy who reaches for the top, optional power steering and air conditioning will help make it easier.

The 1983 Toyota four-wheel drive SR5 Long Bed Sport. It takes the ruts without if's and's or but's. Because somebody did it right. Built a truck with a sophisticated sense of design. The kind of quality and durability that's made

OH WI IATA FEELING!
TOYOTA

Toyota the world's best selling line of trucks. And one more thing that often goes with guts.
Heart.

*28 Estimated Highway MPG, (2) EPA Estimated MPG. Remember. Compare this estimate to the EPA "Estimated MPG" of other gasoline-powered trucks with manual transmission. You may get different mileage depending on how fast you drive, weather conditions and trip length. Actual highway mileage will probably be less than the "Highway Estimate."

BUCKLE UP—IT'S A GOOD FEELING!

A NO COMPROMISE, 4-WHEEL DRIVE DUST-BUSTER.

