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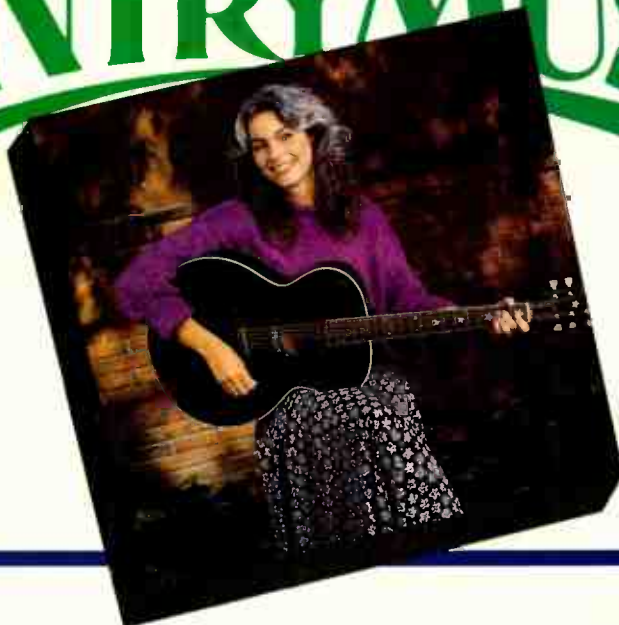
Think about it. If you were out in the swamp, surrounded by 40 or 50 hungry alligators and you got stuck, what would you do?

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4 Letters

Readers react to George Strait's charm, Loretta Lynn's home, Mark Herndon's antics, and concerts around the country. As usual, we're brought up-to-date by you fans.

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Hank Jr. and Waylon Jennings share memories, an Oak marries *and* makes the best-dressed list, country stars appear on TV, Willie goes around the globe and Kenry Rogers turns 50. Plus much more.

by Hazel Smith

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For fifteen years, Emmylou Harris has stood as a beacon for those who believe that country music's past holds the key to its present and to its future. Today that light shines on a new generation of performers whose success is testimony to her vision.

by Patrick Carr

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Bob Millard spends some time with Buck Owens during one of the most hectic weeks in Nashville. He found a man who is happy to be in the limelight again...for however long he wants it to be.

by Bob Millard

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Dave Nemo hosts a radio show just for truckers. Chances are you'll find it interesting, too.

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by Rich Kienzle

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Letters



Strait Fever

Just wanted to say thanks for the terrific article on George Strait in the September/October issue of *Country Music*. Just getting the magazine out of the mailbox and seeing George on the cover—well, it made my day!

The article was very good and gave a lot of information on George's background. He does have a way with the audience, doesn't he? I'm also glad that Bob Allen admitted to George's good looks. Us ladies have known that since we first laid eyes on him. Those clean-cut looks, shy smile and polite manner all make him great.

I wasn't much of a country music fan until George came along. His Western swing tunes and romantic songs changed that, however. Now I really love country. My husband has been a country fan all along. Now he and I both belong to George's fan club.

Those of us who have Strait Fever love to read about our favorite entertainer. And, of course, we love looking at pictures of him. Thanks again for a great article and keep up the good work.

Susan P. Thomas
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Cover Guy

Thank you very much for the cover story on my favorite entertainer, George Strait, in the September/October issue of *Country Music*. This man really dresses up a magazine cover. I think I have to agree with Hazel Smith—he is just about the most gorgeous man I've ever seen. George should be a candidate for *People Magazine's* Sexiest Man Alive. He's also a great talent, easily the best singer in country music today. He should be rewarded with an Entertainer of the Year Award.

The thing I liked most about the article is the fact that it showed what a kind, down-to-earth person George

really is, even with all of the fame and adulation. It's refreshing to see that someone in his position can still be humble. He doesn't seem to be stuck on himself. George is a real winner.

Wanda Chandler
McKenzie, Tennessee

Magnificent Performer

Being a longtime fan of George Strait, I thoroughly enjoyed the article on George in the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. It lets us know where his heart and soul lies.

I've been to several of his concerts in Dallas, and he is truly a magnificent performer. I especially love his cute smile and his sexy voice. I'm glad to know he is so down-to-earth.

Deloris Fowler
McKinney, Texas

Super Smile

I was so excited to see my favorite singer on the cover of the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. I really enjoyed the story by Bob Allen, and the pictures were great, too. I have been to ten George Strait concerts in the last two years and have never been disappointed. He always gives a great concert. I have travelled near and far (mostly far), sat in the rain, in the heat and in the cold, sat close up and in the peanut gallery, but I wouldn't trade any of those concert memories. Each one was special.

I love to hear all of his hits, but "Love-sick Blues" is my very favorite—hope he records it someday. With all of the records that he has broken in the past 12-18 months, I don't understand why he hasn't been named Entertainer of the Year. He may not be as talkative or showy as some singers, but he is sooo exciting!

I say let's leave George just as he is, shy, private or however one wants to describe him. It's working for him and his fans. In reality, if he just smiled that boyish grin all night, I'd be happy.

Alice C. Staggs
Dayton, Ohio

Dailey Delighted

I'd like to send a note of thanks to a lady named Marie Kliever of Klamath Falls, Oregon. She wrote a very nice letter in the September/October issue of *Coun-*

try Music Magazine about my grandfather, H.W. "Pappy" Dailey. Thanks for your kind words and thoughtfulness, our family appreciates it. He gave a lot to country music and did inspire many to greater achievements, including myself. From the Big Bopper to Willie to George Jones and many unknowns—he gave them a starting chance. He will be greatly missed and never forgotten. Also thanks to *Country Music Magazine* for printing the letter.

Mike D. Dailey
Steel Guitarist in George Strait's
Ace In the Hole Band
San Marcos, Texas



From One Loretta to Another

Thank you, thank you, for the very lovely Loretta Lynn interview with pictures in the September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. She is my favorite country music star.

You really outdid yourself with this interview. It not only tells what a warm-hearted, lovely lady that Loretta is, but also how and where she lives, where she's been and what her family and fans mean to her. Also, you took us on a trip of her fantastic mansion. It was almost like being there in person.

Glad Loretta has opened her home to her many fans. Her heart has always been open to her fans. It's fun to see how this lovely lady lives, what she collects by way of antiques, dolls etc., and how she tells us about her views on life in the past, present and future. She's one swell lady to look up to, enjoy and listen to, and a great standard in country music to live by.

Loretta Willis
Tifton, Georgia

Old Friends Are Good Friends

I've been a Loretta Lynn fan since she started in the 1960's. For the last three

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**Harold Malaguti and Loretta Lynn at
the Lynn ranch.**

years, I've been going to Butcher Holler
in Van Lear, Kentucky, and working to
restore her old homeplace with her
brother Herman. There are hundreds of
people who visit it yearly. I was also out
to the ranch the day she opened her
home as a museum to the public and
worked the gate for three days. I spent a
lot of time with her husband Mooney and
other kinfolk. I think when it comes to
country and country music, Loretta
says it all.

Harold Malaguti
Kingston, Massachusetts

Loretta's House and Home

Thanks so much for your story on
Loretta Lynn and her home in the
September/October issue of *Country
Music*.

I was lucky enough to be there the
first day the house was open for tours. I
want everyone to know Loretta sat and
signed autographs all day and even
allowed a few of us to have our pictures
made with her.

She is one very nice lady and will
always be Number One in my book.
You'll never meet a friendlier person,
and she loves her fans and her family,
too.

I'm proud to be a Loretta Lynn fan.

Brinda Burris
Dalton, Georgia

Rooting for Riders In the Sky

I feel your magazine has been neglect-
ful in not running a cover story or at
least a feature article on Riders In the
Sky. Everyone is always writing to you
about how wonderful different artists
are to their fans, which I'm sure they
are. But there is no artist or group any
nicer to their fans than Riders!

I have the honor to call each of the
three, Doug, Woody and Slim, a friend.
At numerous engagements I have
helped Slim at the records and T-shirt
table. Never once have I seen any fan
denied an autograph or a request to
have a picture taken, even though many
times Riders had just finished a concert
under adverse conditions, such as 100-
degree Kansas temperatures, blowing

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dusty winds or long-distance travel to Kansas from a concert the night before on the West Coast. I have been to more Riders' concerts than I can count, but never once have I seen them give less than 120 percent entertaining the crowds.

I hope you get the point and print a much deserved feature on them.

Harold Widup
Hutchinson, Kansas
Your timing is just right. A feature story on Riders is in the works.—Ed.

Tanya Tucker, Libby Hurley and Friend

On August 7th in Malone, New York, I had the pleasure of going to see my all-time favorite in concert—Tanya Tucker! There were two things that really surprised me about the concert. One is that she let her dog, Lucy, who is really very sweet, run all over the stage. And number two is that we got an extra bonus—Libby Hurley did back-up.

So, what I want to know is, why doesn't anyone anywhere ever mention Libby Hurley? And why don't people write more about Tanya Tucker?

Christie Drake
Ellensburg, New York

Alabama At the Top

I've just returned from an Alabama concert in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The night was truly magical. Any rumors that these talented musicians are slowly losing popularity apparently haven't reached the fans or the group. They put their heart and soul into their music, only to be thanked by a very enthusiastic crowd. During the song "The Fan," I don't think there was a dry eye in the crowd, including the boys in the band. Then, true to form, they signed autographs for every fan that stayed after the show.

Thanks, Teddy, Randy, Jeff, Mark, Larry and Custo for a fantastic night and for showing us, your fans, how much you love us. You are tops with us.

Sherri Keller
Abbottstown, Pennsylvania

Naughty Alabama

Last night I had the pleasure of watching the CMA Awards on television. It was a treat to see an enjoyable night of entertainment. However, today I still can't believe what I saw in a close-up of Alabama. After K.T. Oslin sang her song, Teddy Gentry made an unkind gesture, followed by a truly obscene gesture made by Mark Herndon. I was appalled. I have been a fan of Alabama for years and was always impressed by the way they handled themselves. Surely they were aware that sitting where they were the chance of being on camera was quite high.

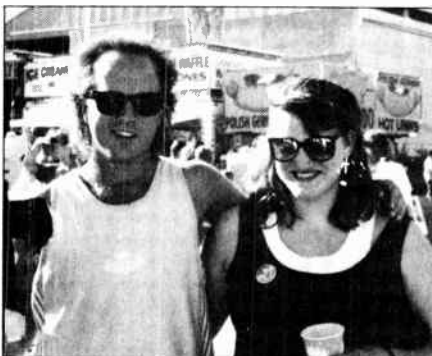
The rest of the night was a country music lover's dream. Good music, great and gracious stars and a fun night that Dolly Parton made a joy.

Katherine Fager
Idaho Falls, Idaho

Reba's Unbelievable

I have never been inspired to write to a magazine before, but I just returned from the Minnesota State Fair where I saw Reba McEntire give the concert of a lifetime! I have been a Reba fan for a long time and I know what a talented, classy lady she is...but to see her live and in person is simply unbelievable. It's no wonder Reba has captured the hearts of country music fans across the USA! Thanks, Reba...Minnesota loves you!

Jan Massman
St. Cloud, Minnesota
Minnesota State Fair was loaded with talent this year.—Ed.



Mark Miller and young fan Kendall Stephenson at the county fair.

Surefire Sawyer Brown

On August 9, we went to the Clark County Fair in Vancouver, Washington, to see Sawyer Brown. We were so excited to see Mark Miller and a couple of other band members walking around the fairgrounds. When I asked if we could get a picture, Mark said, "Sure." And as you can see, it came out great! It made my fourteen-year-old daughter Kendall very happy.

Sawyer Brown is a great group of guys that put on a very energetic show. We love you, Sawyer Brown, and thanks for being so nice.

Nola, Kendall and Angi Stephenson
Longview, Washington

Hurrahs for Jennings at Harrah's—And Where's Gary Scruggs?

My husband and I just got back from seeing Waylon Jennings at Harrah's in Reno, Nevada. Both Waylon and Jessi put on a great show. We have seen them many times and have never been disappointed in their show. Waylon jokes around between songs now and does a real good job of making the crowd laugh.

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TROY-BILT Owner
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Walla Walla, WA
Finalist, 1982 *Victory Garden* Contest
Finalist, 1985 *Mother Earth News* Garden Contest

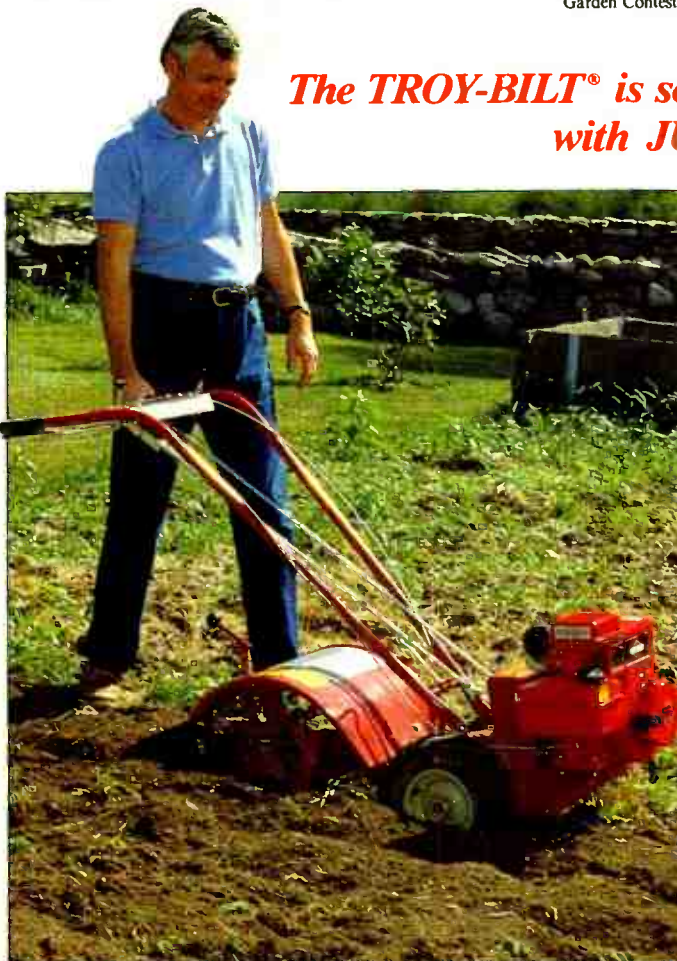


TROY-BILT Owners
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Weare, NH
1st Prize, 1985 *Organic Gardening* magazine's Gardener of the Year Contest



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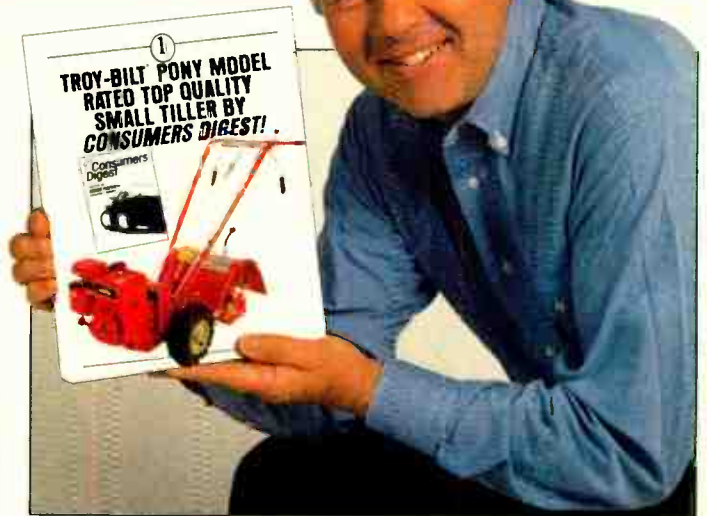
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- Does so many different gardening and landscape-related jobs, folks who own them, use their TROY-BILT Tillers 18 times a year on average!
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As it's often been said (and as over one million satisfied Troy-Bilt Owners can attest), a Troy-Bilt Tiller is so well made, it's probably the last Tiller you'll ever need to buy. And the PONY Model is just part of the Troy-Bilt story...

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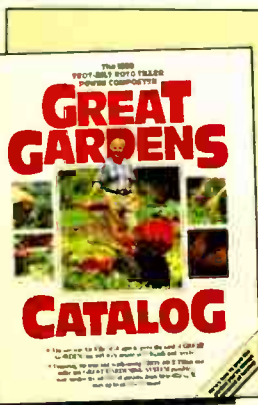
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It makes me so happy to see that he has got his life back together.

We did notice that one of his band members wasn't there and was wondering what has happened to him—Gary Scruggs. Will he be back?

I sure wish that Waylon and Johnny Cash would do a show together somewhere close to my home in California.

Christi Underwood
Boulder Creek, California

We'll ask Hazel Smith.—Ed.

Restless Heart Rates High

I saw a superb concert on Labor Day at Ponderosa Park in Salem, Ohio. The headliners were Restless Heart. It was a surprise to receive my September/October issue of *Country Music* a few days later and read the interview on Restless Heart.

They did a fantastic show, then signed autographs and took pictures for over one hour. Their show exhibited the varied talents of the individual group members. Their songs "New York" and "Hummingbird" are terrific.

Thank you for the article. I believe it will help Restless Heart.

Maureen A. Riley
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



Actor and musician Martinez with one of his heroes, Mr. Willie Nelson.

Working with Willie Nelson

I am a singer, songwriter, musician and striving actor. Recently, I had the pleasure of working with one of my heroes—Willie Nelson. He was in New Mexico filming his latest movie, *Where the Hell's That Gold*, and I must say Willie is one hell of a nice man. He takes time to talk to people, sign autographs, pose for pictures, etc. Willie—we sure do appreciate that.

I have also worked with Kenny Rogers in *Gambler III*. He also is nice to his fans.

One of my other heroes is Kris Kristofferson, whom I worked with in *Convoy*. During the filming I tried to talk to Kris, but his bodyguard always chased everyone away. At the same time I wrote a song about Kristofferson and recorded and released it. I sent a copy to him with no response whatsoever.

This year Kris was again in New Mexico filming an HBO movie. Again I tried to talk to Kris—again no luck.

The bottom line is that, as an entertainer, I know the fans make the star. To Kenny and Willie, thanks for taking a few seconds or minutes with us. Kris, have a heart for your fans, would you?

Anthony Martinez
Española, New Mexico



Crowell keeps the audience enthralled at Little Rock club concert.

Crowell Catches On

To say that Rodney Crowell is *hot* (as heard on *TNN'S Crook and Chase*) is an understatement. We saw him perform at a Little Rock club recently, and after enjoying a two-and-a-half hour show from this multitaleanted man, we were very tempted to follow him to Tulsa, for his next show!

After years admiring his wonderful songwriting, we were thrilled, to say the least, to see him finally perform those songs we loved so well, "Shame on the Moon," "Till I Gain Control Again" and "Song for the Life" to name a few. And what a performer he is! So in tune with his audience, delighting them with their every request, meeting his fans and signing autographs. He was a real sweetheart.

So, here's to you, Rodney, for finally receiving the recognition you deserve!

Marti Herring
Harrison, Arkansas

Whatever Happened to J.K. Coltrain?

I wanted to write and tell you I love your fine publication. I especially like reading your fine Letters column. I have a question that I would like to ask. About five years ago a young country

artist by the name of J.K. Coltrain appeared here in Dalton. He had a spectacular voice and had written some great songs. The people here were crazy about him. We all thought that he was destined to become a superstar. Then he just kind of dropped out of sight, and we haven't heard from him since. Do you or one of your readers have any idea as to what happened to this young singer, J.K. Coltrain?

Nancy Hatfirth
Dalton, Georgia

Ok, readers, who knows? -Ed.

Hobbs Applauds Kienzle

Dear Rich,

Thank you so much for the *great* review in the September/October issue. We happened to be walking into the office of *Country Music Magazine* in New York when it came out and got an advance copy. Needless to say—you made my day! I just couldn't stop grinning!

Thanks again!

Becky Hobbs
"Beckaroo"

P.S. My mama likes it, too!

Fan Does Too

I'd like to send a big thank you to the staff of *Country Music Magazine* and especially to Rich Kienzle for the super review of Becky Hobbs' album *All Keyed Up* in the September/October issue. He said it all so well, and I'm sure all of Becky's fans are delighted.

This album has everything—really great country songs from ballads to toe-tappers to Western swing. Add to that, Becky's own unique and captivating vocals, and excellent production.

Congratulations, Becky! You sure have a winner with your MTM album.

Linda Minnici
Lanesboro, Massachusetts



Corporal Myers and his new flame Paulette Carlson at Bull Run.

How About That Highway 101!

While stationed in West Berlin, I was able to see plenty of pop-rock concerts from Elton John to Prince but was never able to see any country-and-western performers—they just don't exist in Europe. I've been back in the states

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now for a little over a year and have seen a total of seven concerts, all C&W. I guess I am trying to make up for the lack of concerts overseas.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that there aren't a lot of explosions, smoke, heavy drum solos and flashy costumes, but there's something very genuine about a country performer. My most memorable experience was on the 17th of July when Highway 101 joined forces with Ricky Van Shelton, Waylon Jennings and George Jones at the 1988 Country Jamboree at Bull Run National Park in Virginia.

All of the performances were great, but the part I enjoyed most was when I got to meet the beautiful lead singer of Highway 101, Paulette Carlson. She and the rest of the group gave unselfishly of their free time to sign autographs and talk to their fans, which I can imagine gets tedious when they have to do it time and time again. But Paulette was so polite and sweet (especially considering the aggravating heat, over 100 degrees) that I asked if I could get my picture taken with her. She agreed and I fell in love.

What a precious woman. As the infatuation wore away, I realized that after all of the big names that I've seen perform, here was what country music was all about, caring and feeling.

Corporal Steven A. Myers
United States Army

And as Hazel Smith says in *People in this issue, the fairs are where you find 'em.*—Ed.

Annual ETC Homecoming

Just wanted to update you on the Annual Earl Thomas Conley Homecoming from ETC's boyhood home of Portsmouth, Ohio. As in the past, this year's event drew close to four thousand and plans for next year's show are going to be bigger.

Proceeds from the Homecoming go

directly to a scholarship fund which provides money for local high school students—one from ETC's alma mater, West Portsmouth, two from two other local high schools each year.

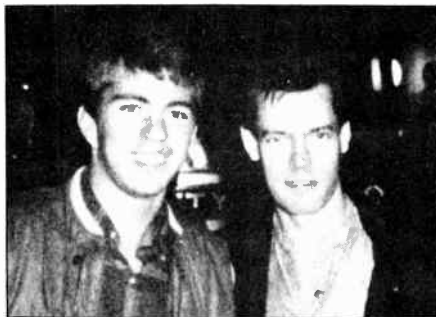
Earl does his show gratis while others involved perform at a reasonable rate, considering the cause, our thanks to them. Folks who have been on the show with Earl besides this year's Dan Miller, Shenandoah, Lorrie Morgan and Keith Whitley include The Whites, Pinkard and Bowden, Shelley West, Butch Baker, Patty Loveless and numerous local performers.

Phil Malone
Portsmouth, Ohio

For information on future Annual Earl Thomas Conley Homecomings, contact Phil at 1226 McConnell Avenue, Portsmouth, Ohio 45662.—Ed.

Fan Captures Star with Shift in Schedule

I'm writing in response to a letter in your July/August issue's Letter section. Someone wrote in and told how he went



Terry Tyson landed the handshake he wanted from Randy Travis.

Correction

Glenda Taylor of Stockbridge, Georgia, provided the photo we printed of Little Jimmy Dickens on page 14 of the September/October 1987 issue. We regret the omission of a photo credit.



As part of the festivities, Conley signed autographs for WUGO radio/Grayson, Kentucky, and made taped intros for the station to use on the air.



Earl Thomas Conley with his proud mama, Ruth. Everybody around town just calls her "Mom."

to see Randy Travis in concert and tried to get his autograph, and all he saw was Randy and Libby running to Randy's bus.

Here's my advice...go to the concert two or three hours early, and you'll probably have time to chit-chat with the stars. It works for me. And here's proof! I met Randy recently before one of his concerts, shook his hand, got his autograph and got my picture taken with him!

Terry Tyson
Nampa, Idaho



Bev Sverko's admiration for Johnny Cash knows no bounds.

Cash for King

I enjoyed your July/August issue covering the Johnny Cash exhibit at the Country Music Hall of Fame.

On July 7th, Johnny and his show performed here in Santa Rosa, California. I first met Johnny in 1984, after being a fan of his for twenty years. Since then I have personally met, talked to him and had photos taken with him on two occasions.

Johnny has always been cordial and a gentleman. I am a member of his International Fan Club and think he is and will always be the King of Country Music.

Bev Sverko

Santa Rosa, California

The King (King Acuff) still lives, but we could make Cash the Chief Executive Officer—how's that?—Ed.

Three Cheers for Michael Bane

...The man who tells it like it is, like it or not! And this Southern boy likes it. Bane's review of Hank Williams Jr.'s album *Wild Streak* in the September/October issue of *Country Music* made me smile from ear to ear. Much better than the review John Morthland gave *Born to Boogie* in the November/December 1987...issue (it chapped my hide).

I eat a lot fewer Roloids when Bane does the reviewing on Hank Williams Jr.'s albums. Hank fans spell relief B-A-N-E!!

Terry D. Hooten
Pecan Gap, Texas

Send Letters to the Editor to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters.

People

HEARTBREAK HOTEL PREMIERES IN MUSIC CITY

Actor David Keith, Knoxville's pride and joy and star of the newest Elvis flick, *Heartbreak Hotel*, attended the film's world premiere at the Belcourt Theater in Nashville. It all started with a song, so the song's writers, Mae Axton and Tommy Durden, were in attendance as well as the song's publisher, Tree's own Buddy Killen. Following the showing of the film, Ms. Mae was heard to say, "David doesn't look like Elvis at all. However, the way he moved when he sang, he made you believe that he was Elvis." That's called acting. David had supper with T. Graham Brown and T.'s wife Sheila following an appearance on *Nashville Now*. T. Graham had a part in the film and attended the premiere also. Tell you what, folks, if movie folks and hillbillies keep hanging out and making movies and music together, we are gonna have to change the name of this good town to Hillywood. Don't you just love it!!

YOU WON'T GET SHORT-CHANGED WITH CASH

Johnny Cash was honored at the Opryland Hotel in Music City recently, where he received the Americanism Award of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Just so you fans know that I know that you are always right, I want to thank you 3,000 screaming youngsters who had the good taste and smarts to show up to see the great John R. at New York City's Ritz. One thing you can count on is that NYC's kids know and love good music. I can tell you right now, young folks, Johnny Cash is a hero worth having.

BARRY BECKETT ON TV

Producer Barry Beckett never shows his face on the screen unless he is behind a piano. He did make an exception recently and went on *Nashville Now* to present Hank Williams Jr. his 17th gold album for *Wild Streak*. For



Waylon and Hank Jr. Just two friends sittin' around and talkin' 'bout old times.

your info. Hank boasts four platinum records to boot. Like I have said before, that boy made that music on his own. Being the son of Hank Williams Sr. had zero to do with it.

I saw the show. It was outta sight. Hank, who loves Waylon Jennings, had him on the show and Waylon shined. Merle Kilgore, Hank's manager/associate, allowed as how Waylon was one of the folks who spoke up and told Hank to do *his* music *his* way. If you all recall, the fans wanted Hank Jr. to be a reflection of Hank Sr. It was not supposed to be that way, and Waylon knew it from the start. He was credited for this on live TV. Another longtime believer in Hank's music is Johnny Cash. They remembered him, too.

SECOND TRY TO THE ALTAR WITH THE SAME GIRL

Richard Sterban, the trendy-dresser/bass-singer with the Oak Ridge Boys, made it to the altar this go-round and said 'I do' with his long-time full-time lady, Donna Summers (not to be confused with the singer of the same name). The first time Sterban agreed to this arrangement, he got cold feet, called

Duane Allen (another Oakster) and said, "I can't go through with it." Donna's persistence paid off, and this time Richard made it to the altar. Here's wishing the honeymooners many happy anniversaries.

BELLAMYS SHOULD SMELL GOOD

Howard and David Bellamy are endorsing a men's cologne. I think that's okay. Country music stars smell just as good as anybody else if they take a bath and use deodorant and cologne.

T-SHIRT IS INTERNATIONAL AND A BEATLE AT THAT

With that awful Albert Goldman book about John Lennon on the seller list, and media folks dissecting both parties but mostly Goldman, we tend to forget about the music and sort of let it slide. But then, lo and behold, a Beatle with another name, Paul McCartney, joins forces with our own Crickets and produces the title song, "T-Shirt," on the group's new album. Exciting, isn't it? The current Cricket roster includes original members J.I. Allison and Joe B. Mauldin along with youngster Gor-

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People

FANTASY AIRPORT



Indiana Jones, a Japanese tourist, a WWI flying ace and an Arab sheik are really The Statler Brothers all dressed up and ready to shoot their latest video for "Let's Get Started If We're Gonna Break My Heart." The video features the fantasies of each Statler as they wait for a delayed flight.

don Payne, who does the singing. (I'll have you all know that Gordon is a friend of mine. I knew him when he played lead guitar and sang harmony with Waylon Jennings long ago and far away.) So let's concentrate on the music and what's happening now, rather than picking at old wounds.

RAVEN FLYING AGAIN

I've written about Eddy Raven many times but never with more pride than today, the reason being the song, "Joe Knows How To Live." What a great song. Eddy is singing better than ever, too. His vocals on "Joe" are as good as anyone's on the radio.

KERSHAW ON THE CHARTS AND GOOD TO SEE

Teaming up on the old Hank Williams-penned tune "Cajun Baby," Doug Kershaw and Hank Williams Jr. did themselves proud, I'll have you know. I'm glad Hank Jr. sang with Kershaw. It's good when one hillbilly helps another one out. Remember all the times that Willie Nelson sang with other artists to give their careers a boost?

MASON DIXON

Mason Dixon now endorses Justin Boots, and they still haven't sent me my size 9 regular. Mason Dixon appear as

part of the Miller Genuine Draft Band Network Tour. Mason Dixon, I live below your line, and I bet you did not know that my brother, Daniel Boone, works for Miller Beer in Eden, North Carolina. Heck, they ain't sent me no beer either!!

SWEETHEARTS SQUARE

Sweethearts of the Rodeo appeared on *Hollywood Squares*. If you don't believe me, a picture speaks a thousand words.

HILLBILLY AT HARD ROCK

Nashville's own Steve Wariner, who picks a pretty mean guitar, presented



Janis and Kristine on nighttime TV.

one of his many to the Hard Rock Cafe in Dallas recently. Shown is Jim Jaworowicz accepting the instrument. By the way, Wariner's new MCA album is titled *I Should Be With You*. You got that right, Steve!

LEMURS NAMED

That's right, ladies and gentleman, step right up. They walk on four legs, have a fox-like face and are kin to monkeys. Their names are Rodney and Rosanne, and they reside in the Zoo in Norfolk, Va. Are you believing that rap? Isn't that just a hoot, a real hoot? Named, of course, for Rodney Crowell and Rosanne Cash, the duo should love country music with a different twist.

I'd like to add my two cents' worth here by saying I still appreciate Rodney recording a great country album. *Diamonds And Dirt* is the title in case you missed reading it in my last column. Rodney, be fruitful and multiply, and I do mean country musically.

LORETTA GETS NEW MANAGERS

Got a note from Sandy Brokaw telling me that he and his brother David Brokaw, along with Ken Riley, will be managing the career of superstar Loretta Lynn. The Brokaws have their own public relations management firm in Hollyweird, and Ken Riley has been associated with Loretta since 1976, first as drummer, then as a road manager. A great team, I hope. Loretta is one of my all-time heroines.

ANOTHER BRAND NEW TENNESSEE WALTZ

"Tennessee Waltz," penned by Pee Wee King and Redd Stewart, was a million-plus selling record by Patti Page back in the 1950's. *The Brand New Tennessee Waltz*, written and sung by Jesse Winchester, was a pretty big record, too. Another waltz called *Tennessee* is threatening us these days in the form of a movie. Filmed right here in Music City, the film stars Julian Sands and Stacey Dash in her first starring role. Our own Johnny Cash opens the flick singing. Rod Steiger is also in the movie. What did I say about Hillywood!

THE PRESS RELEASE SAID...

Reba McEntire has been named one of the Top Three Female Vocalists in the 10th Annual *People Magazine* Reader's Poll. Number One was Whitney

Fact:

"Heavenly Angel," 1971 first issue in the *Hummel Annual* collection, debut series from Goebel Porzellanfabrik, now trades at an exceptional 2,796% of issue price.*

Fact:

"Elvis at the Gates of Graceland," an historic first issue from Delphi, is available for \$24.75.

You can draw your own conclusions from the facts above. But at the Bradford Exchange, the world center of plate collecting, we know that historic first issues are enjoying considerable success. And "Elvis at the Gates of Graceland," the first issue in an historic new series, could easily post big gains on the secondary market.

Consider the evidence.

It's a genuine work of art.

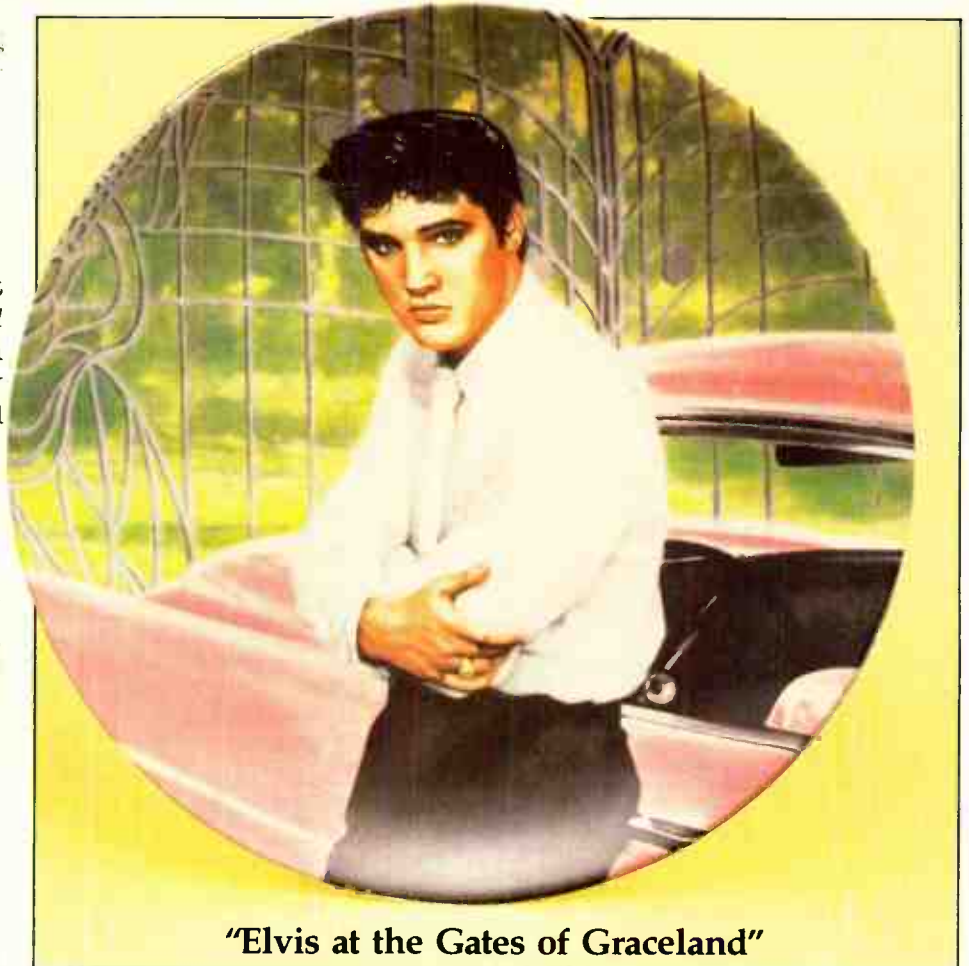
"Elvis at the Gates of Graceland" marks the debut of American artist Bruce Emmett in the collector's plate medium. Officially endorsed and authorized by the Estate of Elvis Presley, each plate is fired to Delphi's rigid quality standards and is accompanied by a Certificate of Authenticity.

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Exceptional historic first issues have been trading at remarkably high values ("The Toy Maker," the 1977



"Elvis at the Gates of Graceland"

by Bruce Emmett

First plate in the *Elvis Presley: Looking at a Legend* series from Delphi. In full color on fine china.

©1988 Delphi*

Actual diameter: 8½ inches.

issue in the Rockwell Society's *Heritage* series, now trades at 1,000% of issue price, and "Over the Rainbow," the 1977 issue in the *Wizard of Oz* series, now trades at 342% of its original price), so it's a good bet that "Elvis at the Gates of Graceland" may quickly rise above its \$24.75 issue price.

*As reported in the Bradford Exchange *Current Quotations* 16-5.

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People

Houston, Number Two was **Barbra Streisand** and Number Three found **Madonna** and **Linda Ronstadt** tied for third place with **Reba**. You want my opinion? I ain't so proud of that. If **Reba** and **Ronstadt** had tied for the Number One position, then I'd think their *People* were as smart as our *People*!!

TRUCKERS AID

Don't you just love hillbillies? **Truckers Aid** is about the hippest thing that happened this summer. For the benefit of a lobbying organization for truckers, the 'all-day music making' featured such greats as **Moe Bandy**, **Johnny Paycheck**, **David Allan Coe**, **Eddy Raven** and **Joe Stampley**. Thanks, guys, for helping out the truckers. There are just no better country music fans than the truckers, God bless 'em.

GLOBAL TRIBUTE

I'd never been to a **Global Tribute** before, but neither had anybody else, since this one was the first in the history of the world. **Adam** and **Eve** never had a **Global Tribute**. All they knew was the garden. What is a **Global Tribute**? It's what you give **Willie Nelson** when his *Stardust* album has been on the charts 520 weeks or 10 years! This, friends and fans, is a first ever. None of them rock 'n' rollers, rhythm-and-bluesers, jazzers, poppers or crackers ever achieved this. This award is exclusively **Willie**. Wearing a *tuxedo* and leather sailor's cap, **Willie** looked every inch the star that he is. With *The Nashville Network* cameras rolling, **Willie** previewed his brand new CBS album, titled *What a Wonderful World*. What a wonderful man!!

On hand to pick and grin were Nashville studio musicians and **Willie's** ever-present harmonica man, the handsome **Mickey Raphael**. Believe you me, it was an event. Wearing a long dress for the first time in six years, I mentally felt great. Seeing **Willie** took me back to long ago when we were all without awards or money but it was still fun. The new album might be another *Stardust*. Produced by the legendary **Chips Moman**, as were all of the evening's events, the program started out with "Spanish Eyes" (**Julio Iglesias** duos on this one on the album and in Spanish!), followed by "Moon River," "Some Enchanted Evening," the title song "What a Wonderful World," and "South of the Border." Flip side presentations included "Ole Buttermilk Skies," "The



"A Global Tribute to Willie Nelson" included a presentation by CBS's **Roy Wunsch** and *Billboard's* **Gerry Wood**.

Song From *Moulin Rouge* (Where Is Your Heart)," "To Each His Own," "Twilight Time" and "Ac-cent-u-ate the Positive." The band took a break, and **Roy Wunsch** took to the podium to introduce CBS-ers from around the world and Nashville. Some of them talked and all of them presented **Willie** with one award after another. Me and **Willie** might have been the only folks in the room who were present when he got his first platinum award for the wonderful album *The Outlaws* with **Waylon Jennings**, **Jessi Colter** and **Tompall Glaser**. See, that record was on **RCA**, and another whole bunch of different

faces in the same kind of suits showed up that day.

The present-day event held at the elegant **Opryland Hotel** had a first...songwriter **Townes Van Zandt** ("Pancho and Lefty") showed up in a tuxedo. I commented to **Townes** as to how well he'd cleaned up and how handsome he was and asked why? **Townes** drawled, "I figured if **Willie** could wear one, I could." Other dressed up folks included **Harlan Howard**, **Bob Montgomery**, **Donna Hilley**, attorney **Joel Katz**, the Honorable Governor **Ned Ray McWherter**, **Alex Harvey**, **Willie's** sister **Bobbie Nelson**, the great **Booker T.** who produced the album *Stardust*, and of course *Billboard's* **Gerry Wood**, who presented **Willie** with a plaque commemorating the ten years the record had been on the charts. It was an evening of excitement and good cheer.

I got my picture made with both CBS-ers, **Roy Wunsch** and **Joe Casey**, I'll have you know. Folks back home in **Caswell County, N.C.**, are impressed that I know anybody, so I send photos. It's called putting up a front and I'm good at it.

THE LADY IN THE LONG DRESS WAS ME

What a do! **Black tie** and **RSVP**. **Minnie Pearl** and **Roy Acuff** in the audience. What kind of a deal is this? Let me tell you about it. It all had to do with **Roy Clark**. On the podium were **Bob Hope** (I swear), **Senator Al Gore**, **Senator Jim Sasser**, **Congressman Bob Clement**,



Jim Halsey, **Brenda Lee**, **George Lindsey** and **Bob Hope** were just four of the many supporters who turned out on behalf of **Roy Clark's** Friendship Tour to Russia.

People

Brenda Lee, Sam Louvullo, Jim Halsey and George Lindsay. The occasion was a \$100-a-plate dinner honoring Roy and the Roy Clark Friendship Tour to Russia. If I weren't already impressed with Roy Clark, this would have done it. First off, Roy Clark has quietly donated almost a million dollars to the children's hospital in Tulsa. As if that weren't enough, it seems that early in his career he once played a certain town in Colorado. When the show was booked, everything was looking up. By the time the show was set to play, the major business in the town had closed and most everyone was out of work. The show, however, was sold out. Roy not only gave the town back the proceeds from the show, he had his office wire back the deposit money. He gave it all to the city. Clark was visibly embarrassed as the 'toasters' related story after story of his generosity and kindness. Please know, Roy Clark isn't taking any money for this voyage. It is strictly an act of brotherhood for the furtherance of good relations and great music in the land of the Red Square. May God bless Roy Clark in this selfless journey. And may our children and our children's children live in peace with the USSR as a result of one man named Roy.

KENNY ROGERS TURNS 50 AND FRIENDS TURN HIM AROUND!

Kenny Rogers is rich, famous and happily married. Wouldn't you just love to be one of those three? Rogers had a game of golf planned at the Mountain-gate Country Club in Los Angeles with his friend **O.J. Simpson** and others. **Ken Kragen** planned the event and had **Dolly Parton** fly in from the movie set of *Steel Magnolias* in Louisiana for the party. Besides Kenny's wife, **Mary Ann Gordon**, and son, **Christopher Rogers**, other invited guests included **Roger Miller, Lee Greenwood, Sheena Easton, Kim Carnes, Henry Mancini, Mac Davis, Olivia Newton-John** and others. Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday to, Happy birthday, dear Kenny, We are jealous of you!

EYE SAW

Only in Nashville can one drive south on Gallatin Road, pass, get passed and pass again none other than **Leon Russell**. His hair and beard are snow-white and both might' near butt-length. Leon was performing recently on TV wearing a red shirt with the beard and hair all a-wonder. Our two-year-old, Jer-



Award-winning K.T. Oslin.

emy Smith, raced into the room at two-year-old speed, took a look at the TV, pointed and yelled, "Santa Claus."

EYE HEAR

After her Grand Ole Opry debut, my heroine, **K.T. Oslin**, was saying one last goodbye to the friends and neighbors along with my buddy **Keith Bilbrey**—all this on live TV. K.T., who has a head full of sense and a mouth full of sass, can talk a blue-streak. Her acting lessons ain't hurt the girl for starters, plus she does have brains. Keith allowed as how K.T. has an answer for everything, that she did not mince words nor was she ever at a loss for words. K.T.'s reply was, "At my age, I ain't got time to waste no words."

EYE SAID

When I heard that the Anti-Defamation League was honoring **Johnny Cash** at the Opryland Hotel, Eye said, "Now there's some folks who know who to honor at a do to get some money for a good organization." Shoot, anybody'd be fool to turn down an invitation to dine with the great John R. Cash.

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS ACUFF REMEMBERS CENTRAL HIGH

Roy Acuff, Esq. turned 85 years young this year. All summer long country music's King has played seven or eight shows a week, counting Opry appearances and matinees. Nobody enjoys, entertaining the fans more than Mr. Acuff. With his yoyo in his hand or fiddle on his chin, or singing for the friends and neighbors, he gives it his all and the fans know and love it. Acuff hasn't forgotten the folks back home,

either. A staunch supporter of Knoxville's Central High School since 1920, Roy went east once again to his alma mater. He lettered in basketball, football and baseball when he was a student and would have been a professional baseball player had he not suffered a heat stroke. Roy's entourage on the visit included Opry favorites **Bill Carlisle, Connie Smith** and **Charlie Walker**. The show's performance at the high school was a fund raiser to help construct the Roy Acuff Fieldhouse.

GILLEY'S AIRBORNE DEBUT ALBUM

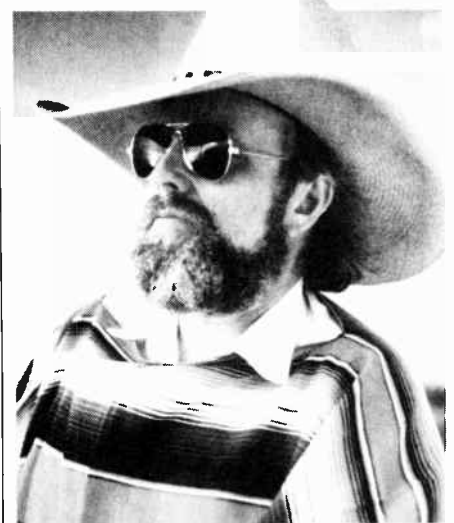
Mickey Gilley ain't about to quit. The cousin of rock 'n' roll's bad boy **Jerry Lee Lewis** and holy roller back slider **Jimmy Swaggart**, Gilley has continued to surface and sing and stay in the mainstream. His album *Chasing Rainbows* is produced by Nashville legend **Larry Butler**. I like the album and look forward to seeing Gilley's name amongst the toppers on the national country charts once again.

A NUMBER ONE FOR LULU

Lulu Roman, Hee Haw's heavy lady of wit, was all excited because her gospel record went to the top of the charts. Congratulations, Lulu. You do sing a good song, girl.

CHARLIE DANIELS' NEW ALBUM

The title of the new CDB album is *Homesick Heroes*. The hit single is "Boogie Woogie Fiddle Country Blues," and it's putting Charlie on another hill-billy roll. Give him room and watch his smoke.



Fiddle master Charlie Daniels.

A Tribute to *The King*



- Limited edition plate
- 3mm border of 23K gold

• Actual size: 10 1/4"

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People

THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK (HAS BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK BEFORE)

Bob Montgomery was born in Lampasas, Texas. He didn't say when, but when you finish this article, you may think the legendary songwriter/music publisher/musician/producer/businessman/song plugger/singer is at least 150 years old. He isn't. His dear sweet mother will attest to this fact, too.

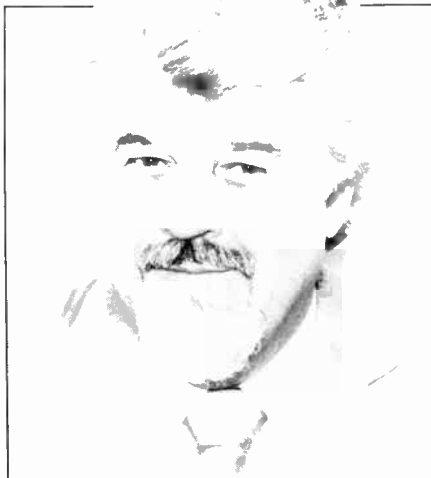
Bob's musical trail started at the tender age of 12 when he and the late **Buddy Holly** became best friends. The celebrated duo of Buddy and Bob began when the boys were only 15 and lasted all through high school. Like best friends, they did everything together. Music was spelled with a capital "M" for them. From this era came two co-written tunes, "Love's Made a Fool of You" and "Heart Beat," both recorded by Holly. Buddy's sudden death went hard with Montgomery. The world was shocked, but Buddy's best friend was stunned.

In 1959 Bob moved to Nashville. Like a zillion other songwriters, he, too, signed with Acuff-Rose. My favorite Bob Montgomery-penned tune happens to be "Misty Blue." This song has been a hit an unprecedented four times, recorded by artists including **Dorothy Moore**, **Eddy Arnold**, **Joe Sun** and **Billie Jo Spears**.

The Texan who wears many hats then ran U.A. Records in Music City. He soon found himself occupying his very favorite position, that of record producer. The recording studio is where Montgomery prefers to be.

From 1969 to 1983 Bob and singer **Bobby Goldsboro** owned and operated House of Gold, one of the more successful music publishing companies on Music Row in Nashville. Montgomery also produced Goldsboro in the studio, including his monster smash "Honey" that went to Number One on virtually every chart in the book. For personal and professional reasons they sold the company in 1983 to Warner Brothers Music. Bob had a joint publishing venture with Warner Brothers which he still maintains. He worked there until 1985, when his old friend, **Buddy Killen**, convinced him that he should move up a "new Tree" as professional manager of the very successful Tree Publishing. Bob's tenure there lasted three years.

Last year, Tree songwriter **Hank Cochran** approached Montgomery with a song and an idea. The song, "Do You



Believe Me Now," the idea, **Vern Gosdin**. Bob approached CBS with the song and the idea. Now, CBS and all record labels are in the business of signing artists that can make a phonograph record for cents and sell it for millions. Hey, don't fault them. It's the name of the game. Everybody plays it. CBS, of course, thought Bob Montgomery had lost his mind. Gosdin was a has-been. Never thinking having a mind was a necessity in this business, Bob just 'kept on keeping on.' Finally he got his 'cents.' He went in the little studio at Tree and came out with four songs that were so great that CBS could not say no! Montgomery, the "Voice" and the songs sold the powers that be. They gave Gosdin an album deal. Montgomery called Vern down to his office and told him to go get the great **Max D. Barnes** to write another song as good as the above. The song, "Chiseled in Stone," the third single, has made the coldest hearts in the media melt and cry, including mine. Classic country Gosdin. The other masterpiece co-written by Gosdin, Cochran and my buddies **Dean Dillon** and **Buddy Cannon** became Vern's first Number One song from the album. Titled "Set 'Em Up, Joe," it will surely play on every jukebox in Texas until Gabriel blows his trumpet.

This whole deal almost didn't happen. It could have missed as easily as it clicked. I, for one, thank God and Montgomery for sticking his neck out on behalf of a super-deserving talent like Mr. Vern Gosdin.

Through the years Bob has sat in the producer's chair for many artists. He's made them sound as good as anybody and better than most. His work has always been a cut above. He's a tough nut to crack with a song. Rumor has it he is hard to please. When you look at

his success with Goldsboro and this stuff of Vern's, then a body can only respect what the man stands for.

The Gosdin miracle gave another new lease on music for the many-hatted Montgomery. If Montgomery could resurrect Vern Gosdin's career, what could he do for an entire label roster? That be the question in mind, I would guess. So CBS put the Mighty Bob where he functions best, V.P. Country Division/CBS Records, A & R department, Nashville. Pretty long title for Bob, I think.

Just so you all will know that I cross all 't's' and dot all 'i's,' I met with Montgomery in his brand new office at CBS before he ever hung his Buddy Holly pictures. First, I was really mad at him. He was in Jamaica during Hurricane Gilbert and almost got blown away. No one heard a word from Bob. The only word we got here in Nashville was there were no American casualties and the lines were down!! Reassuring! Thank God, he made it home safe and sound. His angelic mother and his angelic friend (me) were worried to death, as was the entire music business. Course when he finally hit Miami, the first thing he did was call **Roy Wunsch's** assistant **Kay Smith**. He gave her phone numbers of his mother and children to call. Then twenty minutes later he called back to see how many records Gosdin had sold while he was in Jamaica.

Why was I mad at Montgomery? Because I did not sleep one whole night worrying about his well-being. He's okay now. Alive and well, seated in one of them big over-stuffed chairs that music row execs just melt their backsides into. I took a reading and can testify that Montgomery's fits him like a glove.

BIRTHDAYS CELEBRATED

September 12th **George Jones** celebrated his birthday, hopefully with his bride **Nancy**. September 13th **Bill Monroe** celebrated his 77th birthday all week long! Opry manager **Hal Durham** attended Monroe's party as did **Jerry Strobel** and other Opry folks, friends and entertainers. September 15th **Roy Acuff** celebrated his 85th birthday with a party attended by both **Durham** and **Strobel** and other friends, stars and family. Then on the 17th all the above remembered how much music and how many songs the world would have missed had not **Hank Williams** been born. The week of the birthday of stars is quite a week every year.

People



The Wagoneers have a fan in Hazel.

FOR KAREN AND TRACY

Karen and Tracy, two friends of mine, have joined the string of girls turning on to The Wagoneers. The Texas group on A and M Records has stirred up a bit of dust in this music town. Besides, they got a bunch of applause on the Grand Ole Opry. Their album is *Stout and High*. Give 'em a listen. They are good and good-looking.

NEWCOMER EWING ON OPRY

Skip Ewing, MCA's latest rage, made his debut appearance on the Grand Ole Opry and I saw the performance. He came off looking like a star. He's bragging on the folks he's been opening for this season, folks like Alabama, Barbara Mandrell, The Bellamy Brothers and Randy Travis. I don't blame Skip, I'd brag too.

ASCAP HONORS KENNY

Kenny Rogers has never been out to my house for supper, and he seldom or never calls me on the phone, but I believe he has a good heart. As rich as he is, he still maintains a giving heart. You sure can't say that about a lot of folks. Recently ASCAP Prez Morton Gould presented Kenny with the first Harry Chapin Humanitarian Award. Congratulations, Kenny, but more than congratulations, thanks. Thanks for your help. Today it's hungry children. Next it could be you or me. So thank you in advance and God bless.

MERLE AND WILLIE AT STARWOOD

9,000 of us turned out to see these two superstars of song. The fans got a good bellyful of Willie Nelson, who was in as fine a form as I've ever seen him. When Willie peeled "Mr. Record Man" from his wall of fame, I almost lost my breath. He performed all of 'em, hit after hit, in fine fashion. There's fewer cowboy hats in the audience than in the past and the crowd has aged like good wine. Yuppies and red-necks side by side with suits. But it's always been that way with Willie fans.

Merle Haggard could sing "Chopsticks" and I would dig it, but I personally wanted to hear Merle's "The Bottle Let Me Down" more than Jimmie Rodgers' "T. B. Blues." It seems to me that Merle sings what *he* likes and wants to sing rather than his hits. All around me folks were requesting songs with familiar titles, and Mighty Merle just rared back and sang Lefty Frizzell's "Always Late." Another sorta weird twist, Willie accompanied Merle on the stage, and the hillbilly giants

NAT STUCKEY: 1933-1988

Nathan Wright Stuckey II didn't attain the superstardom that Elvis, Jim Reeves, Webb Pierce and other former *Louisiana Hayride* stars did, but before his death from fast-moving lung cancer August 24, 1988, the Texas-born singer/songwriter had his share of achievements, particularly with novelty songs.

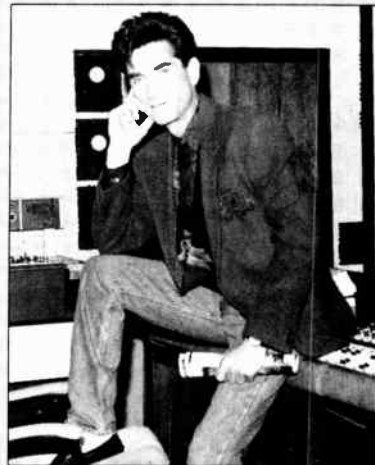
Nat first gained attention as a *Hayride* announcer and began recording in the 1960's first for Sims Records, then for Louisiana's Paula label. Two Paula singles hit the top ten: "Sweet Thang" (Number Four, 1966) and "Plastic Saddle" (Number Nine, 1968). With RCA "Sweet Thang and Cisco" made it to Number Eight in 1970 and "Take Time to Love Her" to Number 10 in 1973. "If God is Dead," a duet with Connie Smith, hit Number Four in 1970. Nat also co-wrote the Buck Owens classic, "Waitin' in Your Welfare Line." He'd written the chorus, and *Hayride* boss Frank Page sent a tape to Buck, who wrote the verses with Don Rich. All three shared composer credits. For a time, Gary Stewart played in Nat's backup band. In the 1970's he had modest success with MCA, where most of his records reached the lower end of the charts. His last real hit was "Days of Sand and Shovels," which reached Number 21 in 1978. Memorial services were held in Nashville; he was buried in Shreveport. —RICH KIENZLE

duoed on "I Think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink." Willie stayed onstage during Merle's entire set with fans screaming for their chart-topping duet "Pancho and Lefty," but the song remained unsung. Merle's tight black pants had seen better days, but he still looked like a fox that just might get in somebody's nest. Time, rhymes and wine ain't hurt the "Okie From Muskogee," which he did sing, to my pleasure.

MY PALS, JESSI AND WAYLON

Was talking with Jessi Colter on the phone from Harrah's where she and hubby Waylon Jennings were performing. They've been on the road more than enough this summer and fall. They are doing fine, thank you, but miss their precious son Shooter and their home. On the other side of the world, practically, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, they turned up recently for a fine do paying homage to another great picker, Les Paul. The other folks who turned out ain't country, but they are friends of Jess and Waylon and belong in my column. They included Rita Coolidge, B.B. King, The Stray Cats, Carly Simon, Stanley Jordan, David Gilmore, Eddie Van Halen, Steve Miller and Jan Hammer. *Cinemas* taped the event for a showing.

BEST DRESSED LIST



Richard Sterban, that deep-voiced Oak Ridge Boy, has made it to the Top 10 once again. This time it was without The Oaks—he was named one of Nashville's top-five Best Dressed Men by the staff of the Nashville-Tennessee's Living section.

It was a dream story of sorts. An Irish kid from Jersey via Brooklyn, writing songs for the King himself, then carving out a niche of his own in Music City with rollicking good-time songs like "Two Dollars in the Jukebox" and "Drinkin' My Baby (Off My Mind)." And Eddie Rabbitt was an off-beat country star—intelligent, articulate, interested in everything from hard science to science fiction. At the height of his success, though, he and wife Janine lost a baby son, sending their lives into three years of soul-searching. And now he's back, returned to a world he missed sorely. We caught up with Eddie Rabbitt after a 20-minute jog around a Baton Rouge hotel, and as storm clouds raced across the south Louisiana skies, he answered 20 Questions.

20 Questions with EDDIE RABBITT

1

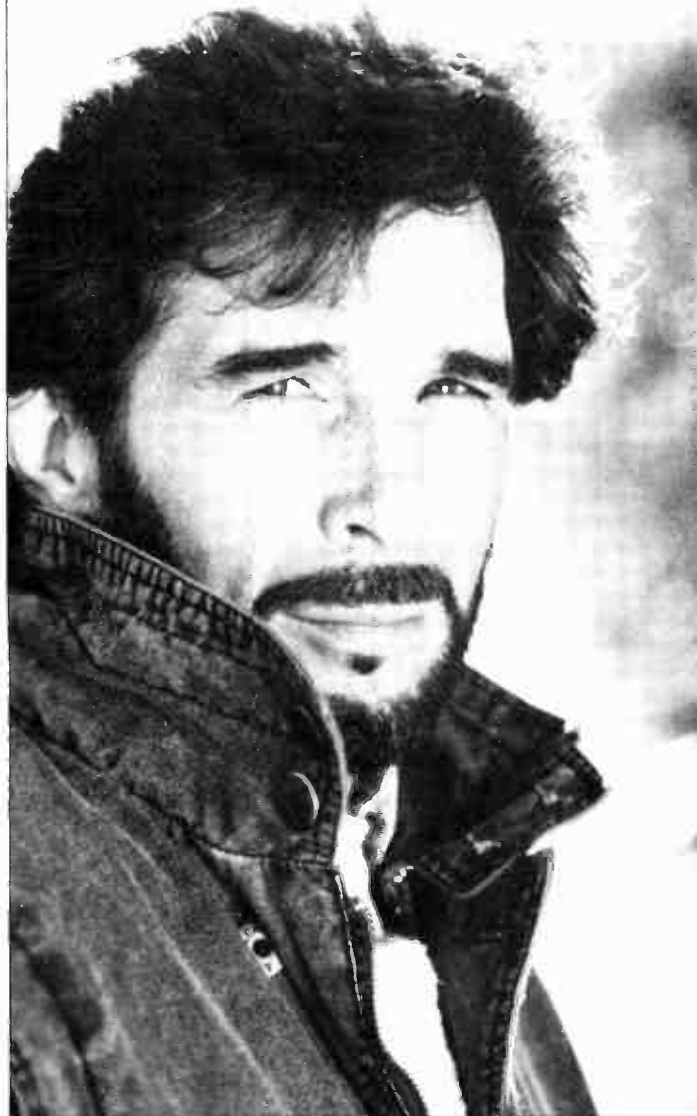
We're looking at a newer, leaner Eddie Rabbitt here?

Man, staying home more than going out, you know, I literally got up to 255 pounds. More—275. And I was never really fat at 275, I'm just big, you know. You know I'm just a big guy. I guess I was fat in a degree, but not in a round rotund sense, you know. I just got larger and larger. They should have made the movie *Big* about me. But, anyway, I just got—because of that tragedy and everything, you know, you just kind of lose a bit of your grip on yourself, I guess. You just start eating, you find good excuses, you know. Good rationalizations to slop down three plates of spaghetti. It was all, I guess, feeding a pain of sorts. But it was time to get back on track again.

2

Looks like you've gotten back on track pretty much.

Yeah. I feel real good. I run. When I'm home, I run some really hard courses, two miles uphill without stopping. I do some real tasks, you know. And I try to beat my own time. I have a particular little place that I run



by Michael Bane

which is, like I said, two miles uphill and around and down some other places, and I try to time it. When I started out, it was over 30 minutes on this little course. Then I got it down to 27 minutes a year later. Then a year after that, I got it down to 26.20. Just two weeks ago, three weeks ago, I was there at the same track and one day I got it down to 25.45. The next day I got it to 25 minutes and 15 seconds.

3

And you're working with a trainer as well?

Yeah, a guy named Mike Haney at the YMCA in Green Hills. He's real good at taking care of the football field at Vanderbilt. He's a real good trainer. So, yeah, I like it. I really do like it, you know. And there comes a point when you gotta treat yourself right.

4

The road doesn't make that easy?

No, and I like eatin' good and feelin' good. It's something that the road in the past and still today doesn't really afford you, you know. It's all fast food places.

5

What's it feel like being back on the road again, serious?

It feels good. It feels real good. I dig the playing now, and, you know, I feel good. I think I look better.

6

Did you expect the kind of reaction you've gotten on the road?

I'm real surprised. It's real nice. I mean, I can't tell from one gig to the next what's going to happen, but I'd say 99 percent are just real good.

7

How nervous were you going back on the road heavy?

Well, a little bit, you know. When you are out of it for a while, this being such a McDonald's mentality world



Emmylou Harris

VISION and HEART



Musical purist, riveting performer and suburban mom—that's Emmylou Harris all rolled into one. A new marriage, a move to Nashville and a hand in the country music industry are keeping her on solid ground these days / by Patrick Carr

When Emmylou Harris sat down to talk in Nashville in the winter of 1988, she was in good spirits. The large reasons for her happiness were to emerge over the course of our conversation, but on that particular day she was also feeling the warmth of a little thing.

She had, she said, just come from a ceremony at the Country Music Foundation, where in her capacity as President of the Board of that institution she had accepted a valuable gift from Buck Owens: the original master recordings of some of his groundbreaking early hits. The event had moved her. She told me she had had tears in her eyes as Buck passed his musical legacy into the loving care of the C.M.F.'s archivists.

She also told me why she was so moved. The occasion, you see, did not mark an ending, another all too familiar enshrinement of past glories, but a rare and wonderful surprise: a new beginning. Thanks to the efforts of a young man standing by his side during the ceremony, the outspoken roots-retro superstar Dwight Yoakam, Buck's

genius had begun to capture the attention of two or three new generations of music lovers and reawaken the interest of both his original fans and the powers that be in the commercial country recording industry. Simply and solely because Dwight Yoakam cared, a creative circle broken long before its time by the cynical imperatives of greed and fashion and music business politics was being mended.

You can see how such an outcome would move Emmylou Harris to tears, for the kind of labor of love just performed by Dwight has been her own personal job for fifteen years.

She's done it well. With her own pristine music and her encouragement of others who would resist the temptations of the lowest common denominator, she has kept the circle intact. If you doubt that, go tune in your local country radio station. Amid the pop and schlock and countrypolitan cutesiness, you'll hear a lot more real country music than you did ten years ago. You'll hear singers who grew up listening to Emmylou Harris records.

Emmy, does it please you to hear new acts, like The McCarters, who make your kind of music and say that you're their inspiration?

Oh, it's wonderful to think that I might have been responsible for that music. It's lovely. The McCarters are like angels. I'm really delighted for them, and for The O'Kanes and Sweethearts of the Rodeo and The Judds, Nanci Griffith, Lyle Lovett, Steve Earle, all those great new people. For all of us, really, because if *they're* successful, that means there'll be more like them.

People perceive you as the keeper of the country flame. Is that how you perceive yourself?

Yes. Very much so. In the early part of my career my whole approach was that I was keeping something going—Gram Parsons' vision of country music—until somebody else came along. Of course, I didn't realize I was going to have to do it for so long. The first day I met Rodney Crowell I knew without a doubt that he was the one, but Rodney ran into all sorts of roadblocks. Thank God people

are beginning to discover him now; an overnight sensation, you know?

But yes, I've always thought of myself as continuing traditions. I'm always searching for little treasures—old songs, new songs, different ways of doing things, this harmony part here, that mandolin solo there—and saying, "This music is so beautiful. This is such a treasure. Listen to this!" Hoping somebody else will say, "Oh, yes! And listen to *this!*"

That's a continuing process, you see. It's a continuing, never-ending thing that must go on. And there was a period, the late 1970's and the whole first half of this decade, when I thought it had ended. I thought nobody was listening. I thought, "What is this stuff they're calling country music? Or music, period?" It didn't move me on any level.

But now it's like, where are they coming from? These young upstarts are just pouring through the doors. It's great.

It sometimes amazes me that you're always been allowed to make the kind of records you really want to make, while others haven't. How come?

I can't really take any credit for that. I have to credit Warner Brothers, my recording company. Historically, you see, Warner Brothers has always operated differently from other companies. When they see an artist be successful, as I was with my first album (*Pieces of the Sky*), they trust you through thick and thin. They might suggest other things, and they might feel that what you want to do is a mistake, but they will let you make that mistake.

My *Roses in the Snow* album was a case in point. I really wanted to do it because I'd been wanting to do a bluegrass album for a long time, and Ricky Skaggs was in the Hot Band at the time, so bluegrass is what we'd all play when we were just sitting around. Also, I thought the timing was right: around then, the late '70's, every musician I met was saying they wanted to do a bluegrass album. But the record company thought it would be a commercial disaster. My *Elite Hotel* album had been a very successful record, and they thought we should follow it with another album of very good basic Hot Band tracks we'd already accumulated—as somebody at the record company called them, "Son of *Elite Hotel*."

But I really wanted the bluegrass album. I said that I was willing to bear the brunt of a commercial disaster in order to make an artistic statement, and I needed Warner Brothers to take that chance with me. And they did.

Of course, the album was even more commercially successful than *Elite Hotel*, but that's not the point. The point is that the record company bowed to my

wishes despite their own instincts.

So you've never had to get involved in a real knock-down, drag-out fight with your record company?

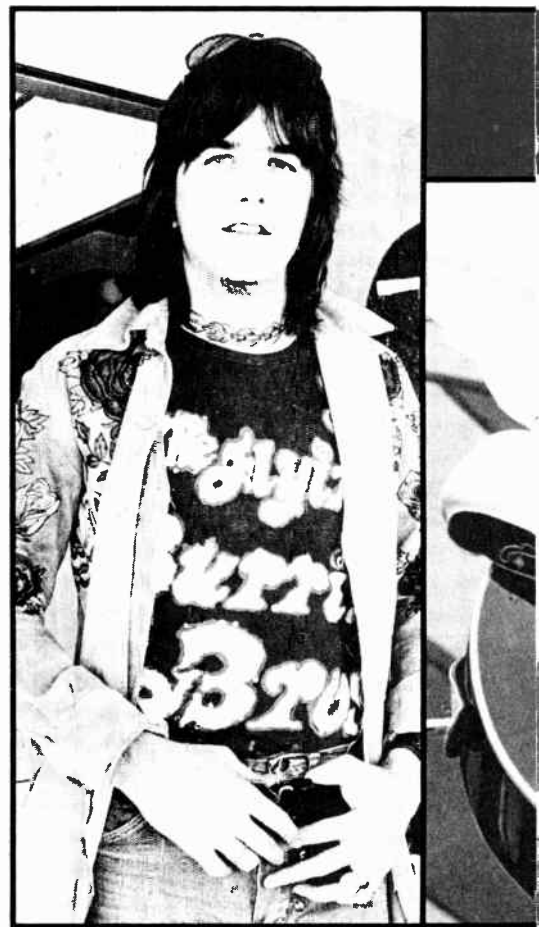
No. I've never had to really fight, which is wonderful, because I don't think I'm a person who would have a lot of energy for fighting. I'm more passive. I just say, "This is what I want to do," and do it. And I believe to this day that if I had changed and done whatever it was the record company was rumbling about me doing, making that pop crossover record, it wouldn't have worked.

You see, I'm convinced that the reason my records appealed to people was the feeling that came across in them, and that came from the fact that I was following Gram's vision and my own heart. There was no way I was going to let anybody mess with that.

Gram's vision, Emmylou's heart: that's where it all came together back in 1972. If it hadn't been for Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris records wouldn't sound the same. In fact, there might not even be any Emmylou Harris records. For when she first met the ex-Bryd and soon to be ex-Flying Burrito Brother at the Cellar Door club in her hometown of Washington, D.C., Emmylou was a musical traveller ready to abandon her journey.

The paths she had already taken had led nowhere. She had wanted to be an actress, but had slowly abandoned that ambition as it dawned on her that her attraction to music was far stronger. She had begun a life in music by taking herself to New York City and playing the folk revival clubs of Greenwich Village, but had abandoned that course as the withering of the folk boom closed one club after another. Then, thinking that her music was really more "country" than "folk" anyway, she had moved to Nashville with the man she had married in New York and the infant daughter she had borne there, but she ended up working as a waitress—the only music she made was in a Happy Hour singing job in some motel—and enduring the failure of her marriage. Then she had run back home to her parents' house in Washington and found a job showing model homes to prospective buyers. She had been encouraged by the thriving local country/folk/bluegrass club scene and had once again thrown her hat into the musical circle, but after a while her club dates felt more like work than music, and she had begun to think about abandoning the music life entirely.

That was the direction of her path when it crossed Gram Parsons' and a whole new highway opened up before her. Parsons too was unhappy with his direction—he was beginning to find his



own band, The Flying Burrito Brothers, as constricting as The Byrds had been—and so he too was ready for the new highway represented by the road-weary young woman before him. He took Emmylou under his creative wing, and together the pair made two deep and gorgeous albums, *GP* and the aptly titled *Grievous Angel*, which stand today as arguably the ultimate achievements of modern country music.

Emmylou and Gram were together for just over a year. In 1973 Gram's creative force was extinguished; overpowered by the excesses with which he placated his demons, he died of a heroin overdose in New York City.

Emmy, what did meeting Gram Parsons mean to you?

At the time my music was not giving me joy, and my problems were just overwhelming me. Gram gave me a reason to be singing, and a music to sing. It's like he said, "Don't dig for the oil here; it's over there," and I realized, "Okay, *now* I understand. *Now* I know why I've got a voice. *Now* I know what I'm supposed to do. *Now* I know the joy of finding that right song, and how I'm supposed to sing it." It wasn't all laid out for me, but I knew I was walking on the right road. I didn't know, and then I knew.

*"Gram gave me a reason to be singing,
and a music to sing."*



That knowledge will sustain you through all the hard times when your records aren't selling, or you have all kinds of difficult things going on in your life. The music is that shining light. It will always be there, and it will never change. No matter what else changes in your life, you can always go back to it. That's how it became for me after Gram came into my life. That's what he taught me.

How did you learn it? Did he tell you, or did he show you?

He had it. I didn't see it right away. It was just working with him, singing with him, learning to sing, becoming a better singer. Singing harmony with Gram was like, "This is what I'm here to do. This is my job in the world." I was just so happy doing that. I really felt I was good at it, and I was excited by it. So it sort of snuck up on me. And then I found myself alone.

A lot of people who knew Gram say they saw his death coming. Did you?

No. I didn't see it at all. Sometimes now I look back and ask myself how I could have been so blind. But I was a very naive person then. I'd never been involved in the real music business scene, and I was not truly aware of or

involved in drugs. I saw all that on a peripheral level. Also, Gram to me was such a friend, such a mentor, that he represented great positivity to me. He was such a life-giving figure to me on so many levels. Then, too, while we were working together he had a period during which he stopped drinking and stopped a lot of things. He appeared to be on the road to recovery; all that stuff seemed to be in the past. So no, I didn't see it coming. It was just a sudden, devastating blow to me.

I grieved, but I knew I had to carry on with what he had taught me. I wanted other people to have that response to music, to get what I had gotten out of it. I didn't really know what to do, but then I got very lucky. I ran into really good people: Mary Martin at Warner Brothers, who connected me to Brian Ahern, who was the perfect person to make records with me. Brian was able to plug into that intuitive thing I had; he could see my strengths and bring out the record maker and studio musician in me. I also had the musicians who had worked on Gram's records, who became my Hot Band: an amazing group of people.

That was such an incredibly creative, magical time. If somebody tried to brainwash me and convince me it wasn't

magic, that it wasn't as wonderful as I remember it, they couldn't do it. I was there. It was all very special, and it all started with Gram.

Gram was never accepted in Nashville. In fact, he and his music were quite pointedly rejected. He was labelled a renegade and undesirable. You weren't, though. Why?

I had good relations with Nashville from the very beginning, but I came as an outsider with a product that had been conceived and put together outside of Nashville, even though the music very much traditionally inspired. And the product was successful; I came here with a country hit, "If I Could Only Win Your Love" from my first album, already behind me.

The shame of Gram's rejection was that he loved established country music. On the Fallen Angels tour, he carried two cassettes with him: one by Charley Pride, and one by Merle Haggard. He wasn't a renegade in the sense that he was a Southern boy who respected his elders and had a great deal of affection for country music and country people. But he was so far ahead of his time.

I don't know. There's still a lot of that kind of thing going on in Nashville. I was accepted, certainly, but even today, some really great new country artists aren't. Steve Earle, for instance. He's someone who could easily have been accepted first in the pop market, but who chose to say, "I'm a hillbilly and proud of it, and I want to play country music." He made a great record, and did everything to openly show that he wanted to be part of the Nashville establishment when he didn't have to. Now, I don't know exactly what happened, but it seems that we've lost him. And he's somebody who is going to be a major, major artist. He could have been one of ours.

So there's still some of that closed-door attitude happening in Nashville. I don't understand why. It's very frustrating.

In your own case, do you think you could have made that first great album, Pieces of the Sky, in Nashville?

No, I don't think so. We had complete artistic freedom to make that record, you see. There was nobody supervising us or paying any attention at all; I was anonymous in L.A. And I just don't think we could have had that kind of freedom in a small, tightly controlled recording town like Nashville. I might have been able to make some sort of record here, but I don't think I'd have been allowed to make *Pieces of the Sky*.

Yes. One shudders to think what might have emerged if you'd signed with, say, CBS down on 16th Avenue

South: covers of "Rose Garden" and "Help Me Make It Through the Night," six tunes copyrighted by the producer's brother-in-law, and one song you actually wanted...

You said that, Patrick. I didn't.

For a decade Emmylou Harris and mainstream commercial country music seemed to be coming from different planets rather than from cities separated by just a thousand or so miles of American soil. While Nashville boomed and busted, enforcing adherence to whatever style seemed to offer the maximum dollar return in the immediate short term—Nashville Sound lushness in the early 1970's, Outlaw fire in mid-decade, Urban Cowboy sleaze as the 1980's dawned—Emmylou just kept making, and selling, the music she felt in her heart. Perhaps that is why in the early 1980's she was one of only two country recording artists to have achieved hit records throughout the entire decade and to be looking at an almost certain future of more of the same (the other being the similarly independent, creatively uncompromising, non-trendy and non-Nashvillian Merle Haggard).

That future has come to pass. Today Emmylou is still a major commercial artist. She is, however, no longer an outsider either professionally or personally. The stylistic distance between her and Nashville has decreased—for now at least the short-term dollars seem to be in country music which sounds remarkably like the kind she's been making since 1972—and the geographic distance has disappeared entirely. Emmylou moved her home from California to Tennessee in 1983, and has slowly become an active member of the Nashville community.

Emmy, why did you move to Nashville? Moving your home or changing your job never works as a solution to your personal problems, it's true. It certainly didn't work when I first came here from New York; all that happened was that I had a new set of problems to face, and the people were friendlier. But sometimes drastic actions help you make changes you need to make within yourself. And I needed to get away from Los Angeles. I wanted to move where I had friends, and it was quieter, and the move also coincided with my separation from Brian (*Brian Ahern, the producer she had married after recording her first album with him*). Most importantly though, I needed to make a statement to myself that I was going to change some things. That's why I cut my hair at the same time: as another statement, a way of making sure I wouldn't go back.

I had become very unhappy in Los



Angeles. I just lost a lot of perspective about a lot of things, personal things I don't really want to talk about, and also I had gotten so caught up in working that I didn't feel I was an artist any more. That happens to a lot of musicians after a while, and it happened to me. My music had gotten away from me.

So did the move to Nashville help you change?

Yes, I think it did. For one thing, I finally finished the *Sally Rose* project here. I'd been carrying it in my mind since 1978. It turned out to be my worst-selling record, and I often wonder whether the audience would have been there for it when I first wanted to do it, but I'll never know that. The most important thing is that I actually finished it, and I'm happy with it. It was like carrying a child for all those years, and finally I was able to give birth to it

here in Nashville.

And I like Nashville a lot better than L.A. It's a much quieter lifestyle. It's a better place if you have kids. You have some chance at a normal community life, because it's a very family-oriented town. There's some sense of stability that kind of spills over, and you feel like you're being helped as a parent. That might be available to people in Los Angeles too, but I never felt it; perhaps that was my fault. But really, Nashville feels little: it's a big city that will always be a small town. If I just stop at a gas station, I run into someone I know, someone I know really well.

In a strange way I'm busier here, too. There's a lot to do. People keep asking me to do stuff with them—people I like, and who have done stuff for me—and I'm always going here and singing with this person, or playing with that one. So I have to be pretty well organized, which



From early on, Emmylou's friends and family played a hand in her music. At left Rosanne Cash and Rodney Crowell. At right with Ricky Skaggs, Guy Clark and former husband Brian Ahern.

living in; this was before we married. We'd just finished *Sally Rose*, you see, and we were raw from all the work that had gone into it—the writing, then the recording, then the mixing—so Paul had the idea that he just wanted to hear me sing the way I do when I'm not thinking about anything. He said, "Let's get a bunch of musicians together and sing some old songs," and that's what we did.

I love it as a singer because I can listen to it without groaning at the places where I had to do overdubs, and I definitely have plans to do a sort of secular *Angel Band*: to get a little band together on some secular material, and record it in such a way that it's as live as possible. It won't be an *Angel Band* because this time I'll be self-conscious, that red light will be going on in my mind, but I think I can pull it off.

It's such fun, recording that way. I just did a duet with Johnny Cash which was like that. We were all at Jack Clement's place, that studio in his attic, with the bass right next to the drums, me and Jack and John all playing acoustic guitars, me and John singing live, the piano over in the corner; it was wonderful. That's how all the old records I really love were made.

The Stanley Brothers "Angel Band" itself was made that way, right? When did you first hear that record?

Oh, God... Let me think... I know; it was in Tacoma Park, Maryland, back in the folkie days. Some friends of mine who were really big Stanley Brothers fans played it for me, and I couldn't believe it. When they made that record, something else was happening in that room. They went back and recorded it again, you know, and it wasn't the same. People swear that there's another harmonic part on that first record that nobody was singing; it's an extra harmonic created by the certain blend of those voices with a certain timbre at a certain time in a certain place. It's pretty amazing.

Our *Angel Band* can't surpass that, of course. It's not meant to. It's meant as homage to The Stanley Brothers—half that record, in fact, is music they did originally—because they are sort of The Rolling Stones of bluegrass, aren't they? They're scary.

The woman before me is obviously, genuinely, a person inspired and motivated by music; not a star or a personality or a show person or a music business politician, but a musician.

Partly I draw this conclusion from the clear evidence of her career to date, which has involved practically nothing in the way of TV talk show appearances,

is difficult.

I think if you're a parent in the music business, though, this is just about the only place to live. You're always only twenty minutes away from a world class studio, and there are always good musicians here. They're moving here all the time, too. It's scary, almost; it's great.

Who are your best friends here?

Well, Rodney and Rosanne—Rodney and I have been friends for years, of course, since his Hot Band days—and Hank DeVito too, though he doesn't come into town very much. I guess I see more of Guy and Susannah Clark, whom I met through Rodney, than anyone else. Those are the people closest to me in the music business.

I don't really get to hang around with people as much as I'd like, though. I'd really like to get together with my musical friends more to listen to music

and talk about music and just sing. That's where a lot of your ideas and your inspiration come from, you see. So much of the music that I did on my second and third albums, after Rodney joined the Hot Band, came from just sitting around trading music. That's the real specialness of what we do in this business; those are the best times. We need to do that more now that we're all a little older and mellower and we stay home more. I mean, we're all within twenty minutes of each other here.

Your last album, and your first album of sacred songs, Angel Band, came out of that kind of setting, didn't it?

Yes. Basically, it was a live performance, and the only way we were able to do that was that we were not, in our minds, making a record at the time. We did it all on my husband Paul Kennerly's sixteen-track TEAC in a barn he was



CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

Today Emmylou and husband Paul Kennerly have a happy and supportive marriage.

promotional videos, movie parts, *National Enquirer* headlines or other symptoms of glamor addiction. Otherwise I base it on more direct observation: the joy in her eyes when she talks about music counterpointed by the openness, honesty and lack of conceit in her answers to my questions. And then too there's how she presents herself visually. She has not, for instance, applied any makeup today. Despite the ready availability of an arsenal of treatments, her hair remains prematurely silver. She is wearing flat-heeled black shoes and a comfortable flannel dress patterned with horses (inexplicably rendered upside down) which she bought in the only clothing store open one day in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. (The next day, warned that we will be taking her picture for the cover of the magazine, she shows up very slightly glamorized; a little makeup, earrings, and a sweater and skirt.)

The overall effect of the everyday Emmylou, then, is nothing at all like the image of that grievous, ethereal hippie-hillbilly angel of the album covers. It is, rather, the image of your somewhat more than usually attractive and well-bred suburban Mom: just another nice lady doing a little business between grocery shopping and fetching the kids from school. When in fact she drives to the supermarket in her Bronco with the *Mom's Taxi* sticker in the rear window, nine times out of ten her fellow shoppers have no idea that a star has fallen into their midst.

But of course all images are decep-

tive, or at least only partially revealing. The grievous angel tours live and in person among we hippie-hillbilly dreamers only during the summer, when her nine- and eighteen-year-old daughters aren't in school. The suburban Mom duets with Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings during the day and amuses herself with light reading such as *The Second Barchester Chronicles* by Anthony Trollope. The fragile recluse, the aloof mystery woman of creative country music, is in fact a socially adept, genuinely charming and unusually open person.

Would you say that you're shy, Emmy?
I don't think I'm shy *per se*. I think I've always shied away from a lot of media, because I've never felt comfortable on television. I'm a coward in that sort of situation. I feel that things are getting away from me. I feel as if I'm on an alien planet. But I'm very comfortable one on one, and I'm most comfortable when I'm performing.

Are you even-tempered?

Yes; I'd say I'm even-tempered almost to a fault. In fact I've been spending this last year learning to get mad; some people have told me that I should. I'm doing okay, too. I've had some great temper tantrums.

Do you have a relatively happy life?

Yes, I think so. I feel that I'm trying to be a responsible adult. That may sound sort of boring, but it's something that gets real important to you at a certain

point in your life, especially if you have children.

I have a happy personal life. I have a very good marriage with someone who's incredibly supportive of me. This is an odd line of work I'm in, and you really need someone who's there for you—but usually they have to be in the same sort of work in order to understand what you're going through, which means that they have their own careers, so usually there are lots of problems and conflicts. But Paul handles all that really well. I'm a very lucky girl.

And the music is still very vital and exciting to me. I get excited about making a record, or finding a song I want to record, and I know I have the means to do it. I have a record company, and I still have credibility in the recording community. I have all the tools I need to either be successful in doing a song really well, or not successful. If I don't come up with the real artistic goods, it won't be for lack of tools. So I'm very well positioned to play the game, to cast those dice.

You've said in the past that for you, music is a spiritual thing. What do you mean by that?

I don't mean "spiritual" in the Christian broadcasting or traditional gospel music sense. I just believe that all of us on this planet are spiritual beings—I don't know exactly *how* I know that; I guess I know it because I'm a spiritual being—and I think music speaks to that side of us. Many things do, but music does it in a very pure way. It doesn't have to be talking about God; it just has to be about things that are real.

This is a tough one. I think the reason I make music is that I can't express spiritual feelings in any other form. The Indians have a saying that the best way to catch a horse is to build a fence around it, and I like music that does that. Sometimes you have to use words to paint pictures in your mind rather than coming right out and saying something, and good music is like that; if a song is right, it can say something in such a way that it suddenly makes something obvious which has eluded you. It can put you in touch with something. It can make you come alive inside.

You see, you can be technically alive, but dead inside yourself, and we're all in danger of that every day; we can be overwhelmed by the wrong things. We can even be overwhelmed by the wrong kind of music, because so much of music today is like the big sleep. It's designed to tranquilize you. But when music's right, it wakes people up. It brings out their spirits, and makes them alive.

That's what happens to me when I hear real music. It's what I'm trying to do when I make music myself. That's the kind of gold I'm mining for. ■

CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1989—HELEN BARNARD, EDITOR

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Peace and Joy in 1989/Radio Returns

The year that has flown by and the year that is now beginning have witnessed a presidential election and many local political contests, the usual flood of summer concerts by touring artists, including radio-sponsored Fan and Listener Appreciation Days in various local venues, and countless daily events in countless individual lives, some happy and some sad. Not sure there's a country song about presidential elections, but there probably

is one about everything else that has happened to any one of us in 1988.

More members have written in to recommend their local radio stations, and the *Newsletter* is apparently continuing, judging by your thank you notes and other friendly letters, to provide that special link between people with like interests.

May 1989 be a good year for us all.



The Pike Bros. Band and VP, now President-elect, Bush in February, 1988.

Dennis Devine's Christmas card, 1988.

Dennis and Johnny Cash in August, 1988.



It's a Smell World

Antiques dealer and country music fan—especially Johnny Cash fan—Dennis Devine had a fulfilling year in 1988, mixing with politicians and performers. Here are some of the highlights.

President-elect Bush, then Vice President Bush, visited Council Bluffs, Iowa, Dennis Devine's hometown, twice last year. The first time, in January 1988, Dennis caught up with him with a copy of *Country Music Magazine's* 15th Anniversary Issue with John Cash on the cover. The *Newsletter* published that photo in its May/June 1988 issue, and Dennis used it as his Christmas card with the word *Peace* inscribed.

For Bush's second visit, in February, Dennis organized the entertainment before the rally. He chose The Pike Brothers Band, a local group, to serenade the VP and Mrs. Bush, afterwards almost got collared by the Secret Service as he rushed up to get Mr. Bush's picture with the boys, l. to r. in photo above, Kevin Pike, J.L. Pike, John

Fitzgerald and Mr. Bush. The Pike Bros. would like Dennis to be their manager, but he is too busy. If Mr. and Mrs. Bush invite The Pike Bros. to The White House, however, Dennis says, "I would be their manager then."

Dennis' major interest in country music is Johnny Cash. In August of 1988, Dennis got the best picture of himself and Johnny Cash that he's had since the first time they were snapped together back in Omaha in 1960. The *Newsletter* published the 1960 photo in one of its first issues, July/August 1984. This time Dennis and the Man in Black met in Grand Island, Nebraska.

—H.B.

In This Issue

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The Beaver, Cactus Maces and Kim Shanks, the crowd and Highway 101 on stage at WBVE's first Fan Appreciation Concert.

Beaver Throws a Bash

Kim Shanks of Clevel, Ohio, is a WBVE radio fan, a Highway 101 fan and a very enthusiastic reporter. She thinks people who do this kind of work for a living are lucky people. Here's her report on a Fan Appreciation Day in Ohio that featured Highway 101 in a red-hot performance.

Wow! what a week in Cincinnati. First the All-Star Game and the hoopla, then Highway 101, group of the year. Let me tell ya, folks, they lived up to that award. They were absolutely terrific.

Highway 101 was in town to perform for local Cincinnati radio station WBVE, better

known as "Beaver," at Beaver's first Annual Fan Appreciation Day held on July 11, 1988. The Beaver's been on the air for about 18 months. In addition to Highway 101, Exile and a local country group, Cheyenne, were there to help Beaver and also to help celebrate Cincinnati's 200th birthday. Of course, this was all free except the food and drinks, and the proceeds from those sales went to help fight Muscular Dystrophy. Budweiser was a big sponsor, too! Now on with the show!

Highway 101 performed all of their hits from their last album, plus songs from their new one which was due out about a month after the concert. These people really know how to put on a show and keep a crowd going. The crowd went crazy when Paulette did "Whiskey, If You Were a Woman," not to mention when she sang their new song, "Do You Love Me." Everybody got in on the act as lead singer. Jack did the old George Jones song, "What Am I Worth." Curtis sang CCR's old "Down on the Bayou," and last but not least Cactus sang one from the new album, "Hillbilly Highway." The show lasted about an hour and 45 minutes, but I could have stayed all night.

After the show, Highway 101 signed a few autographs, and it was a dream come true for this gal because I had a chance to have a chat with them all and get my photo taken with Jack and Cactus. I just can't say enough about 'em. Especially how nice and polite

they were signing autographs and having their pictures taken. They seem to enjoy every aspect of what they do. So, folks, if they ever come to your neck of the woods, go see 'em. It's worth every penny. Watch out, Alabama, here comes Highway 101!

**Kim Shanks
Clevel, Ohio**

NOVEMBER 1988 POLL Album and Single of the Month

George Strait	<i>If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Lwin'</i>
Dwight Yoakam and Buck Owens	<i>"Streets of Bakersfield"</i>

George Strait rides into first place in albums in this month's poll with *If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Lwin'*. Ricky Van Shelton is second with the long-running *Wild-Eyed Dream*, Randy Travis third with *Old 8X10*.

In singles, saddle pals Dwight Yoakam and Buck Owens claim first. Tanya Tucker is second with "Strong Enough to Bend," Randy Travis third with "Honky Tonk Moon," and The Oaks fourth with a song with a long name, "Gonna Take a Lot of River," from their latest album.

Turn to the For Members Only page to vote in the January Poll.

It's Not Slim Pickins

Thanks to all those who wrote in to tell us that the cowboy pictured at the KLAC mike with Roy Rogers in the September/October 1988 *Newsletter* is *not* Slim Pickins. It's Dick Haynes, longtime DJ for KLAC radio in Los Angeles. Where were you guys when we needed you? No one here could identify Dick nor could our contacts at the Country Music Foundation in Nashville.

Rick Mouze, Carla Goodwin, Jeanne Hall and Stan Jobe are the members we heard from. They filled us in on "the late great DJ, Dick Haynes, a very popular morning DJ" on KLAC. Haynes' show was called *Haynes At the Reins*.

Station on Track

Program Director Scott Sparks of Colorado station KRTZ was so pleased with the mention of KRTZ in the September/October Newsletter that he sent us more on the station's community activities and programming.

KRTZ has been on the air for six years, and under its present ownership for two and a half of those years. It has gradually evolved from a very traditional station to one that is more contemporary, without becoming a hit country outlet. Our listeners range in age from toddlers to octogenarians, and embrace every musical taste from Eddy Arnold to Exile.

We choose our playlist very carefully, using the trades as a guide, but relying on our knowledge of our audience and our own ability to judge the worthiness of a particular release more than the charts. We listen to every record we get, and the adds are made on merit. If we get a good record by an obscure artist, whether on a major label or an indie, we'll play it—at least to expose our listeners to it. And if we get what we think is a weak or mediocre release from a star, chances are it won't be added—at least not until it appears to be a bona fide hit.

We're excited to be in country radio right now. Great new artists like The O'Kanes, Highway 101 and Kathy Mattea are emerging. At the same time we are seeing the reappearance of such old favorites as Tammy Wynette, Loretta Lynn and Charley Pride. We think there's room in country music for Southern Pacific and Foster and Lloyd as well as Don Williams and Merle Haggard. And how about Dwight Yoakam or The Desert Rose Band—traditional country with a contemporary twist.

We don't play ten in a row. Or even six in a row. Our jocks talk to the listeners. And we stress that when they open the mike, they tell them something they didn't already know. It might just be the weather forecast, or it might be an interesting tidbit about the artist or writer or producer of the last song played. We don't want our station to become background music—we want to *communicate* with our audience—and have them communicate with us.

KRTZ is one of the few 24-hour stations in the area. The overnights are by no means a money-maker for the station, but we feel it is our responsibility to be there for the motel desk clerk, the insomniac or the mother who's up for the three o'clock feeding. We know they appreciate it, and that it only reinforces their loyalty to us.

At KRTZ, we try to be the best radio station we can be—entertaining, informative and an asset to the entire community. We are committed to local news, with three newscasts each weekday. We participate in innumerable community service activities.



Typical of KRTZ's involvement are, clockwise from top left, Hot-Dog-a-Thon to benefit Muscular Dystrophy, Dessiree Kline and Bill Tortorello selling Lazy Boys live and the station truck in a homecoming parade.

We settle bar bets and dispense household hints. In short, we want people to think of us whenever they want or need something—good music, someone to talk to when they're lonely, a favor for the high school band or the phone number of the local CHR station.

It seems to work. We continue to grow in popularity with an ever-widening array of listeners. Our advertisers are steady and loyal. And it just plain feels right. And that's the most important part. It's fun to come to work every day.

Scott Sparks
Cortez, Colorado

Dandy Programming at WRKZ

Longtime subscriber and member Charlie Rothrock recommends local station WRKZ as one of the best in the business. DJ Dandalion is nationally known.

I would like to add WRKZ (Z107) to your list of great radio stations.

In my book, this station is the best in the "Country." Their Music Director is "Dandalion," her CB code name. She is far and away the greatest music director in the business. Many a new artist owes her a



Larry Boone and WRKZ DJ Dandalion take a break at a promotional gig.

debt for giving them a start. She just has the "special knack" for picking good artists and good songs. She was the first DJ to play Boxcar Willie songs. She does the 12 midnight to 5 A.M. show, and it is a good mixture of the old and the new.

Among the newer artists she has helped are The Birch Sisters, The McCarters, Ricky Van Shelton, Highway 101 and Larry Boone.

We are lucky to have a radio station like Z107 in our area. They do their own programming. Most other stations subscribe to Top 40 computerized programming, so Z107 is a refreshing change. They think for themselves, so we get a good mixture of the old and new, the well-known and the lesser known artists.

Dandalion was one of the five finalists in the *Cashbox Magazine* DJ Awards and also a finalist in the CMA Awards Medium Market competition this past year.

A Z107 fan forever! We have also been a subscriber and member for most of your magazine's history.

Charlie Rothrock
Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania



Charley Pride at WCAO Fan Appreciation Day in Maryland.

WCAO Says Thanks

WCAO radio in Baltimore, Maryland, hosted a free concert for country music fans in its area at the Anne Arundel County Fair on September 18th. Charley Pride entertained

the crowd, estimated at over 10,000, a record-breaking event for the Fair and, according to the station, "a great way for the WCAO radio family to pay back their loyal listeners."



Too Late To Spin

Al Ferguson received well over 100 records in response to his call in the March/April 1988 Newsletter, but in the meantime, his station, KJAA in Mesa/Phoenix, changed formats and then went out of business. Here's part of the letter he sent out to those who responded. At this time I am looking for another station that will let me play the kind of music I think is the best, and that's Golden Oldies Country. When was the last time you turned on your radio and heard music by Hank Snow, Jimmy Rodgers, etc., or the newcomer in country music trying to get a DJ to play their record? If I thought a new record had a chance, I would play it on my show. I didn't look on the charts to see if the record was listed.

Today's country music DJ's play only what's listed on the charts, and the newcomer hasn't got a chance to get his record played. I will keep your records, and if another station gives me a chance, I will play those recordings I think have a chance to make it.

Thanks again, and I wish you all the best of luck.

Al Ferguson
Glendale, Arizona

Crowing for KROW

A station out in Reno, Nevada, is sending out true country signals. Eddie Taylor gives KROW top marks.

KROW radio in Reno, Nevada/780 AM, goes with logo of Reno's real country music station, and they can back it up whenever they are asked to show you they are real country.

It is great to be able to hear Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams Sr., Stonewall Jackson, Hank Thompson, Hank Snow, Kitty Wells, Faron Young, Webb Pierce, George Morgan, Red Foley, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, George Jones, Johnny Horton, Buck Owens and other artists who made country music what it is so that a lot of today's progressive-sounding country artists even have a field of music to play and sell their records in—they would never make it otherwise. Yet many country stations will not play the above-named artists because they are "too country." But not KROW radio.

I think a lot of country music higher-ups forget that country music is an American art form of ethnic culture of hardworking people who make up the backbone of this country. When these people listen to country radio, they expect to hear country music and not rock 'n' roll as some country radio stations shove down your throat.

From General Manager John O'Brien and Program Director Rickey Randell to all the DJ's, all are to be congratulated on their choice of real country music, which includes today's traditional country artists also, be they male or female. That's the real country sound we hear.

Eddie Taylor
Carson City, Nevada

Another Vote for Repeat Performance

Repeat Performance, a golden oldies program on Charleston's WTMA mentioned in the May/June 1988 Newsletter and again in the November/December issue, gets one more vote from a listener.

Harley E and Bette B's program is a "must" for people who like traditional country and western music. Their great sense of humor and knowledge of artists and songs contribute to the best oldtime country music program I've heard in over fifty years.

It would be great for country music if *Repeat Performance* could be syndicated to other radio stations so more listeners would have an opportunity to hear once again the real country music we grew up with and enjoy radio at its best.

James V. Robinson
Charleston, South Carolina

Bravo, Station WQXK

An Ohio station gets a big hand from one of its listeners, Heather Mancuso.

There's a great country station over here in Salem, Ohio, WQXK, which is this area's leading station for country music lovers. The lively DJ's keep all of Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania in tune with yesterday's and today's top country hits.

The DJ's from WQXK also take the time to meet and talk with their listeners every Sunday at Ponderosa Park, this area's largest country music live entertainment complex, featuring today's and yesterday's top entertainers, including Alabama, Ray Stevens, Randy Travis, Lee Greenwood, The Oak Ridge Boys, Reba McEntire and Charley Pride.

The WQXK DJ's are ready to take all requests on their tollfree request line. Burton Lee, the station's top DJ, has been with WQXK for five years. He told me that he and the other DJ's use *Country Music Magazine* along with other sources for keeping up to date with all the country stars.

Heather Mancuso
Salem, Ohio

"Blind Child" Found

The response to Bernieta Brown's request for help in the July/August 1988 Newsletter was greater than she expected.

Thank you for printing my letter and the words I remembered of "The Blind Child." What a surprise! I received over 50 replies, including words, sheet music and two cassette tapes.

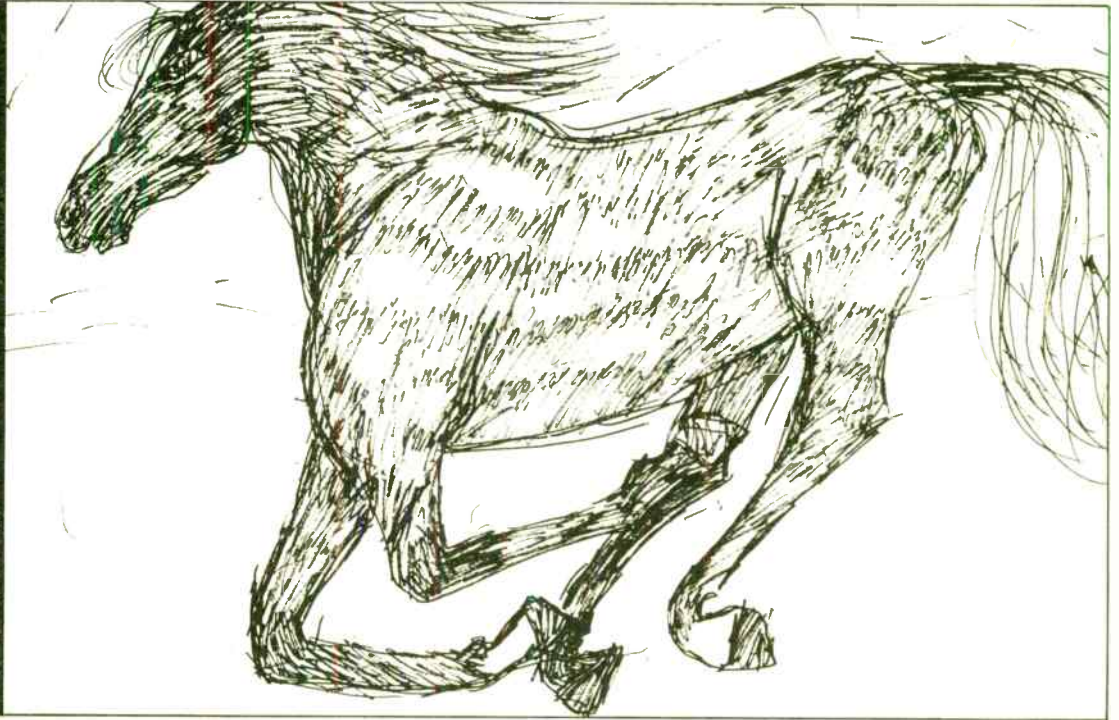
I have written thank you letters to everyone who replied to my request. I also wanted you at the Newsletter to know how much my sister and I appreciate your help and all the CMSA members who sent replies.

Bernieta Brown
Turlock, California

Readers Create

If Wishes Were Horses

Marie Des Longchamp of Houghton, Michigan, on the Upper Peninsula, finds joy in drawing. Marie is a longtime correspondent of ours and an avid country music fan. She draws her horses free-hand. This is one of her newest drawings. "They're not perfect," she says, "but I have a lot of fun sketching, especially horses." Marie lives in the Houghton County Medical Care Facility and has friends all over the country.



Randy Travis by Stanley Guy of Everman, Texas. This is Stanley's second drawing featured in Readers Create.

His first was of George Jones. Stanley writes that he's 25 and that he wishes Randy could sign his drawing.

Letter to D.J.s (Country Titles)

Elizabeth Hornsby wrote this listening to her local station, WFTM in Maysville, Kentucky. She included two popular songs because "the artist has a great name—Bruce Hornsby" and because the song titles fit in.

TO MY LOCAL D.J.'s AT WFTM.

Dear Mr. D.J.,

I don't want you to be *The Last One to Know* that you have *One Friend* out *In Radioland*. It's a *Crying Shame* that everyone don't take *One Step Forward* to *Turn the Radio On* to WFTM.

It's a *Sure Thing* that I come from a *Long Line of Love* for *Country Music*, and I can't help it if *Life Turned (Me) That Way*.

I'll just sit here in *This Old House* and dream of going *Fishing in the Dark*, but I'll keep a *True Heart* and *Listen to the Radio* because listening to WFTM gets us *A Little Closer*.

I could be on *Rockytop* or on *Maple Street* or could go *Bop-ing* down that dusty *Dixie Road* or even take a ride on the *Orange Blossom Special*, but I'll be content now with *Another Place, Another Time*.

I'm *Too Old to Grow Up Now*, so I'll just keep on being *Americana*, listening to the *Fiddling Man*.

If *My Heart Had Windows*, you would see *What a Love* I have for *Country Music*. Even though I'm one of the *Old Folks*, I realize that *All That Glitters Is Not Gold*, but I have the *Best of It All* with WFTM. I don't have a *Satellite Dish*, but I've found out that *The Best Things in Life Are Free*.

You know that *You Bring Out the Wild Side of Me*, but I do calm down when I hear the trains whistle as they *Go On Down the Tracks*. You see, *Trains Make Me Lonesome*, and sometimes I even get the *Freight Train Blues*. When I do get *The Blues*, I get out in the *Western Skyline*, in the *Mandolin Rain*, and look for the *Evening Star* to *Twinkle, Twinkle*.

I'll stop with the *Famous Last Words of a Fool*, and say, "I'm *Gonna Get Ya*" if you ever stop playing *Country Music* on WFTM. You don't want to see me *Cry, Cry, Cry, Do Ya?*

Tell Me True, Do You Believe Me Now when I say *You're Always on My Mind!*

I've been told that I'm a *Survivor*, but without WFTM and *Country Music*, I'd be *Goin', Gone!*, *Forever and Ever*, a *Wildflower* listener, *Elizabeth*.

Elizabeth Hornsby
Maysville, Kentucky



The Louvin Brothers

Family harmonies never sounded better, even though Ira and Charlie Louvin experienced bad luck and eventually tragedy in pursuit of their career.

by Rich Kienzle

There's always been beauty in the quaint and rustic. People have long considered old barns with Mail Pouch ads painted on them as true Americana, part of America's cultural history. The innocence, the optimism, even the mythology of earlier days tell us much about where we've been and, more significantly, where we're going.

And so it is with the majestic, moving music of Ira and Charlie, The Louvin Brothers. They were solidly in the tradition of earlier high-harmony brother-duet acts of earlier decades: The Blue Sky Boys, The Dixons, The Monroes, The Sheltons and The Delmores. The Louvins were virtually the only such act to survive into the Nashville Sound era.

Their grace, dignity and sheer intensity must be heard to be appreciated, and that appreciation has mushroomed in recent years. Emmylou Harris' longstanding public admiration of their music helped spark interest. Old Louvin recordings and even live radio shows have been reissued by Rounder and by the Country Music Foundation. And someday their images surely will grace a plaque in the Hall of Fame.

But that's a far cry from Section, in northeast Alabama, where Ira Loudermilk was born April 21, 1924, and Charlie July 7, 1927 (songwriter John D. Loudermilk is a cousin). The farm work was hard, and the records of Jimmie Rodgers, The Carter Family, The Blue Sky Boys and The Monroes as well as the Opry broadcasts were a welcome respite. Their father played banjo, and religious music was ingrained in their lives from the start.

But the real spark that set them on fire was the day Roy Acuff passed their farm in his customized car, heading to a performance at a nearby schoolhouse. After the boys saw him perform that evening, the die was cast. By 1940 Ira and Charlie, on mandolin and guitar respectively, were playing local fairs and eventually the radio in Chattanooga.

While Charlie served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, Ira worked with Charlie Monroe, where he altered his name to Louvin. Charlie did likewise when discharged, and they headed to Knoxville, where they worked until 1946 on the famed WNOX Radio *Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round*, the show that launched Archie Campbell, Chet Atkins and Don Gibson.

Things didn't go well there, and they spent the next three years in Memphis, where they made \$60 a week at WMPS and recorded one single in Nashville for Decca which went nowhere. Things still weren't going well in 1951 when they came under the wing of songwriter/producer Fred Rose, Hank Williams' benefactor.

Rose, whose clout at MGM was such that he could record anyone he wanted, took them to Nashville's Castle Studios for three four-song sessions over the course of a year that produced

some outstanding music, including such Louvin sacred classics as "They've Got the Church Outnumbered" and "Weapon of Prayer" and the secular "Get Acquainted Waltz." But even the MGM contract didn't seem to help their careers. As 1951 drew to a close, they were working in the Memphis Post Office.

Things improved after Rose took them to Capitol in 1952, where their first session produced "The Family Who Prays," another sacred classic. Charlie was drafted and sent to Korea, not to return until 1954, when they moved to WVOK in Birmingham, Alabama. Things fell apart there, too. Money was short, and with nothing to lose, they called their new Capitol producer Ken Nelson and told him they wanted to go straight to the top: to the Opry. Nelson said he'd try.

What happened next is one of those stories that proves truth stranger than fiction. Nelson called Jack Stapp at the Opry and made his pitch. Stapp, who'd auditioned the Louvins before for the show, was skeptical. Nelson's bluff would impress the most astute poker player. He told Stapp the Ozark Jubilee in Springfield, Missouri, wanted the Louvins—in fact, they didn't. Stapp fell for it. On February 26, 1955, they made their first appearance as members of the Opry.

In late 1955, they had their first Top 20 hit with Capitol: the chillingly beautiful ballad "When I Stop Dreaming," which got to Number 13. In 1956 they had three Top Ten numbers: "I Don't Believe You've Met My Baby" (Number Five), "Hoping That You're Hoping" (Number Eight) and a double-sided hit: the ballad "You're Running Wild" and the semi-rocking "Cash on the Barrelhead." Their records featured some of the best studio musicians in Nashville, including Chet Atkins and, later, their own Atkins-style guitarist, Paul Yandell (who often accompanies Chet on records and shows today).

Tragic Songs of Life, their first album, appeared in 1956, followed by *Nearer My God to Thee* (1957), *Ira & Charlie* (1958), *The Family Who Prays and Satan is Real* (1959), *My Baby's Gone* (1960), the classic *A Tribute to The Delmore Brothers* (1960), *Country Christmas with The Louvin Brothers and Weapon of Prayer* (1962), *Keep Your Eyes on Jesus* (1963) and *Current Hits* (1964). MGM rereleased all their material done for that label back in 1957, and today that album, *The Louvin Brothers*, is extremely rare.

In 1958 "My Baby's Gone" was a Number Nine hit. "Knoxville Girl" (1959), "I Love You Most of All" and "How's the World Treating You" (1961) and "Must You Throw Dirt in My Face" (1962) were all brilliant, though they only got as far as the Top 20. Some records were Nashville Sound-oriented, with excess background choruses, but Ira and Charlie had become stars and toured the country constantly.

However, by the late 1950's the new sounds spawned by Elvis (with whom The Louvins once toured for three months) were affecting their career. They had fewer and fewer hits, their unique blend losing favor in the strengthening Nashville Sound atmosphere. That tension spawned other tensions between the two, and on August 18, 1963, Ira and Charlie played their final job together in Illinois.

Charlie stayed at the Opry and with Capitol, where his recording of "I Don't Like You Anymore" hit Number Four in 1964 and "See the Big Man Cry" made it to Number Seven in 1965. Ira, also working as a single artist, teamed with his wife Anne, had more modest success. They were heading back to Nashville from a show in Kansas with another couple on June 20, 1965. Near Williamsburg, Missouri, they were involved in a head-on collision with a drunk driver that killed everyone. Two months later, Ira's Capitol single of "Yodel Sweet Molly" was a minor hit.

But those magnificent harmonies were stilled forever, a loss still felt 22 years later. Charlie's singles continued to do well on the charts, though none were huge hits, and his duets with Melba Montgomery also had respectable success. He remains on the Opry today.

One can always imagine what could have been: a Louvin revival—even a reunion and more records—had Ira lived. Charlie's pride in the duo remains unbowed. As he said in his notes to the CMF's album, describing that first day at the Opry when they met Jim Denny, the ex-Opry official who ran WSM's booking office. "Denny looked up and said, 'Boys, you're in tall timber.' Ira said, 'We got the saws; you just show us where the woods are.'" ■

Albums Available

See For Members Only page.



Charlie Louvin on the Opry and the brothers' boyhood home on The Louvin Bros. Music Park grounds.

COLLECTIONS

Collecting the Magazine

Members, help each other out.

- Extra issues of *Country Music Magazine*, 1973-1981, and three from 1987. Send SASE, will sell or trade for some I need. **Lois Courtney, 1850 Knight Av., Orlando, FL 32826.**
- Will sell my collection, almost every issue from early 1970's on. Used to live in Orlando, FL and saw almost every show that came there. It was so great to sit on the front row. **Frances Skopek, 2 Village Dr., Savannah, GA 31405.**
- Need the following back issues of *Country Music Magazine*: all of 1972; Jan.-Mar., May-Nov. 1973; Jan., Mar.-Oct., Dec. 1974; June 1975; April, Sept. 1976; Feb. 1977; Jan., Apr. 1978. Also, 25 duplicates, 1980-present, for sale. **C.D. Moore, 423 Fayette Pk., Lexington, KY 40508.**

Information, Please

Write to each other directly. Enclose SASE if you must correspond.

- Free sheet music to "Goodbye, Goodbye, Elvis Presley" if you enclose \$1.25 to cover postage and handling. It's a beautiful tribute song. **Alma Thurmond, 1015 W. 75th St., Kansas City, MO 64114.**
- "So glad I fell... for Barbara Mandrell!" That's my slogan. Would especially love to have, and will gladly pay for, VHS videotapes of the following: Oprah Winfrey's December 22, 1986 show, featuring Barbara; *Hee Haw Celebrates 200 Years of America's Music*, hosted by Barbara Mandrell and Frankie Avalon; Louise Mandrell's video for "Some Girls Have All the Luck," featuring Barbara and her kids shortly after the birth of Nathaniel. I'm 27, single and enjoy Barbara Mandrell and the World Wrestling Federation (what a pair!). If you also like this unusual combination, please write: **Pam Yusko, 4613 Perth Rd., W. Palm Beach, FL 33415.**
- Looking for cassette or LP of *Waylon Live* (RCA AP51-1108, stereo 8). **Donna Clark, 205 Poplar St., Marion, KY 42064.**
- Looking for 45 r.p.m.'s, "Running Bear" by Sonny James; "Jeanie's Afraid of the Dark," Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner; "To a Sleeping Beauty" and "I.O.U.," Jimmy Dean. **Jayne Ashbaugh, 2409 McDonald Cir. S.E., Massillon, OH 44646.**
- I am parting with an 11-year collection of country music memorabilia, photos, etc. Items on Alabama, Kenny Rogers, Crash Craddock, Louise Mandrell, Sawyer Brown and more. Would also like to hear from Ronnie McDowell fans. **Irene Moore, 3589 Pearl St. Rd., Belvidere, IL 61008.**
- Looking for Buck Owens tapes, photos, articles, also the few Buck records I don't have. **Mary Ferro, 3673 W. 116th St., Cleveland, OH 44111.**
- Looking for cassette tape or record by Del Reeves called "Superskirt," released around 1973-75. **James D. Nations, 1536 Claiborne Av., Shreveport, LA 71103.**
- Wanted: Tammy Wynette memorabilia. VHS tapes of her TV specials and other

appearances, photos, articles, records. **E. Nanna, 1927 N. Kingshighway #1, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701.**

- Looking for 45 r.p.m. "Clair," sung by Gilbert O'Sullivan, London Records, 1972. **Paula Shafer, Box 125, New Point, IN 47263.**
- I'm such a fan of Jimmy Dickens. Would love to find a copy of his "Raggedy Ann," also "Happy Anniversary" by Cal Smith. **Rose Webb, Box 1682, Denison, TX 75020.**
- Looking for two singles by Randy Travis from Paula Records, late 1970's: "Dreaming" and "She's My Woman." Also Prairie Rose soundtrack to film *Rustler's Rhapsody*, 1985. **Lois Harbin, Rt. 2 Box 353, Pottsboro, TX 75076.**
- Anyone with Wilf Carter recordings from the 1930's, please contact me. Will take 78's, 45's or albums. **Howard Halouska, 510 W. Maple, Lexington, NE 68850.**
- Wanted: VHS tape of Barbara Mandrell TV special, *Something Special*; comeback on MCN Awards 1985, and her receiving Living Legend Award. **Cindy Tschorn, 1250 NW 33 Av., Gainesville, FL 32609.**
- Looking for two singles recorded by Randy Travis under his real name of Randy Traywick: "Dreaming" / "I'll Take Any Willing Woman" (Paula 429 SL 2829) and "She's My Woman" / "All the Praises" (Paula 431 SL 2853). **V.L. Siegrist, 3939 Russell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63110.**
- Wanted: Grand Ole Opry memorabilia—old radio tapes, history-picturebooks, Minnie Pearl newsletters, program lineup listings, posters and other artifacts from the Opry's long history. Some exchange of materials possible. **Bill Montgomery, Box 973, Frankfort, KY 40602.**
- Wanted: "Never-ending Song of Love," Bluegrass Cardinals; "Mahogany Pulpit," Dickie Lee; "Butter Beans," Little David Wilkins; "With the Shades All Pulled Down," Merle Haggard; "My Daddy Was a Broad-Minded Man," Jim Ed Brown; "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight," Judy Rodman; and more, to help fill the void in my collection. Will exchange. **Lavonia Lynch, 385 Motlow School Rd., Campobello, SC 29322.**
- In search of two records to complete my set. 45's by George Strait and The Ace in the Hole Band on the "D" label: "I Just Can't Go On Dying Like This" / "Honky Tonk Downstairs" and "I Don't Want to Talk It Over Anymore" / "Loneliest Singer in Town." Also memorabilia. **Lynette Shaw, 807 Colonial Dr., Cleburne, TX 76031.**
- Photos for sale: one book country music shows and lots of 8X10's, mostly color but some b/w. For complete listing and prices, send business-size SASE. **Roger Marshall, HC 70 Box 78A, Mountain View, AR 72560.**
- I want to thank everyone who has written to me in the past when I have been searching for old records. Now looking for *Buck Owens Sings Tommy Collins* (Capitol ST1989); Buddy Alan, *Wild, Free and 21* (Capitol ST411); and the western album by Marty Robbins that has the song "Mr. Shorty" on it. **Vern Kongstie, Box 234, Towner, ND 58788.**
- Thanks to all those great people who answered my ad about Elvis and the song

"Are You Lonesome Tonight," especially my Elvis Mom, Mrs. Mary Loyd in Pleasanton, California. Now looking for Elvis books, especially *Elvis, Why Won't They Leave You Alone* by May Mann and *A Tale of Two Kings* by Rick Stanley. **Brenda West, Box 593, Mt. Pleasant, TN 38474.**

- Looking for Freida Parton records (mint or excellent condition), magazine articles, videos, pictures. Will pay any reasonable price. Also "fans" who have gone "nutso" over "fabulous Freida," please write. **Dave Bennett, 211 11 Collingham, Farmington Hills, MI 48024.**
- Looking for music by Kenny Dale. What has happened to this fine singer? Also like to find Les Paul and Mary Ford's "I'll Go On Loving You." **Wanda Owen, Box 254, Paris, AR 72855.**
- Would like to hear from anyone who has photos, magazine articles or other memorabilia of country entertainers who performed in the 1930's, '40's and '50's on WLW Cincinnati, WHAS Louisville or WIBC Indianapolis. **Clarence J. Grelle, 2439 Constellation Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46229.**
- Looking for Capitol albums *Hello* (1979) and *Gentle to the Senses* (1978) by Mel McDaniel. **Debbie Rushing, 4419 Lochridge Rd., N. Little Rock, AR 72116.**
- Looking for an album of the MGM movie soundtrack *Your Cheatin' Heart* in which George Hamilton IV starred as Hank Williams and Hank Jr. sang the songs. If ya got one or know where I can get one, contact: **Denny Heare, Box 9358, Augusta, GA 30916.**
- Wanted: VHS copies of *Star Search '84* on which Sawyer Brown appeared and the First Alumni special, at reasonable prices. **K. Hedden, 10553 Westbrook Rd., Brookville, OH 45309.**
- Looking for two Statlers albums: *Sing 'Do You Love Me Tonight' and Other Favorites* and *The Statlers at the Country Store*. Interested in album or cassette copy. **Eileen Varner, R.D. #1 Box 1476, Berwick, PA 18603.**
- Looking for a copy of a demo done by David Wills called "Leona," recorded in 1983 or early 1984. Any reasonable price. **Beverly Peacock, Box 4985, Atlanta, GA 30302-4985.**
- Dolly Parton fans! Looking for any Dolly Parton memorabilia, specifically: VCR tapes from Dolly's 1976 TV series, single of "The Stranger," the *Official Dolly Parton Scrapbook*, book titled *Dolly Parton: A Personal Portrait*, any photos b/w. Would like to correspond with any loyal Dolly fans. **Doyle Gilliam, Box 6655, Brookings, OR 97415.**
- For sale: rare old 78 r.p.m. records, from Hank Williams to Elvis. Johnny Cash LP's, some on Sun Label. Send SASE for list and price. Also, wanted: Tommy Collins albums on Capitol or Columbia. **J.L. Daffron, 602 Greens Ave., Louisville, KY 40214.**
- Desperately seeking Dolly! Any Dolly or Dollywood memorabilia, especially any Dolly 'n' Porter records or other, any record or tape by or featuring Dolly in mint-fair condition and priced accordingly, Dolly Parton doll which appeared in 1977 or clothing which accompanies it, VHS home movies of Dolly in concert or at Dollywood, posters, magazines, photos. All letters with SASE will be

answered. **Mark Burgess, Rt. 2 Box 381, Maysville, GA 30558.**

- Looking for several albums: *Love Won't Let Us Go*, Louise Mandrell and R. C. Bannon; *Texercise*, Irlene Mandrell; *Treat Him Right and This Time I Almost Made It*, Barbara Mandrell; also albums by Barbara and David Houston, Dolly and Porter, Janie Fricke's *Singer of Songs*. **Blake Bennetts, 1927 Julieann, Visalia, CA 93277.**

Much Appreciated

B. Gene Earnest thanks all the country fans who wrote and called about *The Johnny Cash Show* album. He has it now, and Helen Rinkel thanks everyone who wrote about "A Bride With the Faded Bouquet." It was recorded by Eddie Dean on a Hank Williams tribute album, and she has a copy of it now.

Pen Pals

Members would like to write to each other for fun.

- My love for Dwight Yoakam's music is bigger than Texas! Would love to hear from other avid Dwight fans, whether male or female, youngster or elder. I am a 23-year-old female. **Toni Staton, Box 832, Newark, TX 76071.**
- Hi, my name is Dana Provencher. If you adore these singers, I'd be very excited to hear from one of you: Alabama, Earl T. Conley, Crystal Gayle, The Judds, Ricky Van Shelton, Dan Seals, Louise Mandrell, more. **Dana Provencher, 208 Carwell St., Waco, TX 76705.**
- I am 29 years old, single and an R.N. I love country music. My favorites are Barbara Mandrell, Alabama, The Judds, Dolly Parton, Marie Osmond, Reba. I also watch NBC soaps. If you write, I answer. **Cathie Panaccione, 86 Hill St., Bloomfield, NJ 07003.**
- I am a 30-year-old country boy that loves country music—all of it, from Jimmy Rodgers to Hank Jr., Patsy Cline to Emmylou. I love biking, camping, the beach, antiques, collecting stamps and children. I am d-i-v-o-r-c-e-d and have one child. Right now the "Chill Factor" is very high for me. I need some lasting friendship through correspondence. **Richard G. Morgan, #142267 E-23, 100 Warrior Lane, Bessemer, AL 35023.**
- Looking for pen pal interested in country music. I'm a big Grand Ole Opry fan. My favorites are Jack Greene, Alabama and Ricky Van Shelton. I'm 29 and looking for anyone to write. **Yvonne George, 605 Greenville Pike, Hazel Green, AL 35750.**
- Hi! My name is Jennifer Markley. I'm a 13-year-old. I like Alabama and the Mandrell sisters, but I like most all country music singers. Please send a picture of yourself. **Jennifer Markley, HC33 Box 2976, Wasilla, AK 99687-9720.**
- Hi, I am a 27-year-old John Schneider fan and would love to hear from anyone who is also John's fan. **Lori Jones, 25190 Gap Rd., Brownsville, OR 97327.**

Send material for Newsletter to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Newsletter. Include membership number.

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The Return of the Buckeroo

Coming out of retirement, the seasoned rebel-rouser is touched by the cheers of the crowd.

Buck Owens sees things a little differently the second time around.

But, when he picks up that guitar, it's the same Buck who commands the stage and the audience.

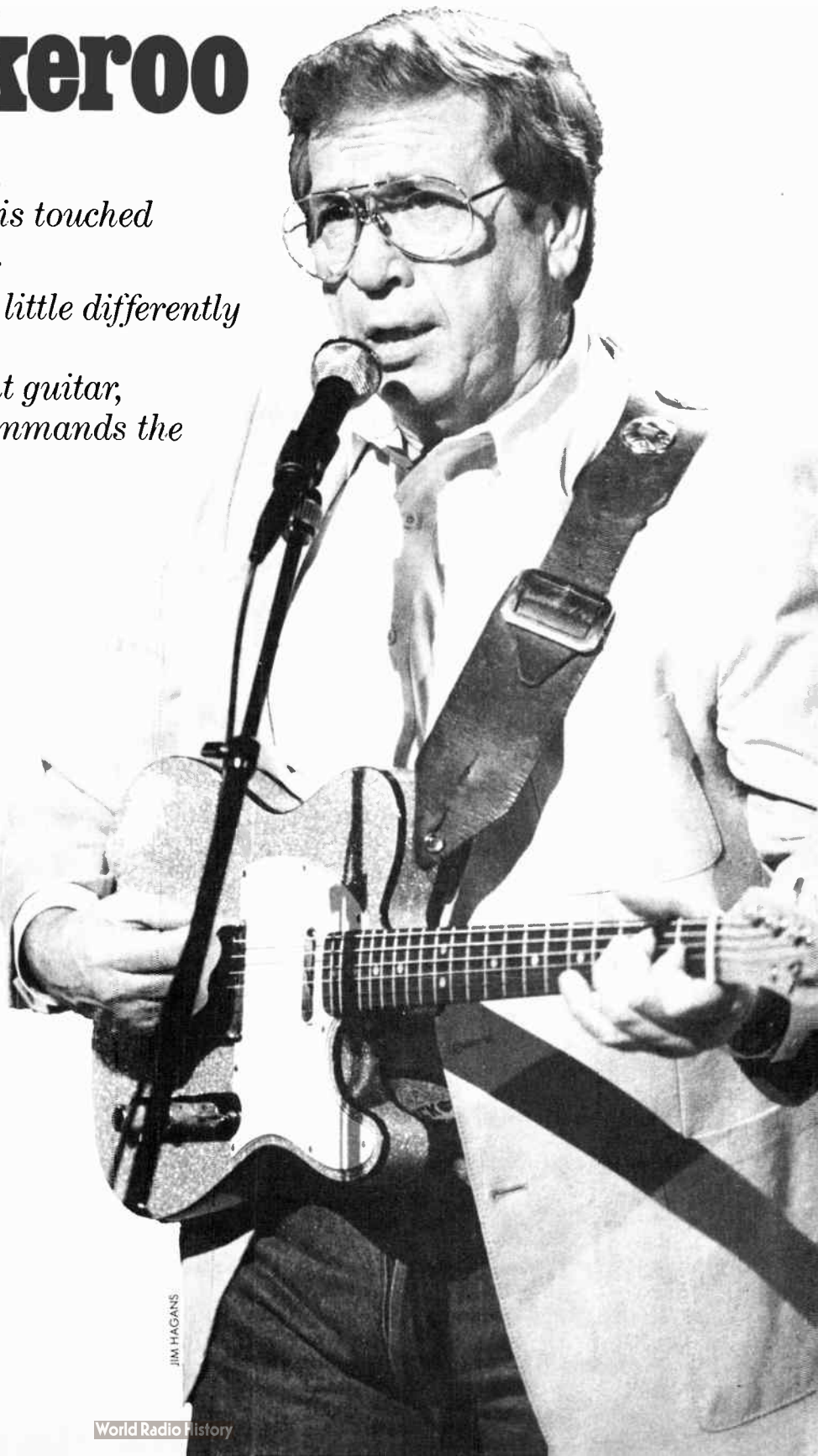
by Bob Millard

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Buck Owens has come back. And the brutal truth about comebacks is that a thin smile and a pat on the back is about all most returnees get. What makes Buck Owens different? And hasn't that been the question throughout his career anyway? Bakersfield rebel, leader of the best small band ever in country music, his voice, musicianship and songwriting abilities are as sharp today as they were when he walked away from them nearly ten years ago. That in itself is remarkable. Now, though the comeback was hardly his idea—he resisted it for months even after it got underway—Buck Owens is clearly back, tanned, rested and ready.

When we last heard from Buck he was responding to Michael Bane's 20 Questions with his own 20 Answers, explaining patiently why he had left the music business and why he wasn't coming back. He hadn't released a record since 1979, he had walked off the barnyard set of television's *Hee Haw* at the end of 1984, wiped his feet and never looked back.

"Actually, it kind of ended up that we



JIM HAGANS



"When I started back to playing dates, I wanted to play Don's guitar."

JIM HAGANS

kind of left each other, I think," Buck recalled. "I think it was a good thing for both of us. I thought the show was old and tired. I always thought of the show, even in the beginning, as a show of fat old men and young pretty girls. I used to jokingly say that, but in reality maybe that wasn't too far away."

It seemed that country music had lost one of its most distinctive talents forever.

So it was a surprise when he appeared back in full force in Nashville, right in the middle of things, during October's CMA Week. Among other things, he was riding the crest of a Number One single and a CMA Award nomination shared with Dwight Yoakam, finalizing arrangements for a reissue of his best live concert album from the 1960's by the Country Music Foundation. He had renewed his relationship with Capitol Records and was passing out advance cassettes of his first new album in nine years. He was

generally working the media and the industry like a hungry newcomer. That's a lot, especially for a guy who only six months earlier was still fairly happily retired from the scene.

In Nashville, Buck stole the show everywhere he went—and he went damn near everywhere. Since Dwight Yoakam dragged an unwilling Buck Owens on stage with him last year at a Bakersfield fair performance, "Buck Mania" has built to an irresistible groundswell of demand for a voice and a repertoire that had been gone too long. Reviewers often said that when Buck appeared in the middle of Yoakam's concerts, he stole those shows, too. Buck was more than a little uncertain of why it was all happening. Tired as he was from the whirlwind, he couldn't deny that he loved it.

Fatigue showed in his face, circles faintly evident under his eyes after a long and demanding week of public appearances and television tapings.

When he filled the barn-like brick Cannery nightclub for The Nashville Network's *New Country*, Buck, more than many who struggle through the stop and start format of a television taping, had played to the audience. Leaning on his Telecaster and peering through his glasses (at 59 he appears to be nearsighted), he chatted with old friends in the front rows and joked with the crowd in between songs. He got impatient when TNN crew mistakes forced him to redo a song because it interrupted the flow, his communication with the fans. "Which one of you guys was pickin' his nose?" he asked when told he'd have to start over again. A pair of twenty-year-old college girls called out enthusiastically, "We love you, Buck," until he finally acknowledged them with an embarrassed reply: "Well, uh, thanks." "See me after the show and I'll tell you where he's staying," quipped a band member. Buck blushed.

The performance was vintage Buck



In the 1970's Buck and his Buckeroos were in full swing. His time on *Hee Haw* with Roy Clark kept changing throughout the years.



Owens. He strolled onstage antsy, like a big kid about to be turned loose at the carnival after being grounded for nearly ten years. Laugh lines radiated across his temples as he cracked a joke at his own expense. The response, as it had been everywhere he'd gone that week, was greater and warmer than he'd expected. At times, while his television makeup was repeatedly refreshed, he looked out from the stage curiously, surprised at the appreciative outpouring following each song. No stage hand had to remind the crowd to applaud wildly. As he stepped into his finale, Buck glowed, absorbing the intimate contact of a few hundred people pressed close to the stage, where he could see them smile.

For two days at the end of that week, I sit down with the old head Buckeroo at his manager's office for what turns into a long personal talk with the man. The almost

overwhelming welcome given him by Nashville, a city he has begun mending fences with after long criticizing the country music establishment from his vantage point in Bakersfield, has made him confessional. Returning to the spotlight is almost as complicated an emotional event as leaving it had been for him.

"Yeah, and it's wonderful, too, I'll tell you," Buck says, leaning back and stretching his legs out across the carpet. "You can't imagine, man. I tell you, I thought that the career, you know, I really thought for all intents and purposes it was gone. I have some very successful radio stations...and a couple of years ago, two or three different times, the music directors would say 'there's Buck Owens rumblings out there.' But there'd always been record people calling me saying 'you know, it might be Buck Owens time again. It might be time for you to put out an album.' I'd say, 'no, thanks.' I'd always

decline.

And then, you know, I had been watching that horizon, and then one day there came a storm to me. It was a big wide horizon, and here come all those young people saying—a lot of 'em, including the Grateful Dead!—and I was getting all this print, Dwight Yoakam extolling my virtues and saying 'you guys forgot about Buck.'

Buck rubs his ample belly and chuckles. Though he has what my own father used to call 'the spare tire of success' around his waistline, he has slimmed down considerably from his beefiest days as *Hee Haw's* ballooning buffoon in the mid-1980's. He laughs again as he recalls his first face-to-face meeting with the young rockabilly renegade, Dwight Yoakam. Yoakam had been talking about Buck and the importance of his music for more than a year before he showed up unannounced on Buck's doorstep one evening and wouldn't take 'no' for an answer.



Buck recently donated the master tapes of his *Live At Carnegie Hall* album to the Country Music Foundation. Pictured with Bill Ivey (CMF), Dwight Yoakam, Emmylou Harris and Marty Stuart after the celebration.

"He came to town," Buck recalls with a smile, leaning forward to gesture with his hands. "Five minutes to five in the afternoon and he shows up at the office. He says 'I'm Dwight Yoakam and I wanna see Buck.' He don't write, he don't call, he just comes. He was at the fair that night and I went out with him. I got up with him—I really didn't want to, I haven't done that in a long time—and felt very comfortable. It was an electric moment that I never experienced with anybody else. It was one of those things where it was the audience and it was me. Something happens when Dwight and I sing together—he knows it and I know it. We've talked about it, but we don't know what it is. We don't know how to make it; we don't know how to stop it."

Buck, on the surface an uncomplicated, happy-go-lucky fellow, is an intelligent, thinking man. He seems more introspective than he was in the 1960s when he made the best-remembered of his more than twenty Number One singles. His return to the limelight, the unexpected extent to which people want him back, is something he puzzles to grasp the meaning of.

Many things that Buck struggles to understand about his own comeback have to do with Dwight Yoakam. Yoakam reminds Buck of himself at that age, and of a fourth son he never had. Even spookier to him is how much of the friendship, fun and creative stimulation that Don Rich provided for so long is now magically coming from the younger Bakersfield rebel. Buck admits that the main reason it was so easy for him to quit music in 1979 was that without Don Rich, his longtime bandleader and singing partner, he just lost heart. Yoakam filled that gap, provided that vital spark that had been missing.

"You know, I had not been asked that question, but I had thought about that," Buck explains. "There was a thing that happened when Don Rich and I sang, too. There's something that happened when Don and I sang together. I could hear that.

"Not only through Dwight but through these other kids, I felt that vindicates what I said, vindicates what I thought."



"You know, this is the first time that's happened to me since then. It happens when Dwight and I sing. Immediately, I see the reaction on people. I think it's the same thing that happened when Don Rich and I sang. And I think people see that. There's something that Dwight does to me and I do to him—it's an electricity that cannot be manufactured or I'd patent that stuff and I'd sell it."

The emotional bond between Buck and Don Rich is continuing in a way into Buck's 'second career'. Since beginning a series of concert and television appearances with Dwight Yoakam, Buck has put aside his signature *Hee Haw* guitar, the red, white and blue acoustic, in favor of the gold-flecked Telecaster Don Rich used to play. Rich's widow gave it to him as a talisman for good luck as he hit the road again.

"When I started back to playing dates, I wanted to play Don's guitar," Buck says, an eyebrow arching, his expression growing serious. "I don't have any idea why. I just thought it would make me feel comfortable and I thought Don would get a kick out of it. I think he'd like that. He'd be saying, 'Well, the chief's playing my guitar out there, he ain't doin' it right, but he's doin' it.' He'd be teasing me."

Buck and Don were such close buddies that Rich's death in a 1974 motorcycle accident plunged Buck into what he only in the past few years has begun to understand as an extended nervous breakdown.

"When he was killed in '74, I think my system went into some sort of safety system shock," Buck says slowly. "For sixteen years I had been with Don, and he was very much a part of my sound. He and I had been together that long, and I had never dreamed of not having Don Rich. I used to think that a nervous breakdown was where a guy goes whacko and they have to come drag him off in a straitjacket, but that ain't necessarily it. I was just confused for a long, long time...looking in a lot of places for something that I'd lost."

If Dwight Yoakam was the personification of the forces that brought Buck Owens back into the spotlight as a performer, he was preceded by a couple of years of new music by new acts, self-contained bands like Yoakam's Pete Anderson-led unit, Desert Rose, Ricky Skaggs and band, George Strait and The Ace in the Hole Band, and the new traditionalists like Randy Travis and Ricky Van Shelton. Buck had left the country music business, but he hadn't stopped watching it. His four radio stations, if nothing else, kept him in touch. The death of 'pop-crossover' was a good sign to him.

"All this time I've been watching the horizon and saying hey, what's down the road," he explains. "Surely there's gotta be something else down the road besides all these sweet, machine-produced recordings. I mean, if machines are going to make our records—what the hell.

"One of the things that I did, I carried a band and they played on my records. Merle Haggard carried a band and they played on his records. Dwight Yoakam carries a band and they play on his records. I admit to you that it's not as smooth, it's not as sweet and sickly sounding, but, to me, this other stuff has no reference to country."

Buck doesn't mince words. Country-pop-crossover—the whole Urban Cowboy era—signified barrenness in the country music landscape to him. He felt his initial retirement was a hand that was in some ways forced on him. "I think I felt

driven away," he says.

"So, not only through Dwight but through these other kids...I felt that vicariously through them that vindicates what I said, that vindicates what I thought," he explains. "Now I'm going to feel better about it if they plant me tomorrow."

There are plans for continued touring, though he can only hazard a loose guess as to how many dates he'll play in the settings he and his manager have decided fit him best: 1,500-2,500-seat halls. Europe is definitely on his agenda, he has a new Capitol record album completed called *Hot Dog*, and the Country Music Foundation will reissue his classic *Carnegie Hall Concert* with extended stage patter and an extra song performed at that late-1960s sell-out show but left out of the original.

By a weird trick of fate, he'll be eligible next year for both the CMA's Horizon Award for most career progress in a given year and the Hall of Fame. It's gratifying and bemusing, but he's also aware that he may not want to continue as an active artist beyond this so-called comeback year he has lined up for himself now. Though he still looks far younger than his actual age, Buck doesn't want to end up like some have, tattered by the ravages of time but unwilling or unable to leave the adulation behind. The retirement that Dwight Yoakam helped end had its good points too, he contends.

"I tell you, it was something that I needed," Buck said. "I needed a respite from the music business and I think it worked out really well. I know that the last few months I knew I'd grown bored with it...and knew I needed to do other things again. Fortunately, as I told you, I could hear it on the horizon even before I could see it."

But his mind won't retreat from the knowledge that some who went before him played their lives out, literally, without ever stopping to enjoy and reflect on their success.

"You know, I used to talk about Ernest Tubb doing that," he said. "While I had the greatest deal of respect for Ernest Tubb—I think everybody knows what a fine gentleman he was—uh, it's something that gets in the blood; the adulation that one needs. I hope that I'll be able to find it with some other method than doing that. I always wondered about those people, you know. I know that Red Foley was in some motel when he died. Tommy Duncan was 57. Tommy Duncan, the great Bob Wills singer that most people think of when they think of Bob Wills' band. He died out there in some lonely little motel waiting to go over to some little old club somewhere. So I guess it's all they knew."

During the course of our two-day interview, Buck Owens ranges from such contemplations of the frailty of human egos to the joy of being back in the spotlight himself. He can afford to be deep at this point in his life. Throughout his career, Buck has been an astute businessman. He owns the rights to all his best recordings, the original Capitol years. He sold his song publishing catalog for a reputed 'small fortune' a few years ago to Nashville-based Tree International. He owns four very profitable radio stations and a small print media empire out of Bakersfield in which his sons Buddy Allen, Michael and Johnny work with him. Even with all this afoot, he remains a big kid in many ways, doing what makes him happy or doing nothing at all.

"There's lots of things I could do and lots of things that I might want to do," he says as he unwraps a sandwich at the end of our last session. "But as long as music is fun...as long as I'm enjoying

it...and I can't remember when I enjoyed anything more than I'm enjoying this right now. It's a long old road that has no turning. I have no idea what's around the bend. If it's more music, I'll be happy with that. I think I'll be much happier today because it's something that I don't *have* to do. It's something I *want* to do."

But, it may be harder to walk away the second time.

"You cannot imagine what it's like to walk out on the stage after being gone for ten years and all those people—it's just like a firestorm," he says with awe in his voice. "I mean, it was almost unbearable to the ears to hear. And I'm thinking, whew! How surprised was I? I was terribly surprised. I mean, I knew that they'd like me all right, but I had no idea. And I still don't know what happened."

And then he laughs. He laughs easily, knowing his wild week under the Nashville spotlight will be over in less than two hours, that he'll be flying home to his 160-acre ranch in the mountains outside of Bakersfield, to his horses, his Rottweilers that guarantee his much-needed privacy and his wife, Jennifer. Wiping mayonnaise from his lips as he finishes up the sandwich, he sums up his feelings his second time around with an aging-memory joke: "In short, I can't remember the first time being this good. I think it's probably because I can't remember." ■

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*"Something happens
when Dwight and I sing
together—he knows it
and I know it."*



Kicking up his heels with Dwight for the video version of "Streets of Bakersfield" from the album *Buenas Noches From a Lonely Room*.



TOM T. HALL

A Contented Veteran of the Music Wars

*As his 20th Anniversary album hits the record shops,
Tom T. Hall reflects on a career which
has been as fulfilling as it has been rewarding.*

*Would he change anything after two decades in the music business?
Not on your life.*

by Patrick Carr

The scene is a rough-hewn, comfortable little cabin set in the awakening woods of a Tennessee spring: it's the actor's home of homes, his special place.

The actor is the writer: Tom T. Hall, The Storyteller, playing himself.

The event is a two-act, one-man show, one of those affairs in which a well-known character reveals himself to the extent he wishes through reflections on both his present and the years which add up to his past. The entertainment, then, is not so much a plot-driven story as an only minimally organized ramble through this, that and the other thing.

Such a structure is appropriate because the significant number of years involved in the event is now twenty; that's how long Tom T. Hall has been a recording artist, a fact celebrated by the release of an anthology of twenty of his best story songs, *The Essential Tom T. Hall*. It's been slightly longer than twenty years since Jeannie C. Riley's superhit version of "Harper Valley P.T.A." propelled him to the forefront of the country songwriting profession, and not quite as long since he first gained a reputation as a writer of prose.

To some extent, then, there is an Elder Statesman flavor to this event; we're dealing here with a man of great stature whose work has broadened and deepened the country river significantly, who is one of the major architects of the music's modern form. And then, too, there's the Renaissance Man aspect of Tom T.'s career, an unusual item in the context of country music; in a world of specialists, here's an impressively educated, fearlessly free-ranging and often startlingly original imagination expressing itself rather effectively in multiple media.

Perhaps, then, we should approach this fellow with a certain awe. But then again, perhaps not. That would be kind of silly, because we're also dealing here with good ole Tom T., the author of "I Like Beer" and similar amusements, the lifetime harasser of sacred cows and former funky fool of Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, the deft exponent of semi-wicked humor and poet of the simple pleasures and surprises of life, the character who has never let either his gift or his reputation go to his head. So really, you can forget the proprieties and shoot the breeze pretty good with a fellow like ole Tom T. That's one of the elements which make his work so attractive, and also one of the reasons why a man of his liberal/intellectual bent has been able to survive and prosper so well in a field where such characteristics are often anything but assets.

So let's relax, cut to the first act of the entertainment—Tom T. laid back in his writer's cabin, framed by his guitar and tape recorder and word processor, surrounded by the life of the woods from which he draws so much of his energy and inspiration—and ramble. Offstage sound is provided by bird-song, the soft breath of wind through the trees, and now and again the rapid hollow drum of a woodpecker at work.

He begins, sensibly and considerately, with what amounts to a definition of his condition, a bill of health. "I was thinking about you coming here today, and thinking about what you'd ask me, and here's what I thought to tell you: the past is unchangeable, and I have no fear of the future, and so I have a pretty decent circumstance. I do pretty much what I want to do: some farming and gardening, road building and wood chopping,

writing and touring. It's pretty nice."

It looks nice. Fox Hollow, the Hall farm and residence these past two decades, is as picture-perfect, productive and lovingly tended as usual. Tom himself looks good, too: trim, tanned, strong, vigorous. He quit smoking recently, and obviously he has not allowed himself to compensate by over-eating. His short-cropped hair, having evolved through salt-and-pepper into almost-white in the three years since he and I sat together, does not age him beyond his years.

We chat casually for a while about the writing cabin—its back wall of natural rock arranged so as not to interrupt the downhill flow of rainwater, the windows above it through which Tom can watch birds, holding the remote shutter release cable of a camera set up outside—until I figure it's time for more pointed comments, and ask him what he's working on these days.

Well, he says, the *Essential Tom T. Hall* album is now behind him, and all he really has to say about that is to characterize it as "my best communication songs, not necessarily the hits" and express wonderment at all the testimonials from fans and friends in many worlds which appear in the liner notes: Kurt Vonnegut and Prof. James Whitehead in literature, Jimmy and Billy Carter in politics and humor, Johnny Bench and Coach Darrell Royal in sports, Johnny Cash and George Jones and a bunch of others in music. "That's humbling," he says. "Reading that stuff is the most profound experience for me... all those fabulous characters I've bumped into in my life!"

Another project, his third children's album, is just about finished as we speak; Tom's done his part, and all that remains is for his longtime producer Jerry Kennedy to finish a mix or two. "Doing a children's album is always such fun," he says. "I really enjoy writing those songs. And this one, too, has been sort of fascinating, because I wrote those songs for the second generation. People who heard my first album as children, back in 1971 or 1972, are now old enough to be parents themselves, and they'll buy it for *their* kids. Which is weird.

"Well, no, it's not weird, really. It's perfectly normal. It just seems strange to me... But anyway, I really enjoyed it. The subjects come easily to me up here, like 'Randy Raccoon'; I didn't make him up, he's a real racoon I feed on the porch out here. And 'The Duck and The Rooster' are down the hill on the farm. So yes, that's very pleasant, natural work. I come up here every morning, and usually I don't get a lot done, it's just a nice place to be, but those children's songs are the kind of thing that just comes naturally out of this place."

That leaves the work at hand at the moment, another novel. Not a sequel to his wild, black-humorous *The Laughing Man of Woodmont Cove*, it is nonetheless "lots of fun. Really, it's a great outlet, especially for somebody like me who's not as busy as they used to be."

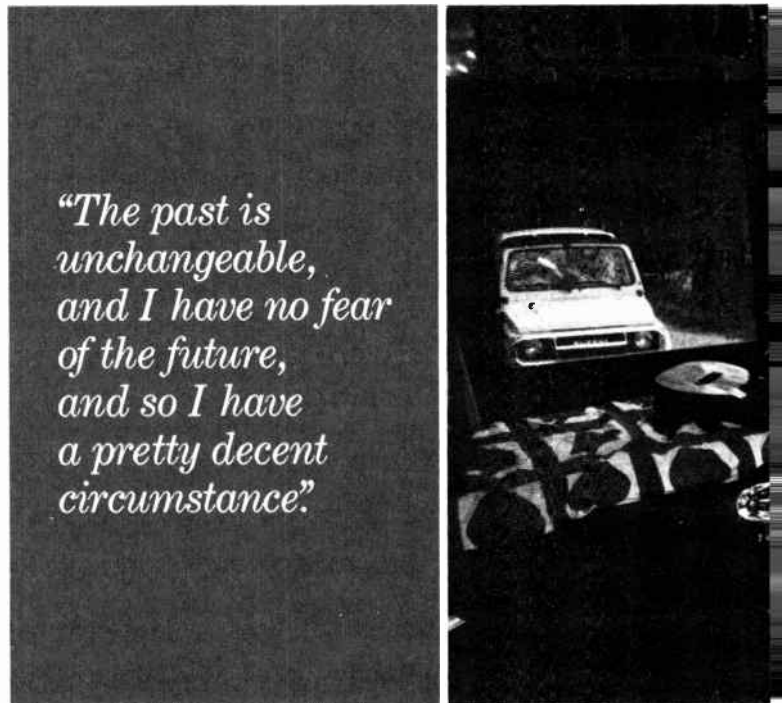
Oh, dear, a hint of trouble in paradise in that last remark. Tom pauses a moment, thinks about how it sounded, and qualifies it.

"That's not a euphemism for 'over the hill'! No. You see, maybe I can't get my songs recorded, but I can get my books published 'cause when it comes right down to it, I can sell them door to door. I'm just enough of a celebrity that if I hang around bookstores and stuff, people come up and say, 'Hey, Tom T. Hall's over here; he's written a book!' So y'know, I sell a few books and I pay my way. So when I'm working on a book, I always know that something's gonna happen to it. There's always somebody saying 'Tom, when you get that book finished, we want to see it.' So yes, I do gravitate towards the prose more than the songs these days."

That's understandable, and fortunate for fans of highly entertaining literature, but the fact remains that the great songwriter Tom T. Hall has not sold a new song to another recording artist for more than a couple of years now. And not



WICKI HOUSTON

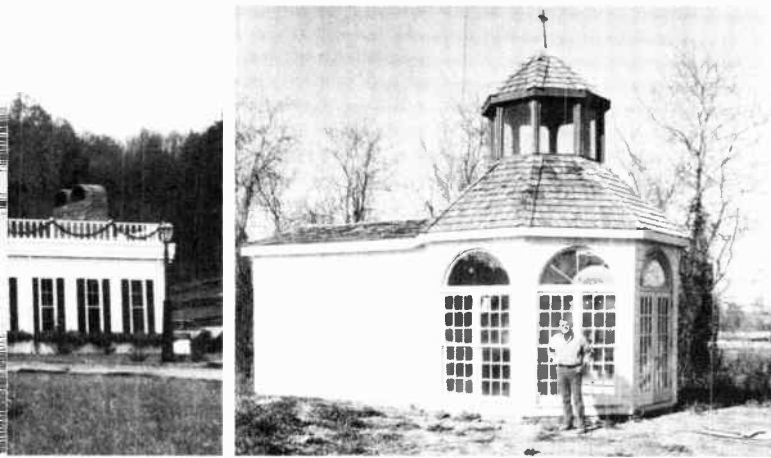


for want of trying, either.

As one might expect, the emotions surrounding the fact are mixed. "I don't know," says Tom. "The whole publishing and songwriting field is a lot different from what it used to be. That's how it should be, of course—you have to have change, just to keep the whole universe from dying of boredom—but really, it's pretty hard for someone like me to get a song recorded these days. The really established, big-time writers of my generation—Harlan Howard, for instance—have to work pretty hard, all the time, to make it.



Tom says his life is fulfilled on and off the road. Here, at Fox Hollow, his home for over twenty years, he can write songs at his cabin, visit his chapel and tend to his farm. His wife Miss Dixie is his companion and friend.



"I mean, I remember that at one point, I had eight songs on the *Billboard* charts at one time. Think about that; that would be just impossible today, for anyone. Now there are so many writers and publishers; *everybody's* writing songs. Where there were maybe a dozen guys who were really putting the hot tunes together when I started in Nashville, now there must be hundreds.

"And then too, they write songs by committee these days. You see a song that's two minutes long, and five guys wrote it! The publishers have 'writing rooms,' and these guys go

there in the morning and start drinking coffee, passing the guitar around, writing songs. It's funny when they give out the writing awards these days. It used to be that a song would win, and just one cowboy would get up and go to the stage. Now it's an entourage. But—well, they all seem happy, and I guess that's what's important."

Enough of this. I ask him directly: "Tom, doesn't it make you feel really bad that you can't get your songs recorded?"

"No, not really," he replies, "because I understand it. You see, there's a certain thing about the timing and the circumstance of a song that's either just right, or isn't. I don't really know what it is; nobody does; it's a little magic something. I mean, I *know* what it is, I understand it perfectly, but I can't put it into words."

He can, however, tell a story about it (which figures). This one, which is also featured in his randomly autobiographical *The Storyteller's Nashville*, is about the Sunday afternoon long ago, before he became a famous person, when he and his buddy Slim Underwood were setting up their instruments to work a honky tonk in New Paris, Ohio, and somebody walked over to the jukebox and punched up one of the week's new crop of records.

"I remember that moment like it was yesterday," says Tom. "There it was: *Hello, walls...How'd things go for you today?*—and I just snapped up and turned to Slim and said, 'There's a new songwriter in Nashville, Slim! That song right there, Faron Young's new record; nobody we ever heard of wrote that song.' So I put down my guitar, went over to the jukebox, finally got the label focused in with it spinning around like that, and there was the name: *Willie Nelson*."

"That was one of those magic things, you see. And I don't know; I don't know if it could happen today. There's nobody new that's really that stylistic. You certainly couldn't say, 'Hey, that sounds like a Smith, Jones, Robinson and Thompson song!'"

"But anyway, who knows what it is in a song which connects you up with the universe and the hearts and minds of millions of people? And you know, everybody today is still writing about the same things they've always written about: love, heartbreak, cheating, honky tonking, eyes, lips, arms—and really, I've got no business writing that stuff. I can't write a cheating song, 'cause I don't go out of my way to cheat; I don't hang around honky tonks, so I've got no reason to write drinking songs; and it's unlikely that some cheerleader's going to break my heart next week.

"So really, I guess this just isn't the time and place for my songs. I understand it. I don't feel bad. I've got the songs, and one day next week someone will pick up that one tune that's just right for that one singer, and it'll be Number One. I don't doubt that. But you can't make that happen in this business. If you try, you just look foolish."

Between the lines, all of this tells you something about the character in our one-man show. For one thing, he's a consistent person, a long-hauler. You can hear that quality in his work, the nature of which hasn't undergone any basic change in more than twenty years. He still writes deceptively simply, seemingly very directly, with the drama subtly hidden but no less powerful for that in those clear, economical plainsong verses of his. He still avoids obvious hooks and painful puns and most other standard Nashville songwriting devices, and he is unmoved by fashion; he didn't pose as a housewife's friend at the beginning of his career in the late 1960's, he didn't become an instant outlaw in the 1970's, he refused the blandishments of Urban Cowboyism as the decade turned, and now he doesn't jump through hoops to write songs that sound like 1949.

Consistency is also the primary characteristic of how he lives his life. He's still married to Miss Dixie, the English

journalist he fell for more than two decades ago. He's still living at Fox Hollow, the home just outside Franklin, Tennessee, which he and Dixie bought with his first cascade of music business money back in the late 1960's. Then too, he still goes through each day doing basically the same things, in the same rhythm, as he did when he first moved into his mansion and farm: morning solitude and (sometimes) writing, followed by agriculture, horticulture, home/farm maintenance and improvement, work for Dixie's equally consistent, ever-expanding commitment to charities and noble causes, and finally, the entertainment of friends and visiting emissaries from various worlds—music, literature, politics, whatever.

Through it all he keeps an eye on the world around him, broods on what he sees, and lets the song ideas suggest themselves naturally. Then from time to time he initiates the idea-getting process himself, sallying forth alone with his tape recorder and notebook into some part of America to watch and listen to the people he finds along the way; that too is something he's always done and will probably continue to do till they put him in the ground. And, of course, he also takes himself and his band on the road (never for periods long enough to impact negatively on the rest of his life) to Dallas, Dublin, Dusseldorf, or anywhere else in the world which promises significant funds and/or other stimulation. Often these days it's the "other" which attracts him: a country he's never visited before or has learned to love especially on past excursions, some new kind of audience or forum, some quality that's interesting beyond the norm.

Another way of saying that a person is consistent is to say they're set in their ways, and Tom T. Hall certainly is that; no gadfly here. Some of his habits have mellowed with age, of course—he consumes less whiskey, harasses fewer institutions or individuals, and seems to worry even less than he used to—but basically he's not so much cutting new grooves in life as ploughing his old favorites ever deeper. What he says about his songwriting process might just as aptly be applied to his whole existence: "I've never changed the way I've done things. I've never perceived any reason why I should... I guess that's why my own favorite song, of all the songs I've written, is 'I Love'; the things I said I loved in that song are still the things I love."

So, personally and professionally, Tom T. is a known quantity, and something of an institution now. Everybody in the music business knows it, and he knows it. More than that, in fact; he luxuriates in the way that fact enters and fills his life.

"You see, the great thing about this business is all these magnificent accidents," he says. "You'd be surprised by how often the phone rings with some interesting, fascinating thing to do, something you'd never have thought of yourself. And that makes the rest of your life so pleasant. You can enjoy all of the leisure you want, and work on projects that you really enjoy, knowing that the phone's going to ring. You don't have to get out and bang on doors; it just happens. And really, that's such a blessing, because I'd really hate to have to work for a living after all these years.

"It really pleases me, you know, when that phone rings—well, actually, it's not *my* phone; it's Tandy Rice's, my agent's—and somebody says, 'We need Tom T. Hall for this thing; he'd be perfect.' I mean, a little while ago Tandy's phone rang, and so I'm going to go to Costa Rica for *The Nashville Network*, on a birdwatching tour. I'm a serious birdwatcher—I've built houses all over this property, and I've got more bluebirds per acre than anywhere else in Tennessee, for instance—so isn't that great? I get to go to Costa Rica, where there's a war going on next door in Honduras and some of those other places, and that'll be exciting, won't it? See all that stuff, photograph some new birds, come back here and make paintings of them, and get paid for it too..."



"Who knows what it is in a song which connects you up with the universe and the hearts and minds of millions of people?"

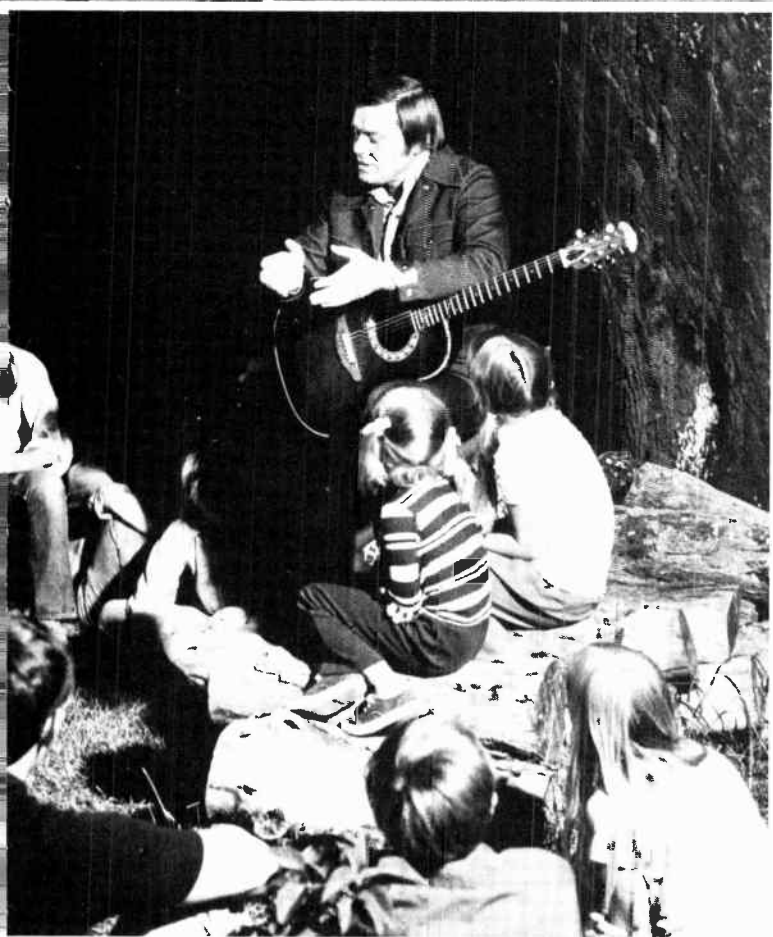
Tom's early days were always filled with music. Above, with his Army band in Germany in 1959, and below as a DJ at WMOR in 1954.

Above right with singer pal, Dave Dudley, and below right, performing for children—always a highlight in Tom's career.



Oh, yes. Really—if you're looking for artistic angst, creative turmoil, words squeezed out painfully or ecstatically between bouts of honky tonk fever and ravening blues or even routine daily insecurity, don't bother stopping at Fox Hollow. Listen instead while Tom gazes out his cabin window, trying to pinpoint the location of the woodpecker whose drill echoes through the woods around him, meanwhile reflecting on how it feels to be sitting here while right at this moment, one or even several of the combinations of words he's written in his lifetime echo somewhere out there in a much wider world.

He talks about all the inexplicable paths his songs take



when they leave his house—the 60 different cover versions of “I Like Beer” recorded by German artists alone; his uncanny popularity in Poland, where people defy the authorities to buy his records on the black market and thank him for his music by sending him watercolor portraits of himself, even Polish money—and ends up talking about the impact of another of his very favorite songs, “The Year Clayton Delaney Died.”

That song, an all-time classic and an enormous commercial success, was written to express gratitude and love for a real person in Tom T.’s life, and today Tom still seems awestruck

by its little miracle of communication. “You set out to thank someone, and you succeed so magnificently that more or less the whole world shares it with you,” he says. “That’s—well, it’s wonderful. It’s a magnificent irony, because it started out with just me sitting down with a guitar and thinking, ‘Well, I want to thank Clayton...’”

And then it got loose in the world, and people heard it and used it in a million different, entirely individual ways, and then some of them told Tom about that. He remembers one such incident, when one day he met a man who’d been a fighter-bomber pilot in Vietnam.

“This guy told me he’d had a tape deck in his plane, and when he started in on his strafing and bombing runs, lining up to drop his napalm or whatever he was doing, he’d crank that song up in his headphones. So all the time he was going through these horrifying things—they were shooting at him as well as him shooting at them, it was a real life or death situation, the whole world coming to an end around him—I was in his ears singing, *I remember the year that Clayton Delaney died...*”

“I don’t know. All that death around him, and him liable to die any second himself, using me singing about Clayton dying to drown out the noise of battle..”

He shakes his head, looks genuinely at a loss. “I just couldn’t imagine myself being in there with him,” he says.

Silence now. Just the woodpecker.

The second act in our entertainment does not translate well into words. It needs pictures, preferably the kind that move, because it’s a guided tour of the world Tom T. has quite literally built for himself. Therefore I take pictures. For words we have just a list of the major attractions and a reflective remark or two.

First there’s the property Dixie has bought and on which she and Tom and various voluntary helpers are slowly expanding a facility built around animals. The veterinary center for unwanted pets is functioning already, with a doubling of its capacity visible in a new wing just getting started. A training center for seeing-eye dogs is taking shape in a half-renovated old farmhouse. An area where handicapped children will ride horses is also well underway, and so is a tiny chapel for pet funerals which Tom and some friends are building from scratch. An old mined area next to the chapel will make a perfect natural-environment zoo for animals less easily domesticated and therefore harder to place in homes than the dogs and cats in the veterinary center.

Tom’s conversation about all this is mostly descriptive, but at the chapel he does note that he finds that project particularly interesting because he’s the son of a preacher himself, and on the way back to Fox Hollow, spurred by requests for autographs at the takeout window of a fried chicken place, he notes that, “Y’know, I’m still a fan myself. One of the great things about being in the music business is that you get to meet all the other people who are in the music business. Like those Newgrass Revival Guys—they’re great!” He adds that, “I’ve always been a bluegrass freak, y’know. That’s how I started out as a musician, and I guess that when I retire that’s how I’ll end up. Go around all the festivals, become a bluegrass groupie.”

The rest of the afternoon is spent admiring Fox Hollow. The peacocks, the ducks, the chickens, the goats, the vegetable garden, the workshop where Tom can fix or make just about anything, the business office right next door to it, the pond where whale-sized catfish churn the waters, the naturally contoured dirt road Tom just built up the hill from the main house to the writing cabin; all those labors of love and more. There’s not much to say about it all except that it’s all real nice, and like his songs, it offers inescapable evidence of a person who knows beyond any doubt what kind of work he likes. ■

Record Reviews

Ricky Van Shelton

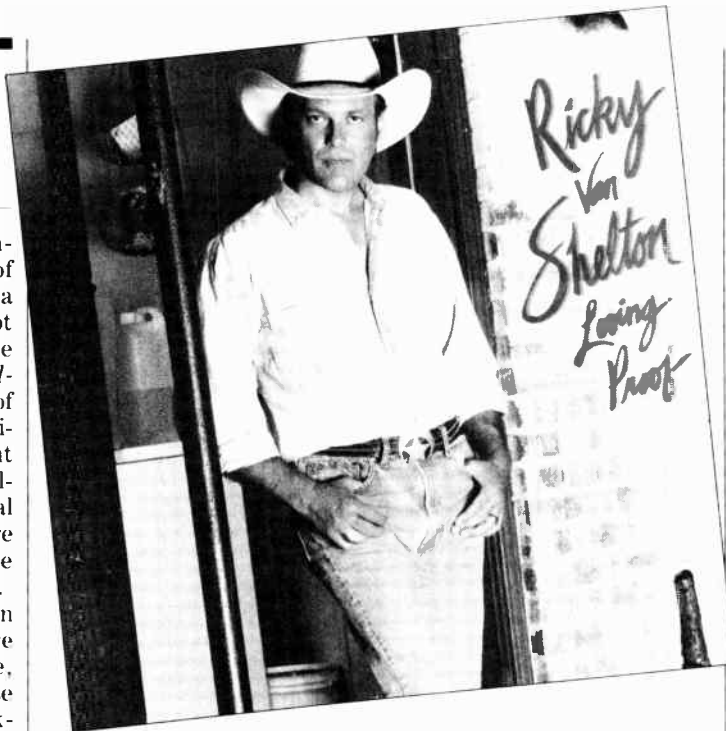
Loving Proof
Epic FC 44221

These days record companies squeeze hits out of albums like the last drops in a toothpaste tube. Yet I doubt anybody expected it'd take nearly two years for *Wild-Eyed Dream* to run out of hits. Fact is, it's smart business not to put a followup out too fast. One of Ricky's labelmates once released several albums a year, and may have worn out his welcome in the process. Who? I'll never tell.

Stated simply, Van Shelton has done it again. There are more oldies than last time, but because of his good sense and producer Steve Buckingham's good sense (I better stick to that description—"Buckinghamization" don't sound so hot) they seamlessly blend oldies with contemporary material such as "Swimming Upstream," part blue-collar chronicle, part gutbucket inspirational message. Its raw, searing arrangement is much like that of "Crime of Passion."

Van Shelton's arresting performance of Wayne Kemp's gut-wrenching ballad "I'll Leave This World Loving You" matches the right song with the right singer. Ricky, Buckingham and Troy Seals co-wrote "The Picture," and the simple lyrics have a traditional timelessness that grows with each listen.

Kemp's love song "Don't Send Me No Angels," as well as "Let Me Live With Love" and "Living Proof" (not to be confused with the Hank Jr. song of that same name),



chronicles a relationship that has to be resumed, present marriage be damned. All of these prove my suspicion—Van Shelton may be the best ballad singer of his generation.

As for the oldies, I've always experienced sour associations in connection with "From a Jack to a King," owing to the time a bozo I'd never heard of who lived 100 miles away phoned (waking me up in the process) to say his band had recorded "Jack" in their garage, pressed a record and wondered when I could get them on the cover of *Country Music Magazine*. I explained we didn't cover local acts. He asked what payoff I'd require. Too tired and annoyed to explain, I hung up. Ricky not only reaffirms what a fine and enduring song it is, he's created a version equal to Roger Mil-

ler's 1963 original.

His remake of Little Jimmy Dickens' 1958 rockabilly anthem "I Got a Hole in My Pocket" captures the bopping, pulsing spirit of the original, right down to the shouted vocal and the note-for-note recreation of Hank Garland's screaming guitar solo. I'm not always crazy about exact remakes, but the song fits Ricky's style perfectly. His version of The Wilburn Brothers' 1959 "Somebody's Back in Town" does Doyle and Teddy proud. Given Patsy Cline's current cult figure status, I wouldn't have expected him to rework one of her standards, "She's Got You," but he does, and makes it succeed on his terms.

I knew the minute I heard *Wild-Eyed Dream* what it was, and I didn't hesitate to say it in these pages. When I heard the first two songs of

Loving Proof, I suspected the boy had done it again. He has.
—RICH KIENZLE

Steve Earle

Copperhead Road
UNI UNI-7

Critical raves aside, it's no rumor that Steve Earle's *Erin O* wasn't the commercial success *Guitar Town* was. And if hindsight's 20/20, I think some of us who jumped to proclaim him a New Traditionalist goofed, me included. He's not in the category with Dwight, Randy & Company and never was, since he's not going back to the time between the 1940's and the 1960's for inspiration. He actually walks a line between blue-collar rock and country, sticking to his direct, vivid chronicles of working class life.

Copperhead Road goes a step beyond the earlier albums. It's easily his hardest rocker, maybe because all but one track was cut in Memphis. The beat is hard and never lets up, combining his own band with guest musicians like Foster & Lloyd and Lone Justice's Maria McKee. The songs never let up either, all originals, two of them written with other writers. The material is roughly divided: Side One sticks to the blue-collar world while Side Two consists mostly of conventional love songs.

The title number kicking off Side One is another dramatic, dark little piece of backwoods Southern life that's neither pretty nor smoothed over: a hillbilly kid whose dad and granddad

*Latest albums from Ricky Van Shelton,
Steve Earle, Nanci Griffith, Patty Loveless, Willie Nelson,
Waylon Jennings, Buck Owens and Lonnie Mack.*

made moonshine who picks up the tradition by growing marijuana. Pretty? No. Real? Absolutely. "Back To the Wall" takes on the plight of the homeless, and "Snake Oil," a venomous rip at sleazy TV preachers and today's cure-all, feel-good politicians (really two sides of the same coin), speaks for itself.

Remaking his classic "The Devil's Right Hand," first recorded for Epic and best known through Waylon's version, Earle comes up with a better performance than his Epic original, aided by the arranging of Bruce Springsteen's bass player, Gary Tallent. Earle now has his own voice; when he first cut it, he was so hung up on rockabilly swaggering he didn't know who he was musically. His magnificent "Johnny Come Lately," a stream of consciousness tune out of the head of a World War II flyer, was recorded in London and features backing by the British band, The Pogues, who combine rock with traditional British music. Since this is where all early country came from, the performance really comes full circle.

Side Two's love songs are a bit samey in places, yet there are high points. The nervous uncertainty of "You Belong to Me" comes out in the choppy, Bo Diddley-style arrangement. But neither "Even When I'm Blue" nor "Waiting on You," the latter co-written with former producer Richard Bennett, have much depth, particularly when compared to the more wistful "Once You Love," written with Larry Craig. "Nothing But a Child" is a different sort of Christmas song, backed by the bluegrass band

Telluride (featuring mandolinist Sam Bush, fiddler Mark O'Connor and dobroist Jerry Douglas).

Earle isn't John Cougar Mellencamp or Springsteen though they all get compared a lot and both cover the same ground. I hope that the public at large wakes up to Earle's virtues more than they have recently. *Guitar Town* wasn't a fluke and, believe me, neither is this one.

-RICH KIENZLE

Buck Owens
Hot Dog!
Capitol C1-91132

Twenty years ago, deep into acid-rock, the blues and the heady moods of Woodstock, I bought my first country album: *The Best of Buck Owens, Volume 2*. Soon I was playing it as much as my Traffic or Jimi Hendrix records, raising my friends' eyebrows in the process. You gotta remember, non-con-

formists in those days were supposed to non-conform the same way.

A few years later, I found myself tuning Buck out. He'd lost the power and the passion from the days of "Together Again" and "Love's Gonna Live Here." I wondered if *Hee Haw* had gotten him hung up in a boring formula. Senior Buckaroo Don Rich's death in 1974 devastated Buck and things went downhill even faster. When he tried recording crossover in the late 1970's with Warner Brothers, it seemed like he'd finally hit bottom.

Come Dwight, Randy and Foster & Lloyd, come "Streets of Bakersfield," and suddenly the sound we took for granted was back—and Buck was back with Capitol. *Hot Dog!* breaks no new ground, but then it was changing his style that got him in trouble at Warner Bros. By remaking his old hits on his comeback album, he proves how durable his segment of the Bakersfield sound is nearly 30 years after

he created it, as well as just how much his music has shaped today's.

In truth, he takes the whole process back even one step further. "Hot Dog" was the rockabilly song he recorded in 1957 under the name "Corky Jones" to keep from upsetting his fans around Bakersfield's honky tonks (he was a closet rockabilly for years). The new version recreates the original but sounds as contemporary as anything around today. Likewise, Chuck Berry's "Memphis" fits him like a glove. "Summertime Blues," however, doesn't work. His vocal is forced, and the whole performance seems somehow gimmicky compared to the other two.

Except for one new composition, "Put a Quarter in the Jukebox," the rest are either honky tonk anthems or Buck's old hits. Frankly, I like his and Dwight's duet on "Under Your Spell Again" (Buck's first Top Five hit) better than "Streets of Bakersfield," because it's Buck's



Record Reviews

sound and not some weird Tex-Mex arrangement. Alone, he tackles "A-11," the Johnny Paycheck hit, with a vocal that reveals just how much George Jones influenced him.

"Sweethearts in Heaven," originally a 1963 duet with Rose Maddox, sounds great even without Rose, and the same goes for both the Harlan Howard standard "The Key's in the Mailbox" and "Second Fiddle," Buck's first chart hit in 1959. My sole gripe is that he relies a bit too much on his late 1950's sound and not enough on the mid-1960's sound of the "Tiger By the Tail" era, which is what really brought him back.

Still, there's plenty of time for that. *Hot Dog!* establishes who Buck was and is for this generation. His next step should be to show how well today's contemporary material fits his classic style. If anybody else had such an order to fill, I'd be skeptical, but "anybody else" didn't have 37 Top Tens (20 of 'em Number Ones) between 1959 and 1973. In any case, Keith Whitley once wrote a song titled "Let's Bring Back

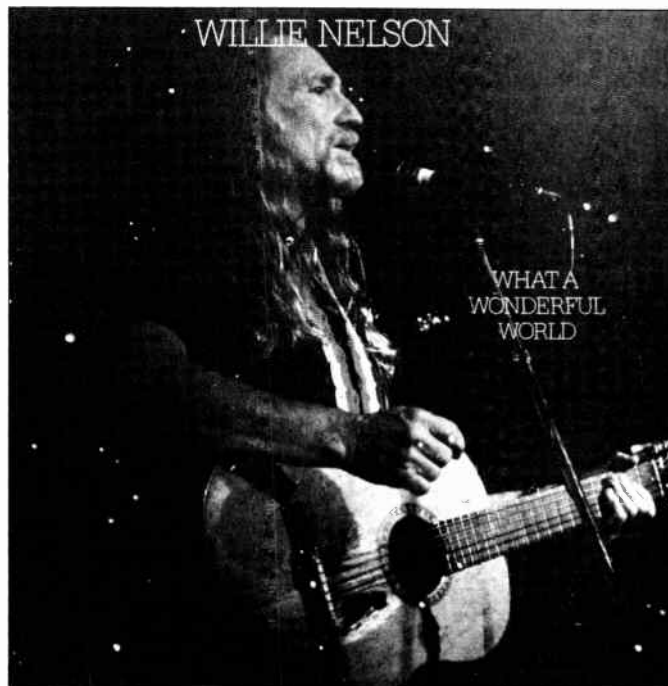
Buck," and we all got our wish.

—RICH KIENZLE

Patty Loveless *Honky Tonk Angel* MCA 42223

Patty Loveless continues her winning ways with this immaculately produced album. *Honky Tonk Angel* is, in fact, very much a sampler of La Loveless' vocal talent, from the bouncy Hank DeVito/Paul Kennerley "Blue Side of Town" to the blue-grassy "I Won't Gamble With Your Love" by Gary Scruggs and Kevin Welch to the traditional country ballad, Brian MacLean's "Don't Toss Us Away."

This is very much a *country* country album, treading the now tried-and-true path of New Traditionalism. Producer Tony Brown does a very good job of holding the album within those parameters. There's some nice steel and dobro work by Paul Franklin, and the ubiquitous Alvin Lee contributes a hint of mandolin now and again.



Loveless' voice still reminds me of a young Linda Ronstadt; it has a presence, the hint of a drawl. On the old Carter Stanley ballad, "I'll Never Grow Tired of You," the listener is almost reminded of the Ronstadt-Parton-Harris *Trio* album, thanks to Loveless' delicate handling of the harmonies by Claire Lynch and Vince Gill.

In fact, the only place the album stumbles is on a couple of more pop-styled ballads—"If You Think" and "I'm on Your Side"—where the songs and production conspire to take an exceptional voice and make it seem ordinary.

—MICHAEL BANE

Willie Nelson *What a Wonderful World* Columbia FC 44331

After a long, almost unprecedented run at the top of the charts, Willie Nelson's recording career has shown signs of slippage in the past few years.

His single releases, which once routinely zoomed to Number One, have been

plummeting off the charts faster than the late, lamented Flying Wallendas' final trapeze act. There's even a joke that's been making the rounds about the novice Nashville songwriter who learns that *his* song has been picked as Willie's next single. The elated writer goes out, buys a new house, a new car, a new boat, a new guitar and a new snowmobile. Then his royalty check comes in, and it's for 39 cents.

In that context, Nelson's latest, *What a Wonderful World*, looks like a last-gasp attempt to reverse this trend. To say the least, it is the first Nelson album in quite a while that doesn't sound like it was carelessly tossed off in a couple of off-hour sessions between rounds of golf. To say the *most*, it is a near-masterpiece—even if it does smack of glorious calculation, a white rabbit pulled out of the hat at the last minute.

What a Wonderful World is, in many ways, a worthy sequel to Nelson's 1978 *Stardust* album, a collection of vintage 1930's and 1940's pop tunes that sold 5 million copies, broke new ground in Nelson's career, and is still on



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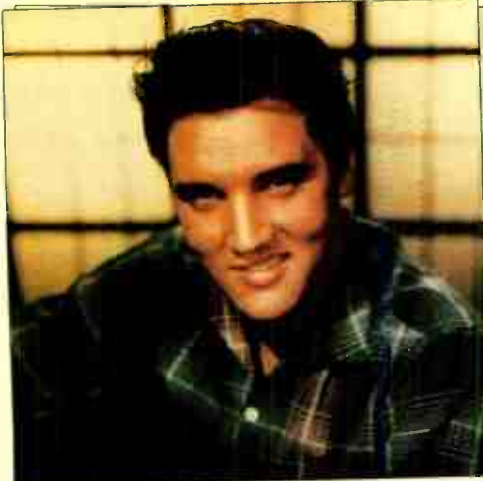


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How the Club operates: every four weeks (13 times a year) you'll receive the Club's music magazine, which describes the Selection of the Month for each musical interest...plus hundreds of alternates from every field of music. And up to six times a year you may receive offers of Special Selections, usually at a discount off regular Club prices, for a total of up to 19 buying opportunities.

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I'd like to share the good news with Tomato Lovers everywhere about a remarkable new Tomato hybrid that will revolutionize home gardening...a new genetic-engineering breakthrough from the laboratories and test-gardens of agricultural scientists that *someday* will be in everyone's home garden. But if you act promptly, you can be one of the FIRST home gardeners in America to grow it *now!*

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Amazing new hybrid literally pours forth meal after meal of magnificent, succulent, rich-red juicy Tomatoes 12"...13"...even 14" or more around!

Tomato Variety Super Bush

huge, luscious, rich-red super-delicious Tomatoes...scores of fabulous "half-pounder" beauties from each individual plant, all season long. These Tomatoes never get leggy, never sprawl through your garden.

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Take it from me, you'll be the hero of your family, and the hit of your neighborhood with these spectacular heaven-sent beauties! And you'll have *more than enough*

to share with the neighbors...because I'm not talking skimpy, I'm talking *Tomatoes*...scores of Tomatoes from every single plant! Not those teeny-weensy tiny Tomatoes other bush hybrids produce, but big, magnificent "movie star" half-pounders so rich in intense, flavorful goodness that every time you taste one, your taste buds will throw a party for your mouth.

The Best Tomatoes in the World Just One Penny Each!

These days, when I walk into a grocery store, I get *sick* at the prices I see. Sixty, seventy, even eighty cents and more for those plastic-looking, plastic-tasting things that should be ashamed to call themselves Tomatoes. Then I think of these delicious Miracle-Bush Tomatoes you can grow yourself for just about a penny apiece and I *pity* the people who never even *dream* of how scrumptious a Tomato can really be!

If you like Tomatoes, you'll *love* my Miracle-Bush beauties! I'm so certain of that fact that I'll *pay* for the Tomatoes myself if I'm *wrong*.

The Most Mouth-Watering Tomatoes Ever — Or Your Money Back!

Let me put it this way: send for my Miracle-Bush Tomatoes now...plant them in your garden...start them on a sunny windowsill...and enjoy their luscious goodness as snacks, in salads and sauces all season long. Then, if you're not as thrilled with my Miracle-Bush Tomatoes as I am, let me know next fall, and I'll refund every penny you paid! Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed, or your money back.



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For more than 20 years, W.M. has been recognized as one of America's leading experts on gardening and horticulture. He has contributed to several books, and has written countless articles on home gardening for magazines and newspapers. He lectures all across the country, and is on the faculty of one of our nation's leading Universities. His many commitments prevent us from using his name in this advertisement, but every word is his, and every word is true. This statement is notarized to prove it!



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Record Reviews

the country charts today. This time around, Nelson and producer Chips Moman (who tends to mimic the lavish period-piece arrangements that producer Booker T. Jones used on *Stardust*) have zeroed in with a carefully chosen selection of film and stage songs. Most of the numbers have been popularized and reprised over the years by everyone from Harry Belafonte and Henry Mancini to Steve Lawrence and Ferrante & Teicher and are firmly ingrained in the collective nostalgia of America's middle-aged masses.

A few choices seem a bit transparent—only because they've already been done to death over the years. This is *painfully* true in the case of "Spanish Eyes." Nelson dueting with Julio Iglesias was a novelty the first time around. Now it's merely a distraction. In addition to the weary over-exposure of the song, Willie Nelson on a Spanish kick has never quite been the ticket for me. Then there's his tired, meandering version of "South of the Border." Here he sounds like he's either gargling with epsom salts or imitating the frequencies of a juice blender.

But these are mere glitches, mere lapses of judgment, in an otherwise superb, enthusiastically interpreted collection of show tune oldies. On numbers like Hoagy Carmichael's whimsical "Ole Buttermilk Sky" and Johnny Mercer's bouncy "Ac-cent-u-ate the Positive," Nelson hits the mark head on. He makes full use of his unusual vocal phrasing (his uncanny knack for veering ahead or lagging slightly behind the meter while giving lazy little slurs and provocative twists to individual words and syllables), and here and there he inserts evocative gut string guitar fills amidst the lavish string, brass and vocal arrangements.

"Twilight Time," "Moon River" (the ultimate crooners'



anthem) and "What a Wonderful World" are three oft-recycled standards to which Nelson brings a particular shine, imbuing them with fresh magic and emotion that will more than likely endear both the songs and Nelson to a new generation of listeners.

Whatever else it may or may not be, *What a Wonderful World* is, from both a musical and a commercial perspective, a remarkable little hat trick from a song magician who always seems to have one more white rabbit up his sleeve. It's one of those unusual musical efforts where the outright calculation hardly detracts at all from its masterful, warm-hearted charm. —BOB ALLEN

Nanci Griffith
One Fair Summer Evening
MCA-42255

Even though it comes at a peculiar time—on the heels of her ground-breaking, critically acclaimed studio album, *Little Love Affairs*—this low-budget, thoroughly

captivating live effort turns out to be an indispensable addition to Nanci Griffith's growing body of recorded work.

Whatever the exact reason for its release, one thing that *One Fair Summer Evening* makes clear is that Nanci Griffith has been, and remains, a *performing* artist—a folk-style singer/writer whose songs have more meaning and greater impact done live in front of an audience than they do on record. Even such familiar Griffith originals as "Love at the Five and Dime," "The Wing and the Wheel" and "Trouble in the Fields" take on new dimension in the powerful, bare-bones acoustic renditions of them she offers up here. It's not just the singing that packs more punch in this format, either. Griffith's colorful, humorous, biographical and occasionally even allegorical spoken introductions make the songs seem more complete—or more real.

In between the songs themselves on this album, we get glimpses of Griffith. The flesh-and-blood poet and story-teller seems spurred on by a live audience. This is a

side of her talent which would not be apparent just from listening to her half-dozen or so studio recordings.

One Fair Summer Evening features relatively few additions to Griffith's repertoire and only one new original, "I Would Give You Ireland." This is the album's most notable weakness. On the other hand, and this may be *why* the album was released right now, the liveliness of the performances—just Griffith, her guitar, and her two-piece backing band, the Blue Moon Orchestra—and the familiarity of the material—"Once in a Very Blue Moon," "Love at the Five and Dime," "More Than a Whisper," etc.—make this an inspired and worthy "best of" package.

One Fair Summer Evening may give Griffith some well-deserved exposure to those many listeners out there for whom her irresistible music is still a fairly well-kept secret. —BOB ALLEN

Waylon Jennings
Full Circle
MCA-42222

Waylon Jennings has often made the point that the plight of an aging superstar is not an easy one.

With each year that passes, it gets that much more difficult to hold your ground in the Top Ten, or even the Top 20. There's always the devil grabbing at your coattails, not to mention all the Randy Traviges, Dwight Yoakams and Steve Earles of the world nipping at your heels and gaining ground.

One would imagine that at times this wary, looking-over-your-shoulder routine must become particularly annoying for an artist like Jennings whose gutsy musical style and anti-establishment character have such close emotional and musical ties to rock 'n' roll, the music

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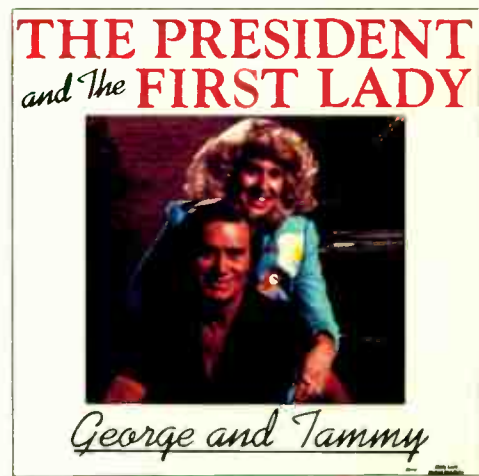
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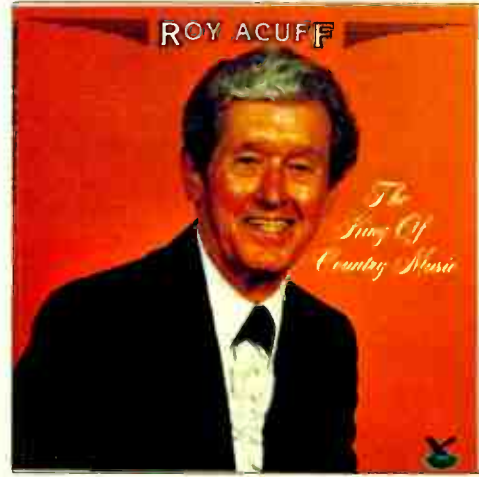
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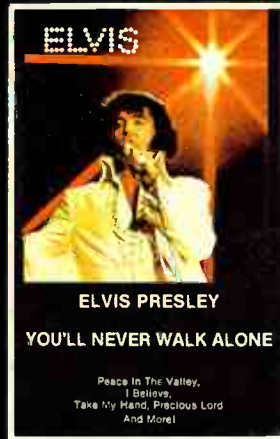
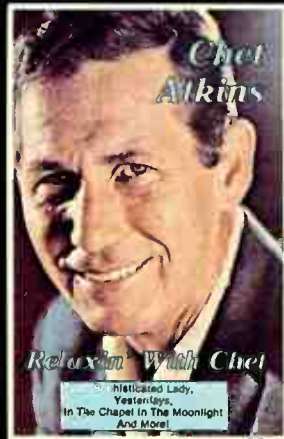
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BOB WILLS—THE BEST OF BOB WILLS: San Antonio Rose/Take Me Back To Tulsa/Big Beaver/Roly-Poly/Trouble In Mind/Time Changes Everything/The Convict And The Rose/New San Antonio Rose—No. CBK3023

Record Reviews

of youth. As Jennings himself asks in one song on his new album (one of the few he didn't write or co-write himself): "Where Do I Go (Now That I'm Gone)."

On the best songs on *Full Circle*, you can hear this peculiar urgency. On "Trouble Man" (co-written with Tony Joe White), "How Much Is It Worth to Live in L.A." (with Roger Murrah) and "Woman, I Hate It" (with Rodney Crowell), Jennings is at his frenzied, compulsive and aggressive best. He sings like a man who has carved out no more than an uneasy compromise with his own demons and a changing world, a world he's never quite come to terms with.

It's precisely this dislocated quality—this look at life from the viewpoint of the constant outsider, the perennial renegade, the fugitive from complacency—that makes Jennings' music so compelling and so eminently listenable.

On *Full Circle*, Waylon has dug in with both feet, serving both as co-producer with Jimmy Bowen and as writer or co-writer on six of the ten songs. The end result is a slightly uneven but irrepressible mix of the usual dark-veiled, macho-man bravado ("Trouble Man," "It Goes With the Territory"), uneasy nostalgia ("Hey, Willie," "G.I. Joe"), scathing social



his own past while steering a precarious course through the present. Waylon sounds like an artist who is once more surveying both ground he's gained and ground he's lost.

And the irony here—as is so often the case—is that Waylon Jennings' loss is the listener's gain.

—BOB ALLEN

Lonnie Mack
Road Houses and

peared, resurfacing seven years later to do two albums, then disappearing again. In 1977, seven years later, he released *Home at Last*, an excellent, though more country-flavored, album. He should be due again around 1984."

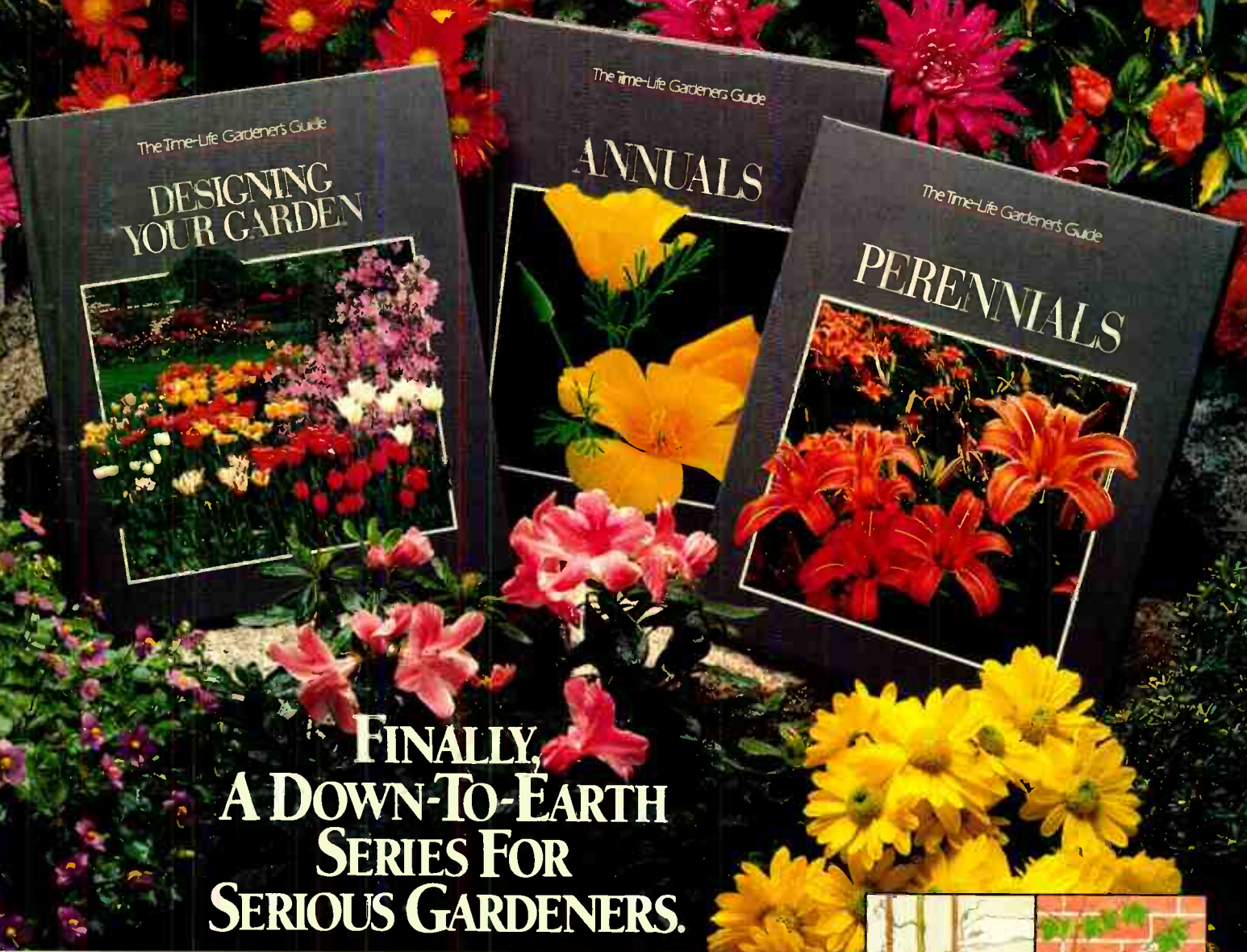
Well, Lonnie Mack was late. Four years late, as a matter of fact. But, cliché be damned, it was worth the wait. *Road Houses and Dance Halls* is a bittersweet look at a life spent on the road, the cynicism and the

mean, just look at the song titles: "Too Rock for Country, Too Country for Rock and Roll," "Sexy Ways/Annie Had a Baby," "Plain Jane (In a Mustang)," "High Blood Pressure," "Cocaine Blues." Whoops, just threw that last one in there.

What I like about this album—and I like it a lot—is that it sounds like Hernandez's *Hideaway* in Memphis around 1962. But not in a nostalgic sense—nostalgia is, for lack of a more delicate word, bullshit.

Nope, this is road music, and it doesn't change. It shouldn't change. Road house honky tonk music makes you want to get out on the dance floor after one too many beers, makes you want to move, heck, makes you want to make a pass at the waitress, knock over the barstool and get carried home by your embarrassed friends.

There is, folks, a place for this kind of soul in country music. This may be the best honky tonk album since Delbert McClinton's *Genuine Cowhide* album years ago. I'm not sure where it fits in with all the New Traditionalists and what-have-you knocking around the airways these days. We always seem to have a little trouble in dealing with the Real Item, as opposed to copies, resurrections and revisitations of



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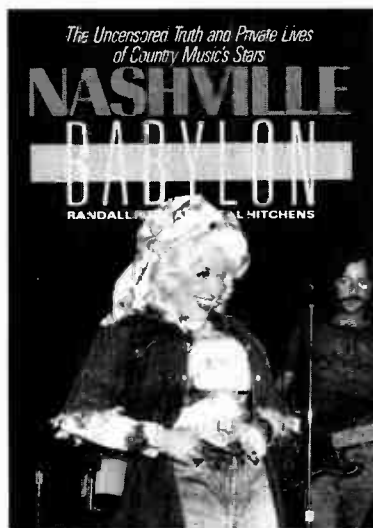
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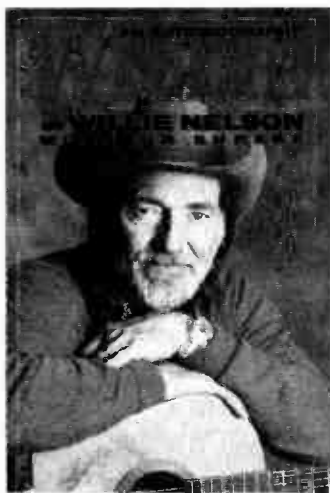
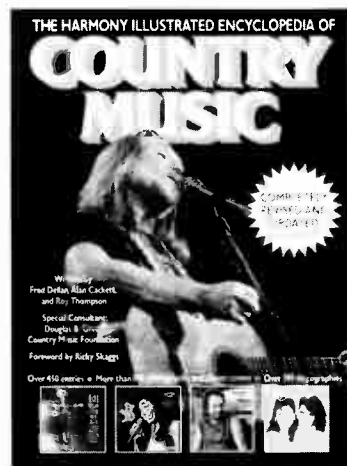
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What Hollywood Babylon did to Tinsel Town, Nashville Babylon is sure to do to country music. Authors Randall Riese and Neal Hitchens have spent a year "incognito" in Nashville, applying the same exhaustive research techniques they brought to their revealing *The Unabridged Marilyn*. The result is a collection of deliciously saucy—but according to the authors, totally true—revelations about the lives of Nashville's greatest stars. The book is loaded with facts about what really goes on "behind closed doors." Some of country music's more fascinating dark secrets and little known scandals are revealed in pithy text and photos. Is it all gospel truth or just a fantasy added in...you decide. 7" x 10"...340 Pages. Item No. B4C—ONLY \$12.95

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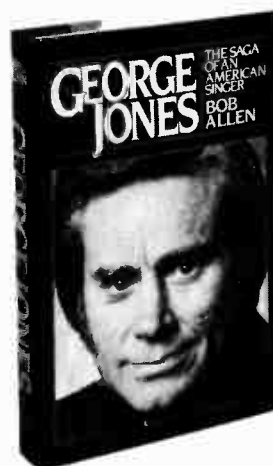
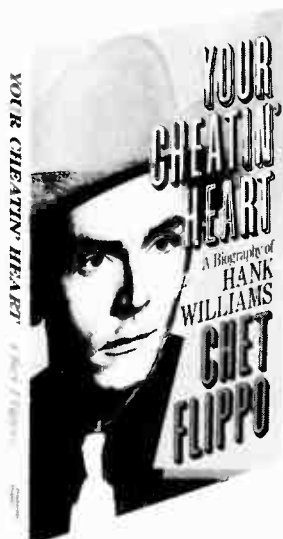


WILLIE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"...full of juicy morsels from his spicy life," says Newsweek. It's the true rags-to-riches story of the transformation of a Texas good ol' boy into a national figure. For the first time, and in his own words, Willie shares the rollercoaster ride of events that have shaped his life and career: his childhood in the depression; his stormy marriages; his impoverished early years as a fledgling songwriter; his wild experiences with drugs, booze and women; his rise to stardom; his career as an actor; and his search for spiritual wisdom...it's all here in this new 334 page hardcover volume, complete with 32 pages of rare photos. You'll love it. Item No. B4H—NOW \$19.95

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No serious country music fan should go without reading this classic 1981 bestseller by noted writer Chet Flippo. Here's just a little of what has already been said about it: "The consummate Hank Williams biography...the explosive life story that deserves to be read by every urban cowboy in America." —*Playboy*. "I'm sure Hank would be glad you done it this way." —Waylon Jennings. "Flippo has managed to put flesh and blood on the sturdy bones of the Williams legend." —*People Magazine*. It's truly a country classic. Softcover...251 Pages...Illustrated. Item No. B9F—ONLY \$8.95



GEORGE JONES: SAGA OF AN AMERICAN SINGER

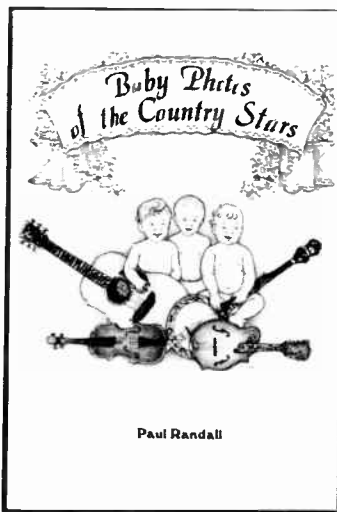
Now, noted country music author Bob Allen reveals the true story of this music legend...from his early life in the isolated and storied Big Thicket of Southeast Texas to his gradual ascent through the ranks to emerge as one of the stellar figures in the checkered world of the country music industry. Allen examines the conflicts that have haunted Jones throughout his career. He explores the stormy marriages and reviews George's lengthy struggles to overcome alcoholism and drug addiction plus the myriad legal complications and ill-advised business decisions that threatened to ruin him. It's a fascinating story you should not miss. Hardcover...312 pages...40 B/W Illustrations. Item No. B2Y—NOW \$15.95

ARE YOU COUNTRY MUSIC FANS!



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

A country music insider who has covered the Nashville scene since 1975, talking with every important country performer for books, magazines and radio, now presents her best conversations in a brand new oversized paperback. Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, The Judds, Ricky Skaggs, Marty Robbins, Reba McEntire, Loretta Lynn, there's 27 in all. Get a rare and fascinating look at the real people behind the public personalities. 553 Pages ..27 Photos. Item No. B4W-NOW \$14.95

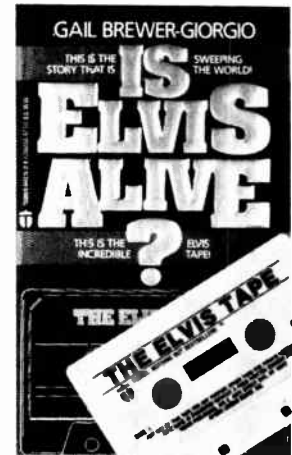


BABY PHOTOS OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC STARS

It's 190 fascinating pages featuring over 150 country music stars with photos of how they looked as infants and how they look today. There's Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, George Jones, Hank Williams Jr., Reba McEntire, Ricky Skaggs, Johnny Cash, Randy Travis, The Statler Brothers and Barbara Mandrell, just to mention a few. Order now. Softcover...321 B/W Photos. Item No. B30-NOW \$10

IS ELVIS ALIVE?

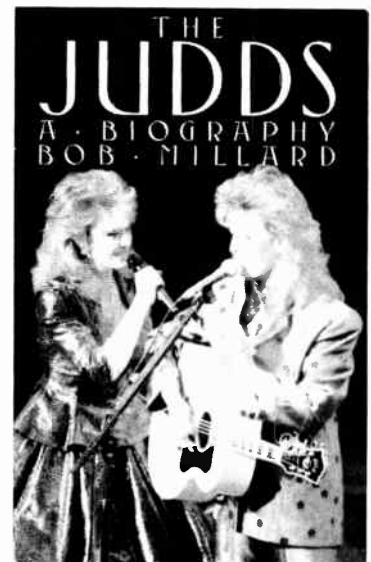
They're calling it the most incredible story of the decade. Did Elvis Presley hoax his own death to escape the demands of international superstardom? So claims author Gail Brewer-Giorgio in her new bestseller...now you can judge for yourself. Why has the death certificate disappeared? Why has no one ever come forward to claim his life insurance? Why is Elvis' name misspelled on his tombstone? What happened to his personal possessions? These are just some of the questions raised in this new book. Now you can read the story and hear the incredible Elvis phone call on tape. Truth or nonsense, you will find this book/tape combination truly fascinating. Item BTV-ONLY \$5.95.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE PICK OF THE MONTH

THE JUDDS

Wynonna Judd has a smile like Elvis Presley's, a voice comparable to Patsy Cline's, and a vocal style that's (almost) all her own. Together, with her mother Naomi, the Judds have become the hottest country-western duo singing today. Now, author Bob Millard traces the lives of this mother and daughter super combo, from Naomi's tragic loss of her brother in childhood, to her escape into early marriage, through the "U-Haul" years when Wynonna and her sister Ashley were toted through countless cities in search of their mother's dream. Their's is a wild, inspiring story of love and devotion, fights, reconciliations, and bold ambition. But most of all, it's a story of finding harmonies—in music and in the women themselves. Softcover...8 1/4" x 5 1/2"....206 Pages...35 B/W Photos. Item No. B4A-ONLY \$8.95



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FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY



Louvin Brothers Special

The Louvin Brothers, whose career was in full swing in the late 1950s, have remained influential, thanks partly to the appreciation and praise lavished on them by Emmylou Harris and others. A good many of their recorded albums have been re-issued in recent years. For more on The Louvins, see Legends of Country Music in this issue's CMSA Newsletter.

Presented roughly chronologically, according to the date of first release, albums available are as follows. Members are entitled to take \$2.00 off the price of each album shown. *The Louvin Brothers* (Rounder SS 07)/\$11.98, all their 1951-52 recordings from MGM; *Songs That Told a Story* (Rounder 1030)/\$11.98, 1952 live recordings made for station WMPG in Memphis but never used; *Radio Favorites* (CMF 009)/\$11.98, various selections culled by the Country Music Foundation from the years 1951-57; *The Best of the Early Louvin Brothers* (REB 852)/\$9.98, the boys' 12 biggest Capitol hits including "When I Stop Dreaming" and "You're Running Wild," reviewed in Buried Treasures in January/February 1987; *Tragic Songs of Life* (HAT 3043)/\$10.98, their first long-playing album, recorded by Capitol in 1956 and including "Knoxville Girl," "Alabama," and "In the Pines," reviewed in Buried Treasures in January/February 1988; *Louvin Brothers Live at New River Ranch* (CCLP 0105)/\$9.98, "Childish Love," "Is That You, Myrtle?" and other notable Louvin songs done live at Rising Sun, Maryland, with Paul Yandell; *The Family Who Prays* (DT 1061)/\$11.98, Louvin gospel music originally released in 1958, reviewed in Buried Treasures in November/December 1988; *The Great Gospel Singing of the Louvin Brothers* (ST 11193)/\$11.98, culled from various later collections of gospel songs, also reviewed in Buried Treasures in November/December 1988; *My Baby's Gone* (HAT 3028)/\$10.98,



originally released in 1960, includes four songs found on *The Best of the Early Louvin Brothers*, but also includes "The First One to Love You" and others, reviewed in Buried Treasures in March/April 1987; and *Ira and Charlie* (HAT 3057)/\$10.98, 1960 covers of other artists' hits, reviewed in Buried Treasures in May/June 1988. All available in both records and cassettes. Specify which you prefer when ordering. To repeat, members' price is \$2.00 off every album listed.

How to Order

To purchase any of these albums, send check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 010289-N, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Include \$1.95 postage and handling for the first item ordered, \$.95 for each additional.

Buried Treasures Also

CMSA members are entitled to take \$2.00 off the price of any album listed in Buried Treasures. So include your membership number when you order, and reap the rewards of membership now. Buried Treasures in this issue includes early Merle Haggard, Merle Travis, Jimmie Skinner, Hank Thompson (the first live country music album ever recorded) and more, all dug up by champion record spelunker, Rich Kienzle.

Calendar Coming

Society members and other subscribers and their friends who have the 1989 *Country Music Magazine* Calendar coming to them may already have it or can expect it any day. A number of suggestions made by readers were incorporated into the calendar this year.

Dave Nemo Covered Again

Society members will note that Dave Nemo and station WWL in New Orleans are covered in this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. The Newsletter covered Dave and The Road Gang back in July/August 1988 as part of our continuing look at country music radio stations around the nation.

MEMBERS POLL/JANUARY 1989

VOTE

Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have an organized way of making your opinion known, by filling out the Members Poll. We forward the results of the Polls to those involved in the business of country music who are interested in what fans are thinking and doing, and we publish the results.

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records or tapes) in the last month?

Yes No

How many records? _____ How many cassettes? _____

2. Which ones did you like best? List performer and album title.

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
d. _____
e. _____

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

3. To vote, list the numbers of your top 5 favorites from the Top 25, page 68.

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Been to the Grand Ole Opry?

4. Did you ever attend the Grand Ole Opry when it was at the Ryman Auditorium? Yes (How many times? _____) No

5. Did you ever attend the Grand Ole Opry at Opryland? Yes (How many times? _____) No

6. If you attended the Opry at both the Ryman Auditorium and Opryland, how do you rate the performance?

Opryland better Ryman Auditorium better About the same

7. Do you plan to go to the Opry in the future?

Yes No

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, fill in your Membership Number _____

If you are not a member, but want to join and vote immediately, fill out the poll, enclose your check for \$16 for a one-year CMSA Membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too).

Fill out and mail to: January Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173.

If You Are Not a Member: You may join and order from this page at the same time at member's prices. Just include a separate check for \$16 (one-year's dues, includes an additional year's subscription to *Country Music*) payable to Country Music Society of America and follow member's ordering procedure above.

Rolling with The Road Gang



A maverick radio station out of New Orleans keeps the nation's truckers in tune.

by John Morthland

Dave Nemo (right)
with trucker friend
O.C. Joiner.

splitting the airtime with him, took over; Parker, then a producer, was promoted to second host, and handles weekend nights plus weeknights when Nemo is on the road himself, appearing at trade shows and the like. Nemo has been known to broadcast from such locations, as well as from major truckstops around the nation.

Road Gang was launched amidst a mini-fad for trucking songs that began in 1963 with Dave Dudley's "Six Days on the Road" and peaked in 1975 with Red Sovine's "Teddy Bear." That song helped make Citizens Band radio a national preoccupation. But today, Nemo doesn't even allow truckers to use their CB handles on the air, saying it's become a demeaning form of identification.

"We try to dignify the driver because we think he's a dignified person, and that's why we don't use handles on the air. We use the guy's real name. And besides, truckers don't use CB much anymore anyhow. But I sure get a lot of requests today on those cellular phones."

Actually, he gets calls of all types. A woman having problems with childbirth had Nemo put the word out to her parents, a husband-wife team out of Kansas; within 30 minutes, the parents had called in from West Virginia. On another occasion, a woman who had fled her husband after a beating, taking the child with her, had to be informed that the dog which had bitten that child a couple of days earlier turned out to be rabid, and shots would be required. Weirdest of all, Nemo once received a call from the FBI about a woman and her lover who were plotting the murder of her husband and were communicating with each other via a code based on song titles that they requested on his show.

And once, he got a letter. It was from a couple in Knoxville who'd gone to meet him when he hosted a show from a local truckstop. "When we saw Mr. Nemo, we were so shocked that he was such a puny little man that we decided we didn't want to meet him and we went back home. We're not gonna listen to him anymore, either!" they wrote.

"That's my prize letter," Nemo laughs. If he didn't know better, the deejay might get the idea nobody likes him. Even within the record industry, the show is not taken as seriously as it might be. So far only Tammy Wynette, Ralph Stanley and Bill Grant and Delia Bell have appeared in person on the air. Nobody, it would seem, cares that much for *The Road Gang*—nobody except 3 to 3.5 million truckers and their families and friends. ■

For more on *The Road Gang*, see the July/August 1988 CMSA Newsletter.

There are two rules that cannot be broken if a station is to be successful in radio today. One is that you always play the hits; if you are a contemporary station, you play today's hits, and if you are an oldies station, you play yesterday's hits—but you never play obscurities. The second is that you cannot appeal to a specialized interest group within your potential market.

Meanwhile, way down yander in New Orleans, *The Road Gang* has been breaking those rules for 17 years and continues to thrive. The show, which airs from 11 P.M. to 5 A.M. nightly on WWL/870 AM has a geosynchronous transmitter on KRVN/880 AM out of Lexington, Kansas, that makes it possible for a trucker to tune in nonstop from coast to coast. Currently headed by Dave Nemo, a slight, bearded man who speaks softly, with assistance from John Parker, *The Road Gang* is a truck driver's show, period. This does not mean, Nemo is quick to point out, that they have truckers' features mixed in with regular programming.

We acknowledge *nobody* else; we're mutually exclusive as far as the trucker is concerned," Nemo declares. "All our music is aimed at the trucker; we play nothing but requests called in on the truckers' hotline, an 800 number we give out only in person to truckers. All our talk and services are directed at truckers. All our sponsors are trucking products. *The Road Gang* is not for everybody. It never will be."

Yet a recent survey by a New York ad agency showed that during a given week over three million people tuned in, for at least 15 minutes, to the show each night (many of course, were counted several times, because they tune in every night they're on the road).

What truckers get when they tune in is the most comprehensive weather report in the nation, a copyrighted service called InterScan which covers 550 points around the country; truckers rely on the report to route their runs. *The Road Gang* also provides an emer-

gency message service that lets truckers on the road know when they have to reach family or friends unexpectedly. If there's a major political issue brewing—say, highway taxes—Nemo will get the appropriate public officials on the air to explain the situation. But when the weather's good and there's nothing special happening, well, that's the time Dave Nemo likes best because then there's nothing on the show but country music.

And mostly older country music at that, including a fair number of records you're not likely to have ever heard before. Among contemporary artists, *Road Gang* favorites are Hag, George Jones and Hank Jr., with a smattering of George Strait, Reba McEntire, The O'Kanes, The Whites and Randy Travis. But the bulk of the programming is reserved for Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Flatt and Scruggs, Webb Pierce, The Stanley Brothers, Johnny Horton, Ernest Tubbs, Roy Acuff, Kitty Wells and The Carter Family.

"I'm 39, and I grew up in Illinois with everybody gathered around the radio on Saturday nights for the WLS *Barn Dance*," Nemo says. "That's still my favorite period of country music, the mid-1950's."

"Then there's that *Road Gang* specialty, obscure records," he chuckles. "*Road Gang* has a whole hit list of records nobody's heard of except truckers who listen to *Road Gang*. John's a record collector, so you can call in and request just about anything, and we'll get it on the air in a few days."

The policy has changed little since Charlie Douglas launched the show on WWL, a station that has always been all-news or all-talk for all but *The Road Gang's* hours. Nemo, at that time, was in the Army, doing a show in Seoul, Korea, but had worked at WWL since 1969. Though born in Illinois, he grew up mainly in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and went to college at Loyola in New Orleans. When Douglas left five years ago for the Music Company Radio Network in Nashville, Nemo, who had been

Buried Treasures /

Reissues,
Rarities and the
Hard-to-Find

Time-Life Country USA

Series: Five years ago, Time-Life Records released *Country Music*, their acclaimed series that covered everyone from Hank Williams and The Statlers to Tammy Wynette. Their new *Country U.S.A.* series takes a different approach. Like their successful *Rock and Roll Era* series, each volume of *Country U.S.A.* presents 24 big hits of a given year, packaged on two long-playing records, two cassettes or one fantastic-sounding compact disc. The songs aren't new re-recorded versions—they are the original hit recordings.

The first two volumes, 1961 and 1957, more than adequately cover the hits of those two years. 1961 has everything from Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces" and "Crazy" to Ray Price's classic Texas shuffle "Heart Over Mind," Bill Anderson's "Po' Folks," Don Gibson's "Sweet Dreams" and "Sea of Heartbreak," Roy Drusky's "Three Hearts in a Tangle" and the original "Louisiana Man" by Rusty and Doug Kershaw. The two early Buck Owens hits included, "Foolin' Around" and "Under the Influence of Love," aren't currently available anywhere else.

The 1957 set reflects the growing influence of rock 'n' roll on the country charts. Along with hardcore country hits like Price's "My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You," Marvin Rainwater's "Gonna Find Me a Bluebird," Hank Snow's "Tangled Mind" and Bobby Helms' "Fraulein" are numbers clearly aimed at a younger market, like Johnny Horton's "I'm Coming Home," Sonny James' "Young Love" and Carl Perkins' Sun hit, "Dixie Fried." As the series continues, this year-by-year idea shows how the music's evolved and changed.

Merle Haggard: The search for vintage Haggard is getting easier and easier thanks



to Stetson. Two more Capitol albums have just been reissued in original form. Hag and Bonnie Owens' *Just Between the Two of Us* (Stetson HAT 3073), originally released in 1966, was named for their hit duet for Tally Records, released before Merle joined Capitol. Merle's then-manager, Fuzzy Owen, wrote most of these, and Merle had to strain his voice in places to harmonize with Bonnie. He winds up sounding more like Buck Owens than himself. The title track, as well as "A House Without Love Is Not a Home" and "Slowly But Surely," are particularly worthwhile.

The Legend of Bonnie and Clyde (HAT 3075) was originally released in 1968 to capitalize on Hag's hit of the same name, popular around the time of the hit 1968 *Bonnie and Clyde* film. This isn't one of his landmark albums; however, the material is a pleasant mix of Haggard originals and songs by others. Listen closely to his "Because You Can't Be Mine": the melody's identical to "Swinging Doors."

Merle's original version of "Today I Started Loving You Again" is also here, and believe it or not, this, one of his most enduring ballads, was never a hit for him. In 1969 pop crooner Al Martino, of all people, took it to Number 69 on the country charts, and Kenny Rogers & The First Edition got their version to exactly the same position—Number 69—in 1972. You figure it out. He also

tackles Dallas Frazier's "Will You Visit Me On Sundays," Tommy Collins' "Fool's Castle" and the Wynn Stewart/Buddy Mize tune "Is This the Beginning of the End?"

Merle Travis: Travis' biggest honky tonk hits all came during the late 1940's: "Cincinnati Lou," "No Vacancy," "Divorce Me C.O.D.," "I Like My Chicken Frying Size" and "So Round! So Firm! So Fully Packed!" all became standards back then, but are now out of print. In August of 1961, however, Travis went back into the studios with Capitol producer Ken Nelson to re-record his old hits. The result was *Travis!*, just reissued by Stetson (HAT 3080).

Accompanying him were Gene Autry's arranger Carl Cotner and a young steel guitarist named Curly Chalker who'd worked with Lefty Frizzell and Hank Thompson. As on the original recordings, a muted trumpet was used to make the recreation of Merle's sound complete. The results don't have the edge of the original recordings, though few re-recordings do. But Merle's singing is more relaxed, even mellow in places. The band is laid-back, and Chalker's jazzy playing on this album gained enough notice to launch his studio career.

Jimmie Skinner: After Ernest Tubb launched his world-famous record shop in 1947, one of his best-known competitors selling records over the radio was singer Jimmie Skinner, owner of Jimmie Skinner Music Center

and one of the earliest to market mail order bluegrass records. After recording for Capitol in the early 1950's, Skinner had several respectable hits for Mercury in the late 1950's and 1960's.

Some of his best work, including several of the hits, is available again on *Another Saturday Night* (Bear Family BFX 15266). Skinner's own singing was much in the E.T. mold, right down to occasionally sliding off pitch, and may well have influenced Johnny Cash. His 1957-59 duets with Kitty Wells-style singer Connie Hall (who later had several solo hits for Decca) have the feel of Tubb's duets with Loretta Lynn, particularly "Married to a Friend." Also included are several of his hits, "I Found My Girl in the U.S.A." (an answer to Bobby Helms' hit "Fraulein"), "Another Saturday Night," "John Wesley Hardin" and "Reasons to Live." The photos and production are typical of Bear Family's high standards. Otto Kitzinger's liner notes are adequate.

Hank Thompson: Some years ago, I took a cassette copy of *Hank Thompson at the Golden Nugget*, originally released by Capitol in 1961, to accompany a night of drinking with friends at a local fire hall. Much to my surprise, guys who hated country music loved the album (as far as I remember, considering the beer flow). Now this, the first live country album ever recorded, is available again from Stetson

(HAT 3076).

Twenty-eight years later, it stands with other truly great live honky tonk albums like *Charlie Walker Live in Dallas, Texas*. The band was having a good night when they recorded it—it smokes from beginning to end. Their versions of “Honky Tonk Girl,” “John Henry” (with hot Merle Travis guitar), “Nine Pound Hammer” and “Steel Guitar Rag” are all included, with an explosive version of “A Six Pack to Go” to wind things up. Vegas’ Golden Nugget may not be a honky tonk, but Thompson made it one at the time. Uncork a beer while you’re listening; you’ll get the idea.

Sonny James: Sonny James’ material for Capitol and Columbia hasn’t been around for years, not his hits, not anything. *Sonny* (HAT 3070), originally released in 1957, doesn’t cover his hard country material, but if you liked “Young Love” and the other pop stuff he did before going back to hard country, you’ll enjoy this. (“Young Love” itself, unfortunately, isn’t here.)

These interpretations of pop and country standards come complete with vocal chorus and muted accompaniment. James’ version of “A Fool Such As I” sounds closer to Hank Snow’s 1952 original than Elvis’, and he tackles two Nashville pop hits from the 1940’s: Francis Craig’s “Near You” and “Beg Your Pardon.” His stabs at The Louvin Brothers’ “How’s the World Treating You” and The Davis Sisters’ “I Forgot More Than You’ll Ever Know” are also excellent.

Tommy Collins: The early work of Tommy Collins, the Bakersfield Sound pioneer who inspired Merle Haggard’s “Leonard” and wrote brilliant songs like “I Guess I’m Crazy,” was long out of print. But now comes *This Is Tommy Collins* (HAT 3071), a reproduction of his debut Capitol album, originally released in 1959. It includes early examples of the Bakersfield Sound, among them his first four 1954-55 novelty

hits, “You Better Not Do That,” “Untied,” “What’cha Gonna Do Now” and “It Tickles,” and some lesser-known originals like “You Gotta Have a License” (a minor hit for Porter Wagoner back in 1970).

In those days, before he matured as a ballad singer, Collins’ crazy hillbilly stage personality was much like Little Jimmy Dickens’. As an added treat, Buck Owens fans can hear Buck play lead guitar throughout the album, since he was working as Collins’ lead guitarist when most of these songs were recorded. This album, out as an expensive Japanese import a few years ago, is a bargain.

Jean Shepard: Jean’s second Capitol album, *Lonesome Love* (HAT 3072), doesn’t feature her hits or original material as her first album (also available from Stetson) did. Instead we have a dozen fine covers of other artists’ hits, among them: Eddy Arnold’s “I’ll Hold You in My Heart” and a hot rendition of Merle Travis’ “Sweet Temptation” with some raunchy lead, possibly by Buck Owens.

Jean does Hank Sr.’s “You Win Again,” Kay Starr’s “I’ll Never Be Free,” Leon Payne’s “I Love You Because” and Jimmy Wakely’s “You Can’t Break the Chains of Love” ample justice. She was in fine voice for this one, and

the production was no-frills country without too much vocal chorus. Speedy West’s probably playing the articulate steel guitar accompaniment.

Jimmy Bryant: I can’t say enough about country-jazz guitar virtuoso Jimmy Bryant’s 1960 album *Country Cabin Jazz* (HAT 3078) other than that I’ve treasured my original copy for years. These 1952-1956 country-jazz instrumentals feature some of the hottest music ever recorded. Bryant and steel guitarist Speedy West burn on every one of these numbers, originally issued by Capitol in the 1950’s as Bryant singles. “Frettin’ Fingers,” “Pickin’ Peppers,” “The Night Rider,” “Whistle Stop” and the breathtaking “Stratosphere Boogie” must be heard to be believed. The amazing swing fiddle on “Jammin’ With Jimmy” was played by Bryant himself in between guitar breaks (fiddle was his first instrument).

Bassist-promoter Cliffie Stone, father of Highway 101’s Curtis Stone and a California country legend in his own right, told me in 1986 that though he’d largely quit playing bass on recording sessions, he enjoyed recording with Jimmy and Speedy. If you add *Country Cabin Jazz* to Speedy West’s solo album *Steel Guitar* (previously reissued by Stetson as HAT

3045), you will have a good chunk of some of the most innovative picking ever done, since *Steel Guitar* also features Bryant. If you know kids who like rock guitarists like Eddie Van Halen, play *Country Cabin Jazz* for them and watch their jaws drop. Country it is; corny it’s not.

Hollywood Hillbillies: Much of the material featured in this Buried Treasures has been from Capitol Records, so we might as well wind this one up with an interesting anthology of Capitol material from the 1950’s and 1960’s. The 20 songs on *Hollywood Hillbillies* (See for Miles SEE 98) cover the era after producer Ken Nelson took over. Not all these numbers were hits, but most haven’t been available since they were first released. Faron Young’s 1959 “A Long Time Ago” is one of his best ballad performances. Hank Thompson’s “Lost John” with Merle Travis is one of his lesser-known but most exciting boogie performances, equal to his 1957 hit “Rockin’ In the Congo,” also included here. Tommy Collins’ “My Last Chance With You” shows him evolving into a strong ballad singer.

Jerry Reed fans will enjoy the two pre-“Amos Moses” numbers from the late 1950’s. He’d finished trying to record rockabilly for Capitol and was trying to make it as a George Jones-style honky tonk singer. He does a decent job on “Too Busy Cryin’ the Blues,” but you can hear that raw power that later came out on his records straining to break loose. Sonny James’ obscure “Forgive Me” with Buck on guitar (his playing is all over this album) features a spirited vocal and guitar solos from both Sonny and Buck. Ferlin Husky’s “Draggin’ the River,” a Number 11 hit in 1961, is among his best (and most rocking) performances.

Next time, if all goes well, look for Rounder’s latest Carl Smith reissue, Stetson’s reissue of Chet Atkins’ first album and new material from Bear Family.—RICH KIENZLE

How to Get These Treasures

Available in records or cassettes, at prices shown: Merle Haggard and Bonnie Owens, *Just Between the Two of Us* (HAT 3073) \$10.98/Merle Haggard, *The Legend of Bonnie and Clyde* (HAT 3075) \$10.98/Merle Travis, *Travis!* (HAT 3080) \$10.98/Hank Thompson, *Hank Thompson at the Golden Nugget* (HAT 3076) \$10.98/Sonny James, *Sonny* (HAT 3070) \$10.98/Tommy Collins, *This Is Tommy Collins* (HAT 3071) \$10.98/Jean Shepard, *Lonesome Love* (HAT 3072) \$10.98/Jimmy Bryant, *Country Cabin Jazz* (HAT 3078) \$10.98. Available in records, cassettes or compact discs, at prices shown: *Country U.S.A., 1961* (Time-Life Records) \$14.99/*Country U.S.A., 1957* (Time-Life Records) \$14.99. Available in records only, at prices shown: Jimmie Skinner, *Another Saturday Night* (BFX 15266) \$14.98/Various artists, *Hollywood Hillbillies* (SEE 98) \$15.98.

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TOP 25

Singles

1. Ricky Van Shelton *I'll Leave This World Loving You*
2. Southern Pacific *New Shade of Blue*
3. Nitty Gritty Dirt Band *I've Been Lookin'*
4. Reba McEntire *I Know How He Feels*
5. George Strait *If You Ain't Lovin' You Ain't Livin'*
6. Barbara Mandrell *I Wish That I Could Fall In Love Today*
7. Vern Gosdin *Chiseled In Stone*
8. Restless Heart *A Tender Life*
9. Keith Whitley *When You Say Nothing At All*
10. Michael Johnson *That's That*
11. The Bellamy Brothers *Rebels Without a Clue*
12. Rosanne Cash *Runaway Train*
13. Paul Overstreet *Love Helps Those*
14. Willie Nelson *Spanish Eyes*
15. K.T. Oslin *Hold Me*
16. Shenandoah *Mama Knows*
17. Eddie Rabbitt *We Must Be Doin' Somethin' Right*
18. Don Williams *Desperately*
19. The Judds *Change of Heart*
20. Rodney Crowell *She's Crazy For Leaving*
21. Baillie and the Boys *Long Shot*
22. Sawyer Brown *My Baby's Gone*
23. Patty Loveless *Blue Side of Town*
24. Moe Bandy *I Just Can't Say No To You*
25. Johnny Cash
with Hank Williams Jr. *That Old Wheel*

Albums

1. Ricky Van Shelton *Loving Proof*
2. Randy Travis *Old 8 X 10*
3. K.T. Oslin *This Woman*
4. Dwight Yoakam *Buenas Noches From a Lonely Room*
5. Reba McEntire *Reba*
6. The Judds *Greatest Hits*
7. Hank Williams Jr. *Wild Streak*
8. Restless Heart *Big Dreams in a Small Town*
9. The Oak Ridge Boys *Monongahela*
10. George Strait *If You Ain't Lovin' You Ain't Livin'*
11. Willie Nelson *What a Wonderful World*
12. Highway 101 *101 2*
13. Tanya Tucker *Strong Enough To Bend*
14. Rosanne Cash *King's Record Shop*
15. Dan Seals *Rage On*
16. Randy Travis *Always & Forever*
17. Rodney Crowell *Diamonds & Dirt*
18. Ricky Van Shelton *Wild Eyed Dream*
19. Vern Gosdin *Chiseled In Stone*
20. The Charlie Daniels
Band *Homesick Heroes*
21. Kathy Mattea *Untasted Honey*
22. K.T. Oslin *80's Ladies*
23. Billy Joe Royal *The Royal Treatment*
24. Sweethearts
of the Rodeo *One Time, One Night*
25. Alabama *Alabama Live*

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