

COUNTRYMUSIC



BR5-49's
Good Time

BRYAN WHITE
In the Mirror

JOHN ANDERSON
Answers 20 Questions



RICK TREVINO
Pull-Out Poster

TANYA
TUCKER
Doin' It Again

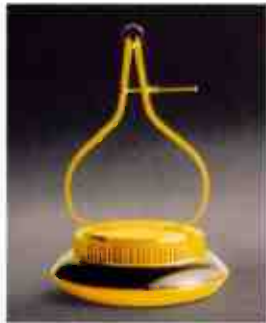




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COUNTRY MUSIC

30



FEATURES

36 Rick Trevino Pull-Out Centerfold

Get the photos and the facts on a guy who started classical training as a pianist at age five. Now he's a country music hitmaker.

42 20 Questions with John Anderson

by Bob Allen

John's back with a new album, a new record label and a new producer. 20 Questions caught up with him on the road at a time when he says he feels like he's come home again. Find out why—and why he likes home-grown vegetables, too.

44 BR5-49: Searching for a Good Time

by Bob Allen

Not too long ago they were just five guys playing in a bar band on Nashville's Lower Broadway. Today they have a record deal, are shooting TV commercials, and appearing on *Good Morning America*. They've even taken their music to Europe. Perhaps more important, though, are the fans they've garnered, both young and old.

48 Bryan White Glances in the Mirror

by Bob Allen

He's taking the younger country audiences by storm, but Bryan White is not just another pretty face. This guy has his priorities in order. In fact, it might surprise you to learn just what he thinks really matters.

44



COVER STORY

30 Tanya: Been There, Done That, Doin' It Again

by Michael Bane

You've read about her in the tabloids, seen her on TV, and heard about her exploits on the radio. She's got an autobiography out, and tells all there. After 25 years in country music, Tanya Tucker still has it, and she's ready for more. Michael Bane spent some time with the superstar and found out that after all is said and done, the music is still what it's all about.

48



DEPARTMENTS

People

4

by Hazel Smith

Dollywood opens, Merle turns 60 and Garth goes to the Big Apple. Strait and Gill take home heavy metal, Kershaw and Reynolds help out with auctions, and the world says goodbye to Mae Axton. Plus more Tanya.

Top 25

40

For Members Only

53

Letters

58

Buried Treasures

68

by Rich Kienzle

Kienzle umpires reissues on Autry, Rodgers, Monroe, Parton and more.

Essential Collector

70

by Rich Kienzle

A Byrds reissue and books galore.

The Final Note

72

by Patrick Carr

Anchors on the charts?

Records

16

George Strait is as good as ever, so is Johnny Cash. Alison Krauss lets the band fly. Pete Anderson shows what he's got, plus this generation's Bramlett, Burnette, Cochran and Wiggins strut their stuff. Also Joy Lynn White, Tracy Lawrence and Joe Diffie return—nicely.

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People

DOLLYWOOD'S NEW SEASON

Kicking off the season with the usual flair, **Dolly Parton's** Dollywood theme park had its Grand Opening for the season in mid-April. Festivities included a parade led by Dolly, **Naomi Judd** and others, and performances by Dolly and many of her pals, including a group of Opry legends (among them **Jean Shepard**, **Margo Smith**, **Johnny Russell**, **George Hamilton IV**, **Jack Greene** and **Jeannie Seely**), plus **Shari Lewis** and **Lamb Chop** and on and on. Dolly also held a ceremony wherein she planted roses in memory of **Bill Monroe** and **Faron Young**. That Dolly does it all!

MERLE'S 6-0 SURPRISE

To see **Merle Haggard** is an honor. To hear him sing is out of this world. To attend his surprise birthday party was so close to heaven I wouldn't have known the difference. Thanks to **Frank Mull**, who staged the event, from idea to clean-up, the Hag was surprised and really enjoyed himself. Merle showed up at the club, the Nashville Night Life, with his wife, **Theresa**, thinking he was going to meet the **Shelby Singletons** for dinner. 'Course when he walked in the door, his band, **The Strangers**, already onstage, started playing "Happy Birthday," and a couple of hundred invited guests, including the Singletons, sang along. For an hour or more, Mighty Merle sang hit after hit, then invited his guests to the stage. Legendary vocalists singing Haggard standards included **Johnny Paycheck**, **John Anderson**, **Vern Gosdin** and **Tammy Wynette**, who were joined by Grand Ole Opry favorites **Porter Wagoner**, **Little Jimmy Dickens**, **Connie Smith** and **Jimmy C. Newman**, along with **Steve Wariner**, **Marty Stuart**, **Delbert McClinton**, **Tanya Tucker** and Merle's son, **Noel Haggard**. I've seen a lot in my years of music but never anything this cool. It outdid any award show. I deem myself one lucky girl to be in the company of such royalty.

Of course Frank Mull had lots of food and birthday cake. Enjoying the schmooze were **Shelby and Sherri Kennedy** and **John and Brenna Van Meter**; pickers **James Burton**, **Brent Mason** and **Gordon**

PHOTOS: CURTIS HIBBEN



Onstage before Dollywood's season opening are **Margo Smith**, **Jean Shepard**, **Johnny Russell**, **Dolly**, **George Hamilton IV**, **Jeannie Seely** and **Jack Greene**. Later on, Dolly sang, and planted memorial roses for **Bill Monroe** and **Faron Young**.



Terry: legends **Jerry Kennedy** and his wife **Gail**. **Les Leverett** and his wife **Dot**, and **Ralph Emery**; **Alison Krauss** and her "hand-holding" friend, **Pat Burgeson**; gals of the biz **Donna Hilley**, **Patsy Bruce** and **Rose Drake**; **Roger Sovine**; **Gregg Brown**; songwriting masters **Max T. Barnes** and **Whitey Shafer**; and last but not least, **Mae Boren Axton**, who made her last public appearance at Merle's party, presenting him with some early photos of himself with other stars. Mae told Merle she loved

him; he said he loved her. Just 24 hours later, Mae was dead. (More on Mae later.)

Merle sang an hour longer. When Paycheck sang "Old Violin," birthday boy got teary. When Merle was introduced to **Dean Miller**, son of the late **Roger Miller**, the great Mr. Haggard rose to his feet to shake the hand of his late friend's son. It showed not only the kind of man the Hag is, it also showed how much he respected the memory of Roger Miller. Merle closed the evening's festivities by saying exactly what I was feeling: "I've never enjoyed myself as much in Nashville as I have this evening." I want to thank Frank Mull for inviting me to Merle's birthday. I shall never forget it. *Primo.*

FAITH & TIM'S YOUNG 'UN

Welcome to the world of country music, **Gracie Katherine McGraw**, daughter of **Faith Hill** and **Tim McGraw**. The youngster was born May 5th in Nashville. Congrats to the proud parents, too.

FROM BRANSON

Rumor has it that **Mel Tillis** and his current wife, **Judy**, are headed for the big "D," and I don't mean Dallas, as it's sung in the **Mark Chesnutt** hit. Tillis resides in Branson, where he performs at his own theater. The couple have an adopted daughter.

Reporter: *Hazel Smith*

Editors: *Rochelle Friedman/George Fletcher*

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MAE'S MEMORY

Mae Boren Axton was everywhere. The 83-year-old songwriter was also author, publicist, mother of a star, mother of an attorney, aunt of a congressman, school teacher, adviser to wannabe hillbillies and to stars, and mama Mae to all of the Biz of Music. A couple or three years back, Roger Sovine called me from BMI saying Mae had cancer and was given six months to live.

"Sorry, Roger, I'm not ready to give Mae up," I said. Roger allowed he felt the same way. Always the Mouth of Music Row, I grabbed that phone like I was mounting a racehorse and had the entire Row, every church, temple, synagogue, prayer chain, mosque and child I could find praying for Mae Axton, and I'm sure Roger did the same. With all that praying, the man upstairs wanted no part of Mae. When she returned to the same physician who'd diagnosed her problem in the first place, he was flabbergasted. The cancer was gone. I wasn't surprised, and I'm sure Roger Sovine wasn't either.

This time the 83-year old legend slipped away. She died in her hot tub from drowning, according to the autopsy. Mae will be sorely missed. She was the Senior Queen. Years ago, she advised Willie Nelson to move to Music



Mae Axton

City. She penned "Heartbreak Hotel," the song that jump-started Elvis Presley's illustrious career. Her son, Hoyt Axton, who has suffered a stroke, attended the services in a wheel chair. Her other son, Johnny, an attorney, preceded his mother in death. Someone said there were 175 floral designs. More than I'd ever seen. Mae would have loved all those flowers, especially those from Priscilla and Lisa Marie Presley.

Mae and I walked into Merle Haggard's 60th birthday party together. We embraced. Our last embrace.

Funeral services were held at Hendersonville Church of Christ. This show biz queen had planned her own show biz service, hosted by Ralph Emery, who introduced publisher and Music Row exec, Buddy Killen; also present were Reba McEntire; Sandy (Mrs. Garth) Brooks; Ray Walker (of Jordanares fame); record execs Tony Brown, Scott Hendricks and Bill Catino; Mae's nephew, former U.S. Senator David Boren; grandkids Shaun and Heather Axton, and son Hoyt. Each gave their own personal account of this extraordinary woman. She would have loved these remembrances of her life. And, somehow, I felt she heard and relished each and every word. So long. Mae.—H.S.

be a husband and daddy impresses the hell out of me. Lastly, I'm impressed with the things Garth does that I accidentally learn about, like the case of the 11-year-old girl in Madison, Tennessee. Garth learned she was dying of leukemia and wanted to meet him. Unannounced, he and Sandy show up and spend precious time with this child, who left this world a week later. This is the first this story's made the press: reason, to make a point.

BASHING GB

It appears to be open season for bashing Garth Brooks. Case in point: two books, *Three Chords and the Truth* by Laurence Leamer, which I haven't read, and *Rough Mix* by former renegade label chief, Jimmy Bowen, which I have read. The former allegedly bashes Brooks, while the latter indeed does. Bowen describes Brooks as a manipulative, power-hungry, greedy control freak. Funny, that's what Music Row said about Bowen. I don't know Leamer's "beef" with GB, but as the story goes, Bowen was ousted from his cushy gig at Liberty (Capitol) Records at Garth's request.

Personally, I've always loved Garth as a person as much or more than I loved his music. The fact that he takes the time to

WFMS EXPO

You readers must know, the heifer has a Zephyr in her office at home.... That's the name of the portable broadcasting/microphone set-up radio stations use for remotes, and I've got one. Yes, I am now live on the air five days a week with WFMS in Indianapolis. And, yes, we had

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GARTH



FROM CENTRAL PARK

Thursday, August 7, 8 PM ET/PT*



IT'S NOT TV. IT'S HBO.

People

our third annual Expo for the fans at the fairgrounds in Indy. What a crowd came to hear new acts like **Sara Evans**, **David Kersh**, **Gary Allan**, **Stephanie Bentley**, **The Buffalo Club**, **Mark Wills**, **Brady Seals** and **Thrasher Shiver** show off their God-given talent. They were joined by young hit acts including **Trace Adkins**, **David Lee Murphy**, **Ty Herndon**, **Rhett Akins** and the legendary **Gene Watson**, plus superstar **Lorrie Morgan**. Super-songwriters **Mark D. Sanders**, **Skip Ewing**, **Angela Kaset**, **Dave Gibson** and **Carson Chamberlain** also gave the fans a taste of their wares. (My friend **Donnis** said Sara Evans' vocals were like having a religious experience.) And **Lorrie Morgan**, in a trendy brown suit with her hair brushed back, proved once again that she is the most beautiful female singer in all of music.

May I take this space to thank all the fans who listen to **Jim Denny**, **Kevin Freeman** and me every morning on the radio. Thanks to all of you who came by the **WFMS** booth for photographs, autographs or to say hello. I had such a great time with my kind of people. It takes one to know one, and country fans know me, because that's what I am...a fan.

MORE GARTH

It's off to the Big Apple for **Garth Brooks** and his gang come August 7th, when Brooks will perform a free concert in New York City's Central Park. The show will be broadcast live over the **HBO** cable channel. Start time is 8 P.M. A press con-



At left, New York City Parks Commissioner **Henry Stern** and NYC Mayor **Rudy Giuliani** welcome **Garth Brooks**, along with **HBO** chairman **Jeffrey L. Bewkes** and **EMI/Capitol's Terri Santisi**, on right. **Garth's** skedded to sing in **The Big Apple**.

ference was held in the park to announce the concert, with Mayor **Rudolph Giuliani** and other New York politicians on hand to greet the hillbilly entertainer.

MONUMENT FOR THE MAN

Alison Krauss, **The Osborne Brothers**, **John Hartford**, **Del McCoury Band**, **Ralph Stanley**, **Marty Stuart**, **Ricky Skaggs**, **The Whites**, **Charlie Daniels**, **Mark O'Connor**, **The Sullivan**

Family, **Connie Smith**, **Jerry & Tammy Sullivan**, **Jimmy Martin**, **Larry Sparks**, **Tim O'Brien**, **Bill Carlisle**, and a bevy of bluegrass greats joined concert host **Keith Billbrey**, concert promoter **Tony Conway**, Ryman manager **Steve Buchanan** and **James Monroe** performing "The Songs of Bill Monroe" at the Ryman Auditorium. As voices and instruments lifted the music in the fashion that **Bill Monroe** had laid out in that very building, an eerie, surreal atmosphere spread across the room. As it swept across my face, I could feel my cheeks cool and damp and was overwhelmed with embarrassment until **Sonny Osborne** said, "Bill Monroe is here tonight." Then I knew I wasn't totally crazy, for I'd kept expecting Bill to walk across the stage. The concert was a benefit to pay for the 20-foot-high monument made of North Carolina white granite with an etched photo of Bill and his dog Stormy that was erected in the Rosine, Kentucky, cemetery where Bill was laid to rest near the Monroe family. Son James, grandson **Jimbeau**, and a couple of hundred gathered, and once more bluegrass music floated across those Kentucky hills Bill wrote and sang about. The place his heart never left.

WILLIE WILL

The Stardust Theater was crammed and jammed with **Willie Nelson** fans. The sold-out concert was a memorial for the late **Faron Young**. Willie sang for an hour and a half, doing his own in-concert tunes. Then

50 YEARS FOR JIM & JESSE



Bluegrass stalwarts **Jim & Jesse** flank the Opry's **Jerry Strobel** upon the occasion of **J&J's** 50th anniversary in show biz and 33rd year as members of the Opry. A couple of hundred friends gathered in Studio A to honor the duo.



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he called his opening acts, **Darrell McCall** and **Johnny Paycheck**, onstage. The three-some sang "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," "Amazing Grace" and "Uncloudy Day." "Faron liked that one," said Willie, his only on-stage mention of his late friend Faron, the man who "booster-cabled" Willie's career when he recorded Willie's song, "Hello Walls." It was time, and Willie performed "Hello Walls," the song Faron refused to buy, yet recorded and made Willie well off from royalties and famous as a songwriter. After the show Willie told a reporter, "I liked Faron Young before I met him."

CELEB SAMMY

Sammy Kershaw, always ready with a helping hand, served as celeb chairman of the Tennessee Special Olympics. Planet Hollywood hosted a 7 A.M. breakfast followed by a celeb auction. When Sammy heard one of the kids say they wanted a **Faith Hill** poster, he bought it. Another child liked another item, and before it was over, Sammy had spent almost two grand of his own pocket money on the kids. Mercury Records prez, **Luke Lewis**, showed up and surprised Sammy with a Gold record for *Politics, Religion and Her*. Sammy was thrilled over the Gold record, so thrilled he auctioned it off, bought it himself, then gave the money to Special Olympics and the record to one of the



Mercury Records prez Luke Lewis gives Sammy Kershaw the Gold during the Special Olympics benefit auction. Sammy knew just what to do with it.

kids. A week before, Sammy was in North Dakota where a radio station was holding a "radio-a-thon" for flood victims. My man Sam not only manned phones and talked with fans, he donated two of his own guitars worth \$1,200. Then Sammy headed home to Kaplan, Louisiana, where he did a benefit performance at the local high school and hosted a golf tournament with proceeds going to St. Jude's Children's Hospital, to the Make-

A-Wish Foundation and to homes in Acadiana for abused and neglected children. Not only does my man Sam out-sing just about everybody, he out-does just about everybody. Boy, don't I know how to pick friends. Love that Sam.

THE MORNING PAPER HEADLINES

"Janis Gill files to divorce Vince" read the front-page headline of *The Tennessean*, Nashville's morning paper. **Janis Gill** cited "irreconcilable differences," and asked for custody of their daughter, **Jenny**. No statement was made by **Vince Gill**. No statement will be made by me.

PORTER HONORED BY PALS

Tennessee's most famous export, superstar **Dolly Parton**, came home to the stage of the Grand Ole Opry to honor her former boss and singing partner, **Porter Wagoner**. An all-star cast including **Vince Gill**, **Steve Wariner**, **Billy Ray Cyrus**, funnyman **Mike Snider**, and the Grand Ladies of the Grand Ole Opry, including **Connie Smith** and **Jeannie Seely**, joined Dolly to honor Porter on his 50th anniversary in show biz. Called "Porter Wagoner Company's Coming," admission was free; however, donations were accepted to benefit the local Red Cross. The show, one of the most entertaining I've seen in several blue moons, was taped by TNN with an air-date set for August. Watch your listings for this one. 'Twas good seeing Dolly and Porter together again as singers and as friends. Dolly said Porter did more for her career than anybody in her life. She performed the song she wrote for Porter

CYRUS AND THE STORY TELLER



At this year's Country Radio Awards, held in the spring at the Ryman Auditorium by the Country Radio Broadcasters Association, Billy Ray Cyrus joined the tribute to Legend Award winner Tom T. Hall when BRC performed the Hall-penned "Harper Valley PTA." The classic tune, a Number One for Jeannie C. Riley in 1968, is included on BRC's latest album.

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when they broke up, "I Will Always Love You," and was joined by her award-winning duet partner, Vince Gill. When she saw Porter's family seated front/center, Dolly quipped, "Lord, Porter, your grandson is older than you are."

I DO'S

The sweetness of **Trace Adkins** and **Rhonda Forlaw**'s wedding was something dreams are made of. Read on. The couple became an item when Trace was performing at Tillie & Lucy's Pub, a cinderblock bar on Lebanon Road. It was Rhonda, the former Arista publicist, who walked up to brand new CEO/Capitol Records **Scott Hendricks** at the Nashville Airport baggage claim and suggested he go watch Trace sing. Hendricks went, liked what he saw, bolted onstage and offered Trace a recording contract on the spot. 'Course, Scott was new on the job and didn't realize he'd done something right the wrong way. 'Course, it worked, so *Dreamin' Out Loud* turned Gold, and we all drove out Lebanon Road to Tillie & Lucy's Pub. **Tillie** and **Lucy** are get-down real people. They call the 6'6" Trace "Big Boy." And Hendricks was back on that stage again, this time presenting Big Boy with some heavy metal.

Back to the wedding, which took place on Mother's Day in the garden of Nashville's Belle Meade Mansion. Rhonda was beautiful. Trace sang a song he had written for his bride, and everybody cried. It was special day for a special couple.

Don't we all love weddings?



Trace Adkins and Rhonda Forlaw ride away in a horse-drawn carriage, after the ceremony that united them at Nashville's Belle Meade Mansion. Congrats to the bride and groom.

BURT UNFUNNY

Maybe I told you that **Burt Reynolds** is hosting a round table talk-a-thon for TNN. He was here to tape two shows with female mainstreamers like **Reba McEntire**, **Ann-Margaret** and **Trisha Yearwood** (**Tammy Wynette** backed out at the last minute due to illness) and male stars **Waylon Jennings**, **Jerry Reed**, **Joe Diffie** and **Tracy Lawrence**. Burt's longtime friend, millionaire/publisher/owner of the Stockyard Restaurant, **Buddy Killen**, serves as producer of the show. Buddy obviously planned the show's taping to coincide with his annual Easter Seals

benefit/auction at the Stockyard, so friends Burt and Ann-Margaret could attend, which they did. Rising superstar **Terri Clark** sang a couple of songs and auctioned off her hat, belt, vest and boots, going home barefoot. She amassed about 25 grand for the cause and started to leave the stage when someone offered ten grand for her bra. Terri refused. Had **Tanya** been there....

Back to subject at hand. Burt seemed angry when the bidding proceeded slowly, and began to swear, curse and what I call "show off," calling the audience names. Later, while escorting Ann-Margaret to the stage, Burt stopped to talk to reporters and began his tirade again. After a few minutes, Ann seemed miffed and walked toward the stage alone. I've concluded that Burt must have thought he was being funny. I questioned a TNN official about Burt's behavior during the TV filming. They assured me that Burt was funny, had fun and has come off with a show the fans will enjoy.

TRUE BLUES ARE GONNA LOVE IT

The legendary foursome of **Waylon Jennings**, **Jerry Reed**, **Bobby Bare** and **Mel Tillis** promise (or threaten) to record an album of songs from the pen of the great **Shel Silverstein**. This fabo quartet of characters are calling themselves The Over the Hill Gang. Bare will serve as producer. These guys have all at one time or another in their careers been millionaires, and maybe still are. This project might not make them that rich, but I'll wager they'll have more fun doing this than they ever had doing everything they've done before, 'cause they've mellowed. True blue fans are gonna love this music.



Stockyard restaurant owner Buddy Killen recruited pal Burt Reynolds to assist in Killen's annual Easter Seals benefit celebrity auction. Burt was in town to host a TNN show.

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People

GEORGE CARRIES HOME THE GOODS



Academy of Country Music awards show co-host George Strait nailed two well-deserved awards this year, for **Album of the Year** and **Top Male Vocalist**. Congratulating their star are MCA/Universal execs **Jim Urie**, **Zach Horowitz**, **Doug Morris** and **Bruce Hinton**. That's George's son, **George "Bubba" Jr.**, next to Strait, along with producer/MCA prez **Tony Brown** and **Mel Lewinter**.

reer. Her book, *Nickel Dreams*, is on the *New York Times* Best Seller list and her latest album, *Complicated*, on Capitol, is selling like hotcakes. She isn't touring, but she's all over the country at book signings. One of the big shots from the William Morris Agency here in Nashville told me that Tanya got a \$1.6 million advance on the book. Mr. Wm. Morris person also told me that a movie was being negotiated on Tanya's book. Following the ACM awards in Los Angeles, where Tanya showed up on the arm of **Stone Phillips**, host of NBC's *Dateline*, word flew back coach and first class, via e-mail, fax and phone, that the two were an item. You do recall, it was Phillips who was her escort the night of her now infamous flashings. A close family friend was asked if Stone was picking up stakes in NYC to join Tanya here. Family friend allowed that she didn't know, but if it were true, Stone better hurry before Tanya changed her mind. And her books keep selling, and her new records keep selling, and Tanya keeps smiling as she keeps saying her flashing was no big deal, though several who saw the incident begged to differ...

MANDRELL FLICK

Get to the Heart: The Barbara Mandrell Story is a CBS-TV flick "in the making." Co-executive producers are Barbie and Ken....**Barbara Mandrell** and hubby **Ken Dudley**. The movie goes from her childhood, with younger sisters **Louise** and **Irlene**, through Mandrell's comeback following the mid-80's automobile crash that almost took her life.

HAPPY LES DAY

My friend, **Dot Leverett**, invited my family and me to the surprise 70th birthday party for her hubby, famed photographer **Les Leverett**. The party was great, and seeing Les truly surprised was wonderful. It was also wonderful that **Grandpa Jones** attended the Happy Les-day. Normal times like this, with Les and Dot's youngsters playing softball with my youngsters, is why God made Sunday afternoons, even in Music Town.

40 BIG ONES AND MORE

My friend, plumb-perfect **Vince Gill**, celebrated his 40th birthday at his favorite place to perform, the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. His band for the night was **Alison Krauss** and **Union Station**, and he was joined on piano by **Tony** (wow) **Brown**. 'Course all you smart people know that Tony is President of MCA Records/Nashville and is Vince's record producer. Lord, it was totally awesome. Vince's birthday wasn't the only cause for celebration recently; there were also the various multi-million sales awards he received this spring. Call it mega-platinum: quadruple platinum for *I Still Believe in You*, double platinum for *When I Call Your Name*, and Gold for *High Lonesome Sound*, plus

three BMI "Million-Air" certificates for three of Vince's hits receiving more than one million radio spins each!

TANYA—LET'S DISH

Tanya Tucker's faux pas, that is, flashing her upper half during Country Radio Seminar, has definitely not hurt her ca-



Shown with a truckload of heavy metal for Vince Gill are manager **Larry Fitzgerald**, producer/exec **Tony Brown**, CMA's **Ed Benson**, Vince himself, BMI's **Roger Sovine** and MCA's CEO **Bruce Hinton**.

People

EYE SAW

Eye saw **Olivia Newton-John** at the Nashville Country Club on a Tuesday having lunch. She was in town to perform at a benefit for the Tennessee State Museum three nights before.

SINGER, SONGWRITER, PICKER, CHEF

Singer, songwriter, picker-extraordinaire, **Lee Roy Parnell** can just add chef to his resume, if he feels the urge. It's new album release time, so star Lee Roy invites all the big wigs and little wigs at Arista: "Ya'll come on out to the house and eat supper. I'll cook," promised the Texas redhead. The country bluesman laid some snack-your-mouth, homecooked Mexican rations on the friends and neighbors—real chili made with big chunks of sirloin steak (not ground beef) with tamales and queso and all the other fixings, all hand-made by the singer.

ANOTHER J.D.

Baby act **James Bonamy** and his wife/backup singer **Amy Jane** welcomed their first offspring, **James Daniel Bonamy**. J.D. weighed in at six pounds six ounces.

OPRY FACTS

Opry star **Jeannie Seely** is coaching a little girls softball team. The six- and seven-year-olds practice on Saturday mornings, which means Jeannie must get up before the crack of noon.

An **Alison Krauss** party is so normal—even at Melrose Bowling Lanes, you have so much fun that you don't even remember to put on airs, if you have any. The Opry star was welcomed by her sponsor, those great Martha White Flour folks, who also prepared the evening's meal. You can always count on Alison to keep us in our place, and she never failed that night by saying, "It's an honor for me to have the same sponsor as **Flatt & Scruggs**." We partied with Alison because she'd released a new album, her first in two years. Ms. Krauss and **Union Station** have recorded some totally cool music. The group became media darlings with this music; even trendy *Rolling Stone* gave the music a nod. I think Alison and her boys got what they went after with this one. No, I didn't bowl. The only bowl I know anything about is a soup bowl. Opry manager **Bob Whittaker** and Opry announcer **Keith Bilbrey** went at it tooth and nail. Last I hear Bilbrey had to treat Whittaker to dinner at a local deli.

CELEBS WILL DO ANYTHING

Matraca Berg and **Crystal Bernard** served as cheerleaders at Nashville's new arena for a day of family fun ending with a game of flag football. The fun and fund-raising event benefited Senior Citizens Inc. Coaches were **Joe Diffie** and **Tim McGraw**. Artists who participated were **Trace Adkins**, **Steve Azar**, **Suzy Bogguss**, **Kenny Chesney**, **Mark Collie**, **Rodney Crowell**, **George Ducas** and **Cledus T. Judd**. Celebs will do anything for a laugh or to help somebody.

USE A NET

Grab a net and you might catch the fabo **Kim Richey** if you're lucky enough and she stops in your town. That girl is burning up that hillbilly highway in support of *Bitter Sweet*, her powerful new Mercury CD. You owe it to yourself...go get one.

MADE US PROUD

The **Oak Ridge Boys** sang and cleaned and made us proud. Read on: The Oak Ridge Boys performed at the opening ceremonies of the first Presidents' Summit for America's future, which was held in Philadelphia this spring. This event was set to mobilize citizens and organizations to benefit the youth of America. **President Clinton** and former President **George Bush** co-chair, **Colin Powell** is General Chair. Former President **Jimmy Carter** also attended the ceremonies. The Oaks, along with former President and **Mrs. Bush** and other volunteers, cleaned up an eight-mile stretch on Germantown Avenue. Now let me say something here. This is for tomorrow. This is for our youth. The most important asset that America has is our youth. It behooves us to get off of our fat rear ends and clean up the streets, get rid of the drugs, clean up the schools, get rid of the gangs. Let's give the next generation of adults an America they can be proud of, and to do so we must start with ourselves.

I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO

Don Everly, half of the famed **Everly Brothers** duo, wed 28-year-old Austin native, **Adela Garza**, at his home here in Green Hills. This is the 60-year-old Don's fourth trip to the altar, and his bride's first. Don's singing partner, **Phil Everly**, didn't make the wedding due to a case of bronchitis. The couple found time to honeymoon in Europe between Everly Brothers shows. If it ain't right, fix it. Even if it takes four times. Right, Don?

A TRUE ORIGINAL

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Record Reviews

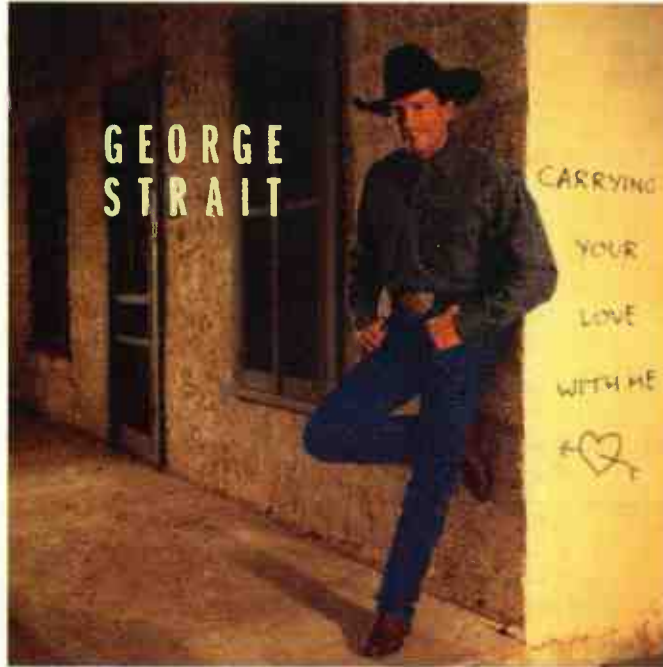
George Strait
Carrying Your Love With Me
MCA 15584

It's easy to take George Strait for granted. After all, every year he comes out with another album of Texas dance tunes and honky tonk ballads, both delivered with that smooth baritone purr and a rhythm as seductive as it is slippery. The level of quality is always incredibly high—as high as it gets in American music—but the level of surprise is always very low.

Unlike most superstars, who reach out to clang you over the head with their latest product as if it were a frying pan, Strait is almost self-effacing. He doesn't change styles with the seasons, and he doesn't like gimmicks; so each album is like another chapter in the same book. At the end of December, when writers are toting up their ten-best lists and year-in-review articles, they usually highlight what's new and unusual rather than what's familiar and excellent. As a result, Strait often goes unmentioned.

So pay attention now. George Strait has a new album, *Carrying Your Love With Me*, and it's as good as country music gets these days. It's different from his previous albums in only the most subtle ways—his vocal tone has a little more butter on it; his phrasing coils and uncoils with a little more spring—but those nuances are the key to his art.

Listen to him sing Jackson Leap's "She'll Leave You With a Smile." for example. A friend is falling in love with his ex-lover, so the singer advises his buddy that this woman will drive you crazy when she's with you, but you'll miss her when she's gone. If it had been



sung by a run-of-the-mill country star or even by the young George Strait, this would be an unexceptional song of romantic warning. The older, wiser George Strait, however, turns it into a potent demonstration of mixed emotions.

When he sings, "Friend, you know she was once mine," he holds out the word "know" and warbles it a bit as if he were choking back a flood of memories, both good and bad. When he sings, "So I guess I ought to warn you," he splits the line in two with a pause, as if doubting whether he should tell his pal about her or not. Because when the chorus comes and his voice broadens with pleasure, it's obvious that a flame still flickers for her in the singer's heart. The scars are still there, too, as we can tell from the pinched tone of the line, "She's a heart-ache."

These contradictory feelings cause Strait to hold back against the beat and then let

the rhythm go in a rush of notes, creating a slow-motion swing in the song. At first it seems Strait is imitating the ebb and flow of Paul Franklin's steel guitar, but it's more likely that Franklin is following Strait's phrasing, for he doesn't play like this on anyone else's session. That's why Strait deserves his co-producer credit (with Tony Brown).

It's easy to overlook Strait's ability to control the mood with his tone and phrasing, but it's that talent that makes *Carrying Your Love With Me* such a special event. The disc opens with the lively Texas swing of "Round About Way," and Strait reinforces the syncopation by grabbing hold of certain syllables and letting others fly by. When he sings the album's first Number One single, "One Night at a Time," his voice is so full of pleasurable hums and sighs that the Mexican-flavored love song seems to swim in sensuality. "I've Got a Funny Feeling," a

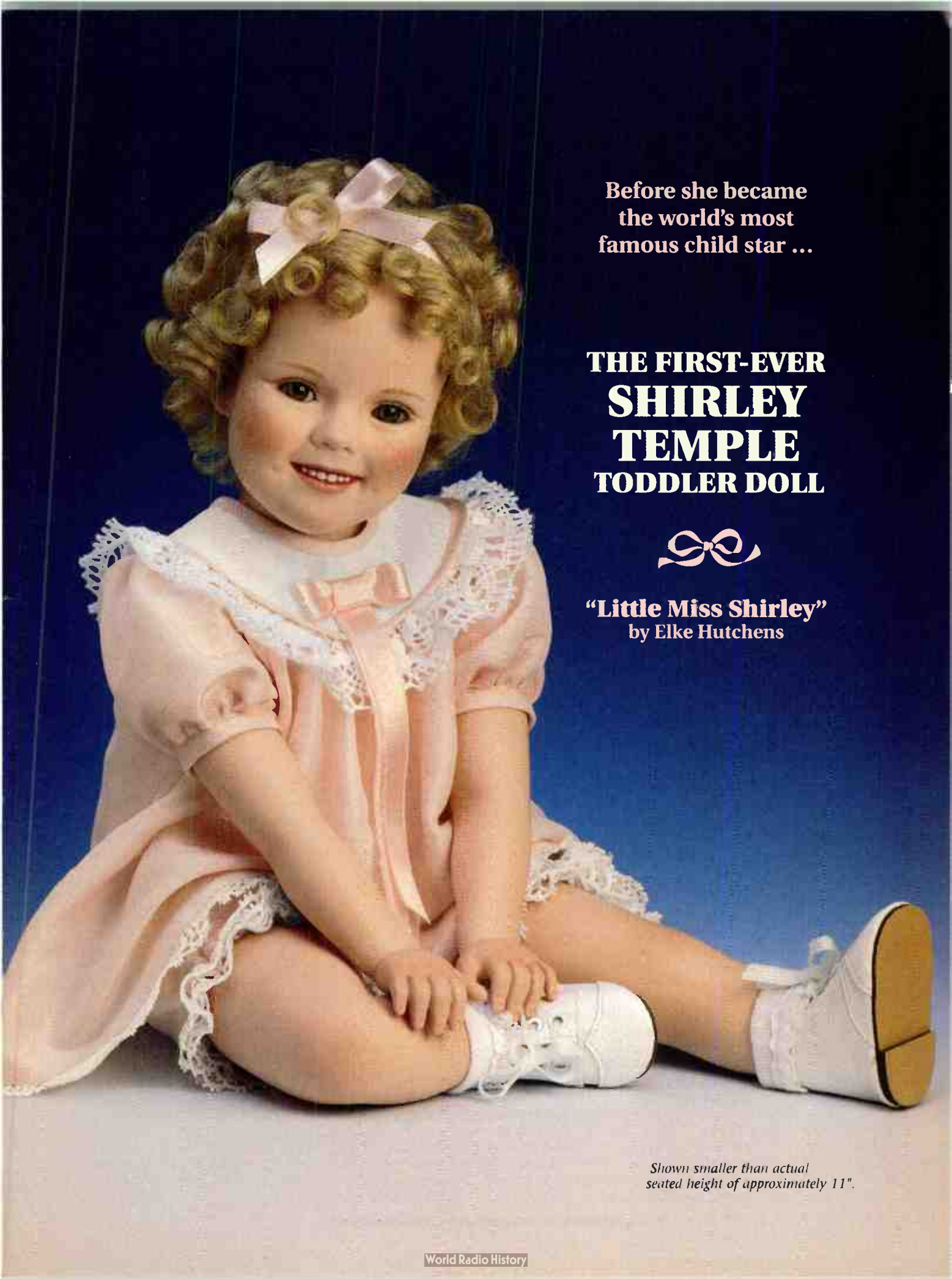
bouncy shuffle by Leap and Harlan Howard, is played for genuine laughs with a deadpan, bewildered vocal by Strait, who wonders who's making his woman so happy.

Strait remakes two older songs. On Vern Gosdin's 1982 hit, "Today My World Slipped Away," Strait manages to maintain his dignity even as he confesses his broken heart over a string arrangement that imitates Franklin's pedal steel. On Wayne Kemp's 1968 minor hit, "Won't You Come Home (And Talk to a Stranger)," Strait revamps the rhythm to give it a push-and-pull swing. The album-ending "A Real Good Place to Start" is a ballad about getting over one relationship and getting ready to try another. On the verses, Strait's weary voice sounds beat down by heartbreak, but on the chorus you can hear the first glimmers of a new hope. These may seem like small things barely worth mentioning, but they're the sort of things that separate tomorrow's country classic from tomorrow's bargain-bin filler.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Johnny Cash
Unchained
American Recordings 43097

The idea that Johnny Cash would be alien to younger rock musicians and fans was shattered by his acclaimed 1993 *American Recordings* album. Indeed, a video of "Delia's Gone" from that album actually showed up on MTV, where animated hellions Beavis and Butt-Head, known for ridiculing rock videos, wondered aloud who Cash was ("Captain Kangaroo" was Beavis' guess), but that was mild considering what they



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Record Reviews



say about other acts.

In contrast to the all-acoustic sound of the earlier album, producer Rick Rubin has teamed him with Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers this time around. Petty's work with Bob Dylan and his knowledge of country make him an excellent choice, and besides, Heartbreakers Howie Epstein and Benmont Tench have backed numerous country artists on records, including Carlene Carter.

The other musicians have some interesting histories as well. Drummer Mick Fleetwood of Fleetwood Mac goes back to the 1960's British blues movement, while another Fleetwood Mac alumnus, Lindsey Buckingham, became an integral part of the band when it attained pop stardom in the 1970's. More surprising, but not out of place considering Cash's appeal, is Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Marty Stuart also shows up in a few strategic places.

This is an album of contrasts. It ranges from some of the most hard-hitting moralistic gospel you'd ever want to hear to contemporary rock tunes, rockabilly, country and pop oldies, and chestnuts from Cash's 40-year repertoire. With one exception, the arrangements avoid the characteristic Cash boom-chucka sound. That could have been risky. His old Columbia Records producer, Don Law, also set that sound aside on the 1959 Columbia LP, *Now There Was a Song!*—a twin fiddle, Texas honky tonk album that was far better than Cash realized.

In the early 70's, he again

veered away from the tried and true to experiment with different sounds, only to veer into mediocrity until he got back to his essence on the single, "One Piece at a Time."

The mix of material here is less surprising than is its consistency. Cash not only tries out some new songs, such as contemporary artist Beck's "Rowboat," "Rusty Cage" by Chris Cornell of the contemporary band, Soundgarden, and Petty's "Southern Accents," all fitting him hand-in-glove. He also tries his hand at country and gospel favorites he's known for years, reinterpreting two Sun-era Cash favorites. "Country Boy" and "Mean-Eyed Cat." Here, they have the rockabilly intensity and rhythm the originals lacked.

In the case of "Cat," Cash explains in the notes that he'd not finished writing it when Sam Phillips had him record it, Phillips ignoring Cash's protests that the song wasn't done. Never again did he perform it, and he considers this the definitive version.

He provides straightforward interpretations of Don Gibson's 1961 hit, "Sea of Heartbreak," "I Never Picked Cotton" (a hit for Roy Clark in 1975) and "The One Rose," which he first heard through Jimmie Rodgers' recording. Dean Martin's 1955 "Memories Are Made of This" was a hit just as Cash's own career on Sun was getting started. Cash turns it into a loping ballad light years away from the sophisticated doo-wop of Dino's original.

The moralistic "Kneeling Drunkard's Plea" (with Petty harmonizing) is a Louvin Brothers oldie written by June Carter and sisters Anita and Helen. "Meet Me in Heaven" is a new Cash original inspired by the inscription on his brother Jack's headstone. His powerful, raw, almost painfully vulnerable performance of the earthy, contemporary gospel number, "Prayer," is equaled by his performance of the title song. The closing

number revisits Hank Snow's 1962 hit, "I've Been Everywhere," a song stylistically right up Cash's alley. That brings him full circle, back to the boom-chucka.

It's a foregone conclusion that only a few veteran artists could remain so solidly on the cutting edge as Cash over the years. After over four decades in the business, he remains a touchstone, and his continuing influence, combined with his openness to working outside his usual contexts, has kept him young well beyond his 65 years.

—RICH KIENZLE



Alison Krauss & Union Station *So Long, So Wrong* Rounder 0365

It's been five years since Alison Krauss had an album of new recordings out. Given her interim moves to commercial center stage in the past few years—with a performance in the soundtrack to the movie *Twister*, a hit duet single with Shenandoah, and the surprise country radio hit single, "Now That I've Found You," from her CD, *Now That I've Found You: A Collection*—fans may have wondered if she would stay "where the money is." Well, fear not. This album is no sell-out; this is a return to folk and bluegrass, at the forefront of the contemporary wings of both.

Krauss gives way to her fabulous band more here than she has in the past. There's a wild and wonderful bluegrass breakdown exercising the evergreen "Little Liza Jane."

Band members take turns on lead vocals on several numbers, with guitarist Dan Tyminski handling that chore three times. Band-vocal tunes are the more traditional bluegrass numbers on this collection, in fact. They make this more an ensemble effort than a gal and her backing players album, and all the better for it.

Still, it's Krauss' lilting, breathy soprano and bluesy fiddle work that continue to draw me in and hypnotize me. The plaintive "It Doesn't Matter" is a minor chord folk song that tears my heart, more so than the title song, which is a more straight-ahead lyric. There are few singers out there—commercial or alternative—who wield anything like the velvet sharp voice she effortlessly unleashes.

Former Doobie Brother Michael McDonald wrote the tune that Krauss sang in the *Twister* soundtrack. He got more involved with her efforts this time out. First she picked McDonald's "I Can Let Go Now" to record. Then her brother, Viktor (who tours with Lyle Lovett), wrote a melody that needed words, and McDonald contributed those, yielding a song called "Happiness." Odd title for a pain song, but then, as the line goes, "You can't always trust happiness."

Commercial country hit writers Kostas and Tricia Walker contribute a sparsely arranged "Looking in the Eyes of Love" that could have been done up for country radio airplay. (Patty Loveless could still have a hit on it, should it come to her attention.) That's not the way Krauss wanted to go with this outing, though. She can drag bluegrass into the mainstream or mainstream into her own delightfully acoustic domain with equal alacrity. She's a rare talent, to be treasured. Let this CD get under your skin and see if you don't agree. This isn't a collection of snappy commercial singles; it's 14 songs-worth of seamless visceral pleasure.

—BOB MILLARD



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Record Reviews



Pete Anderson

Dogs in Heaven
Little Dog 314-534 643

Country music fans know Pete Anderson as the critically-acclaimed guitarist and producer of Neo-Bakersfield icon Dwight Yoakam. In that guise, Anderson turns in cutting edge country music that cares less about the safe currency of the middle of the road than about going for fresh sounds most every time. As an artist in his own right, on his own independent Little Dog Records label, Anderson relinquishes the producer's role and shows even greater breadth of style and scope as a player, singer and writer.

Our own beloved Michael Bane flipped over Anderson's first solo effort, *Working Class*, but I found it self-indulgent and so eclectic as to fail to hold together. Not to mention that, to me, the numbers with lyrics were just way too personal. *Dogs in Heaven* is a much better album.

I dig both the musicianship and the grooves on *Dogs in Heaven*. This is a fine electric blues record, made as a record, whereas the previous effort seemed a loose agglomeration of first-take demos. The instrumental title tune is a riffman's holiday, with a greasy Jimi Hendrix/Stevie Ray Vaughn style meshing with John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra fusion 7ths. Groove-wise, this CD is a grand foray into blues, funk and searing electric guitar playing. Technically, I wish someone had done a better job

mixing the lyrics. Read along with the lyric sheet and you see that Anderson can be a terrific lyricist. But listen and you'll find they're lost below the instrumentals in the mix, mostly slurred. Whudhesay? Darn little cuts clear. In that regard, it has a true-to-life sound of live club blues, and maybe that was the point. Still, as an old-time country and story-song aficionado, I like to understand the words.

But, let's romp on through what is a surprising, nonpareil effort by one of country's most outstanding, creative producers. Marvin Gaye would have loved Anderson's version of "Ain't That Peculiar." You can't help but think of Stevie Ray Vaughn as the Texas-style syncopated shuffle, "110 in the Shade," revives the spirit of Vaughn's "Raining Down in Texas." Then he turns right around and cops a Bob Dylan-sings-David Bowie motif on "Henry Fate." The second of three instrumentals, "Sherry," takes that old semi-sweet Four Seasons chestnut into a whimsical jazzy place, nothing short of wonderful, that sent me reeling. This one cut is worth the whole record.

In "Charlene," Anderson does a second-line Mardi Gras number on the old Bo Diddley "Who Do You Love" riff, taking it one mojo further. I love this too, but again, "whudhesay?" Sparse six-string banjo (sounding deeply gut bucket, like a National steel guitar) and New Orleans Dixieland brass (give Lee Thornburg credit for horns of heaven) trade off licks in the all-too-brief but especially delightful finisher, "A Big Mistake." This is no mistake; it's unexpected, restrained brilliance.

This ain't your father's country record. This isn't any kind of country record at all. But, if there was ever any question that Pete Anderson could emerge as a coherent artist in his own right, this CD settles the matter. As they say in Texas, land of the big electric guitar, "Yeah, buddy!"

—BOB MILLARD



Bekka & Billy

Bekka & Billy
Almo Sounds AMS 8001 2

If the names Bramlett and Burnette sound familiar, there's good reason. Bekka Bramlett is the daughter of pioneer 60's soul-country rockers Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett, best known for their pop hit, "Never Ending Song of Love," an early combination of country and soul music made long before such sounds were fashionable. Billy Burnette, the son of 1950's rockabilly turned pop singer and composer, Dorsey Burnette, has been around for years trying to find his niche. Nothing ever worked for him, not even membership in Fleetwood Mac and in the spin-off band, Mick Fleetwood's Zoo.

If you've suspected that something of their parents might have rubbed off, you've guessed correctly. Bekka's voice, tough and soulful, sounds a lot like her mother. Burnette is also in the element, with producer Garth Fundis making the most of that chemistry by keeping the production natural and smooth and avoiding formula. The opening numbers, the ebullient blue-collar love song, "Patient Heart," and the stomping "Soul Searchin'," establish their chemistry from the beginning. "True Blue Love," penned by Burnette and Larry Weiss, is one of two ballads possessing a moodiness yet also a great sense of quality and class. The other is the gut-wrenching "Through the Walls" (written by Bekka and

Burnette), which shows Bekka creating a vocal magic equaling anything LeAnn Rimes has done. She also rips loose on the stomping "Old Hickory Lake," co-written by Bramlett, Annie Roboff and Beth Nielsen Chapman.

The rockers "Deal With It" (a Burnette-Gary Nicholson collaboration) and "God Knows I Love You," a Delaney Bramlett-Mac Davis composition with a light, acoustic style, conjure the soulful spirit of Delaney and Bonnie without sounding dated. Burnette stands out on "Heart to Call Home," a drifter's number he wrote with Rafe Van Hoy—Van Hoy also penned the rockabilly ripper, "Born to Be Loved by You." "Made for Each Other" is fairly nondescript in the context of the other material, while the closing ballad, "And Then Some," is a pleasant if undistinguished love song.

With little new happening on the horizon, I submit that for the moment anyway, the playing field is currently level as far as new ideas is concerned. No one yet knows—"really knows"—what is coming down the pike. But I suspect that this new duo could turn out to be real contenders, and we could use a few.

—RICH KIENZLE

John & Audrey Wiggins

The Dream
Mercury 314-534 286

It's been so long since John and Audrey Wiggins' debut album came out (three years ago), that *The Dream*, their second release, almost seems like a completely fresh start for this brother-sister duo from the Smoky Mountain region of North Carolina.

And it's just as well. Where the Wigginses' self-titled first album was a charming but tentative beginners' effort, John and Audrey sound bold, confident and inspired this time around. With the help of Dann

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Record Reviews



Huff, session guitar ace/turned producer, they've nudged their rustic stylings a lot closer to the mainstream. And while Audrey has really come into her own as a singer, brother John has flourished as a songwriter.

Audrey has, in fact, never sounded so soulful, earthy and in control as she does on a middle-of-the-road love ballad like "Once You've Loved Somebody." She also makes sparks fly when she plays the bitter, scorned lover on "Little Bitty Pieces" (one of a pair of fine originals penned by John), and on Gary Harrison's and Tim Mensey's "Were You Ever Really Mine." She really pulls out the stops, early Tanya Tucker-style, on "Party Down," a full-tilt country-honker about a spurned woman who discovers that having a great time is sometimes the best revenge.

On the other hand, it's a much softer, more tender side of Audrey that shines through on "Going with My Heart," a sweet ballad that John wrote for his sister.

John gets his chance to step up and strut his solo chops on another hard-pounding, party-till-the-end anthem called "I Can Sleep When I'm Dead" (written by Leslie Winn Satcher and Max T. Barnes). This outing is further enlivened by great instrumental rides by Huff on electric lead, Stuart Duncan on fiddle and Bruce Bouton on steel.

John also reveals a flair and fondness for a more contemporary sound on "If a Train Left for Memphis," a tale of romantic urgency made all the more compelling by Audrey's

breathy, trilling harmony flourishes.

I'm not nearly so fond of the Wigginses' reprise of Poco's ubiquitous 1979 country-rock harmony hit, "Crazy Love." Vocally, John and Audrey both shine on this Rusty Young-penned oldie. The problem is that the original version is still so omnipresent on 70's rock radio playlists that it's hard to get excited about a new version that so slavishly copies Poco's timeless arrangement.

Far more satisfying is the way *The Dream* is closed out by the autobiographical title tune that was actually written by Harley Allen and Clive Westlake. This song is a poignant reflection on how certain mirages, whether attainable or not, keep us plodding on, through thick and thin. The song also serves to remind us that it really took two generations of dreaming for the Wigginses to get where they are today.

You see, John and Audrey's chief inspiration and biggest fan was their late father, Johnny Wiggins. The senior Wiggins was also Ernest Tubb's bus driver years ago, and an aspiring country recording artist in his own right. Son John has unearthed an obscure live track in which the late E.T. introduces the elder Wiggins—known as his "singin' bus driver"—at a 1962 show in Seattle and brings him out to sing "Honeymoon with the Blues." (Turns out old Johnny was a pretty decent singer—sort of a poor man's Marty Robbins.) A segment from this dusty old track serves as the intro to "The Dream," giving the song—and the Wigginses' long musical quest—even more personal drama.

Granted, in the hands of someone less sincere this overt exercise in sentimentality could easily have backfired. But for John and Audrey Wiggins it works beautifully, reinforcing their warmth and earnestness—two of the finest qualities they have going for them. —BOB ALLEN



Joy Lynn White
The Lucky Few
Little Dog 314-534 642

A great new Dwight Yoakam song has just been released. It's a honky tonk ballad called "It's Better This Way," and it finds Yoakam crooning in his best hillbilly drawl about a doomed love as his producer Pete Anderson picks out the pretty melody on guitar and Yoakam's regular road band swings through the Bakersfield arrangement with effortless assurance.

In fact, the song just *sounds* as if it might have been written by Yoakam. It was actually penned by Jim Lauderdale, and it appears on *The Lucky Few*, the remarkable new album by Joy Lynn White. White more than holds her own in her duet with Yoakam, sounding every bit as proud but pained as she holds out the big notes and gives them a wrenching twist. "It's Better This Way" is the only song on the album to feature Yoakam, but Anderson produced all ten cuts; Yoakam's band is along for the whole ride, and Lauderdale contributed two more songs, as did Lucinda Williams. The result is a terrific comeback vehicle for White, who bridges the gap between mainstream country and alternative country as easily as her duet partner.

You might remember White from her two Columbia albums, 1992's *Between Midnight and Hindsight*, and 1994's *Wild Love*, which drew raves from critics and musicians (Marty Stuart, Mike

Henderson, Hal Ketchum and Nanci Griffith all volunteered to help White in the studio) but were pretty much ignored by commercial radio. White was dropped by Sony only to be picked up by Anderson's new label, Little Dog Records. Along the way she hasn't lost any of the spunky edge in her big, twangy voice nor her good instincts about songwriters and interpretations. If anything, her disappointments with the music biz have made her a wiser, more adult, more skeptical, more authentically country singer.

The new disc kicks off with "Too Big for This Town," a country-rocker about a young woman with too many ambitions for a small town. It boasts a ringing guitar hook that White jumps on; there's an impatience in her voice that epitomizes the restlessness described in the lyric. White co-wrote that song, and she also co-wrote "Life's Just Too Short," a bluegrass number that recalls the best of Alison Krauss. At the opposite end of the musical spectrum are a pair of R&B ballads, Kostas' "It's About Me" and Lauderdale's "Why Do I Love You," that White belts out as if she were a diminutive, red-headed, hillbilly version of Etta James.

Although her own albums are too infrequent to sustain much of a singing career, Lucinda Williams is one of America's finest songwriters. Her "Passionate Kisses" was a hit for Mary Chapin Carpenter, while "The Night's Too Long" became a Top 20 single for Patty Loveless. Here, two more Williams-penned songs are given new life by White. "I Just Wanted to See You So Bad" has the same irresistible momentum and logic as "Passionate Kisses," while "I Lost It" boasts a country-Cajun feel with Yoakam's bandmates Scott Joss and Skip Edwards supplying the lilting rhythms on the fiddle and squeezebox.

Many of these songs may be rooted too deeply in the traditions and reality of rural

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Record Reviews

America to survive on so-called country radio, but White also excels at mainstream country-pop. Gwil Owens' "I Doubt If It Does to You" is the sort of heart-broken ballad that everyone has lived through at one time or another, and White gives it a piercing delivery as if she were still trying to break through her lover's defenses. "The Lucky Few," the new album's title track, boasts a Buddy Holly-like guitar figure that's topped by White's big, radio-friendly vocal. When she declares that she'll never be one of those lucky enough to enjoy the easy life, there's a working-class resentment in her voice that returns country music to its Merle Haggard/Jimmie Rodgers origins.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

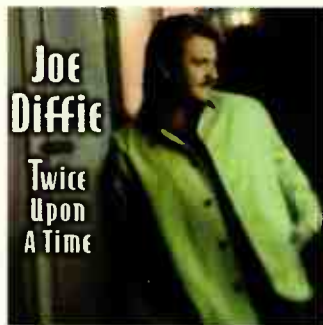
Joe Diffie

Twice Upon a Time

Sony 67693

Joe Diffie struck gold (make that platinum-plus) with *Life's So Funny*, his last album, which featured such antic numbers as "Bigger Than The Beatles" and the monster hit, "Third Rock from the Sun." Little wonder that such zany songs laced with tongue-in-cheek honky tonk angst are also the backbone of his new album, *Twice Upon a Time*.

Things kick off with one of these semi-crazed ditties that are fast becoming Diffie's stock and trade. (Sometimes when Diffie sings these wacky numbers, he does so with a certain crazed breathlessness that reminds me of some guy who's late for work, spills coffee all over himself, locks himself out of his car, gets his necktie caught in his fly, yet still pauses long enough to tell us some nervous personal horror story about his wife running off with a door-to-door preacher.) Titled "This Is Your Brain (On Love)," it's a giddy take-off on a familiar anti-drug slogan, describing how a man's once-orderly life



is being wrenched out of its predictable orbit by hopeless infatuation.

"Show Me a Woman," written by the great honky tonk bard, A.L. "Doodle" Owen, and Doug Johnson, is another skewed, tongue-in-cheek, love-out-of-control ditty with a hot, shuffling rhythm track. Diffie serves up the tongue-twisting lyrics with deft yet frantic hilarity. Clearly, Diffie (who co-produced the album, with longtime associate Johnny Slate) has hit a mother lode with these masterfully delivered, space age, honky tonk novelties: "Houston, We Have a Problem," with its serio-comic imagery of slick Southern politicians and faithless women, falls into similar territory.

Yet no artist wants to run the risk of being pigeonholed as a singer of novelties. So Diffie, with considerable canniness, has padded out *Twice Upon a Time* with a handful of love ballads, most of which are as straight down the middle as a ten-pin strike in a bowling alley. A couple of these "serious" songs score big. "The Promised Land" is full of heart-rending nostalgia and haunting personal loss as a man painfully contrasts the innocence and bedrock faith of his childhood with the sordid life he's fallen into as an adult. "I've Got a Feelin'," the only one of these 11 songs that Diffie had a hand in writing, paints a desolate picture of a man alone and stranded on the Oklahoma plains, coming to the harsh realization that the woman he misses so terribly no longer misses him.

But the rest of the straight ballads—like the Skip Ewing-

penned title song and the closing cut, "One More Breath"—are just a little too mushy for my tastes. Too often, Diffie merely sounds like Michael Bolton with postnasal drip, and I find myself wanting to fast-forward to the next funny song.

And those fast-forwards are consistently worth the effort. "It's Hard to Be Me (And Not Have You)" is a goofy portrait of a guy popping his emotional rivets, one by one, as he descends into a spiral of loneliness and empty beer bottles. Diffie's spry, double-tracked vocals in the chorus and the nifty arrangement make for a winning combination. "John Doe," from the playfully demented imagination of veteran songwriter Dennis Linde, makes me laugh out loud every time I hear it.

Diffie, of course, runs the risk of wearing this shtick out an album or two down the line. But for the time being, if I were him, I'd run with it, too. It's a winning, and playfully compelling, formula.

—BOB ALLEN

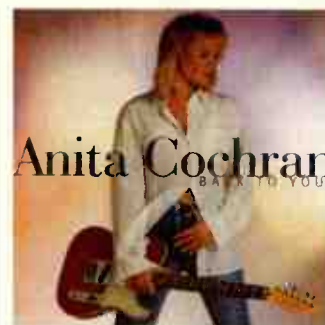
Anita Cochran

Back to You

Warner Bros. 46395

Mary Chapin Carpenter may have written "Girls with Guitars," and Wynonna may have turned it into a hit, but Anita Cochran is living the song. When the blonde singer holds her red-and-white Telecaster on the cover of her debut album, *Back to You*, it's no prop.

Cochran not only plays all the lead-guitar parts on the disc, but she does so with a bright, biting tone and a fast, hard attack that reminds one of Don Rich's work with Buck Owens and The Buckaroos. Cochran isn't as good as Rich yet, but she plays in that tradition and injects her songs with an energy that's missing from most mainstream-country projects these days. Moreover, her guitar parts and vocals en-



joy a rapport rarely achieved when the Music Row session guys play the same licks behind whichever singer is in the studio that day.

Cochran, who was named after Anita Carter of The Carter Family by her country-musician parents (they led a weekend band in Michigan), plays all the banjo, mandolin and dobro parts as well on her first release, which she co-produced with Jim Ed Norman. Cochran also wrote or co-wrote nine of the album's ten songs. When she takes the ballad route, her weakness for sentimental, country-pop clichés takes over. When she goes up tempo, though, the juice flowing through her string-picking fingers seems to leak into her whole body and create vocals as vigorous as the guitar licks.

This is most obvious on "Girls Like Fast Cars," sort of a sequel to Wynonna's "Girls with Guitars." As Cochran growls about the pleasures of cruising her small Michigan town in a hot Camaro, her Telecaster revs it up like the car in the song. The first single is "I Could Love a Man Like That," a tale of lust at first sight, and the cat-in-heat guitar work inspires a similar purr in the vocal. "You're the Break," written by Karen Staley and Brian Keith Burns, adapts the Bo Diddley beat to a honky tonk two-step, and Cochran makes the infatuation lyrics and the stop-and-go rhythms turn on a dime with her sassy singing and powerhouse picking.

Unfortunately, the energy of these country dance numbers dissipates when Cochran slows down in an effort to be

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Record Reviews

meaningful. It's as if she needs to keep her fingers busy to stay original; otherwise she lapses into other people's formulas. Whether it's the droopy ballad duet with Steve Wariner, "What If I Said," or the maudlin tribute to a dear, departed father, "Daddy Can You See Me," Cochran sounds all too ordinary on the slower material. She's too exceptional on the best songs for us to accept anything less.

—GEOFFREY HIMES



Bob Woodruff
Desire Road
Imprint 10008

In the past few years I've seen Bob Woodruff live a couple of times, and I've heard a little of his 1994 debut album, *Dreams & Saturday Nights*. But I must confess that, despite the critical raves of some of my friends, I never quite "got" Woodruff. My fleeting impressions were that his singing was underwhelming, his stage presence tentative and his lyrics occasionally too willfully graphic even for my jaded tastes.

But whatever doubts I've harbored have been all but wiped away by *Desire Road*, Woodruff's no-frills, finely executed and sure-footed second major-label release.

There are still enough of Woodruff's rough edges apparent on *Desire Road* to keep him interesting, and to keep the comparisons to a young Steve Earle rolling in. Yet this time around, his sound is more evenly tempered by a delightfully jangly California country-

rock sweetness, and by a youthful flair for melody and harmony that's reminiscent of the vintage late 60's and early 70's country-rock made by a nexus of influential musicians like Richie Furay, Jim Messina, Chris Hillman and Randy Meisner.

Which is to say, the New York-born Woodruff sounds distinctly like what he is: someone who found his way to country by way of rock 'n' roll.

I'd make that point about some artists with a tone of damnation. But Woodruff so naturally melds these influences (along with shades of country blues and R&B on a pair of Arthur Alexander old-ies) into something vibrant and exciting that it's a supreme compliment this time.

Desire Road kicks off with "Almost Saturday Night," a gem of a John Fogerty song which Woodruff scavenged off a 1975 Fogerty solo album. Woodruff's update of the Alexander standard, "Every Day I Have to Cry" (covered by Jerry Lee Lewis long ago), and his reprise of Alexander's lesser known "If It's Really Got to Be This Way" also make for worthy and soulful side excursions. More central to the success of *Desire Road* is how Woodruff has opened up his songwriting by collaborating with veteran Music Row tunesmiths like Gary Nicholson, Vince Melamed, Michael Smotherman and Ray Kennedy—who co-produced *Desire Road*.

One of the finest fruits of these collaborations (Woodruff wrote three of the 12 tracks on his own and co-wrote six more) can be heard on the haunting "River's Edge" (co-written with Melamed). A sea of sadness is invoked by Woodruff's impassioned vocal and the maelstrom of tremolo guitar, Hammond organ and slide guitar that pounds and swirls around it. "Cry Behind the Wheel" (co-written with Michael Smotherman) is the compelling confession of a man who tries to outrun his heart-break at 70 miles an hour. The

instrumental track is deftly propelled by Ray Kennedy's jaunty rhythmic mandolin figures. And "That Was Then" (a Woodruff solo composition that he's been playing in his live shows for some time) draws a stark vignette of a fallen country star who rediscovers brief shreds of his lost youth and dignity playing in a hole-in-the-wall bar for tips and free drinks.

The arrangements throughout are your great, old, basic, meat & potatoes drums-guitar-bass-steel-slide guitar, embellished with dashes of Hammond B-3 and piano, along with smatterings of mandolin and blues harp. With the savvy backing of session masters like James Burton, Sam Bush, Gary Tallent, Pig Robbins and Dan Dugmore, and guest vocals from Raul Malo and Joy Lynn White, the tracks all have a delightfully raw roadhouse vitality.

Which just makes it all that much more a pleasure to hear an artist finally pull the missing pieces together and come into his own, as Bob Woodruff has so effectively done on *Desire Road*. —BOB ALLEN

Tracy Lawrence
The Coast Is Clear
Atlantic 82985

I'll get right to the point. If you haven't yet picked up Tracy's new CD, you should. You've surely already heard the hit first single, "Better Man Better Off," which is now in "recurrent" status at radio (meaning it's no longer the latest record out, but is still on the playlist). It's just the beginning.

There is much to like here. The title song is a wistful ballad, asking the girl he left behind to follow on—"Young and naive I didn't know what I'd found/But I do now and there ain't a cloud in my mind." "Any Minute Now" is a smashing, up tempo, hooky number by Thom McHugh, a talented fella with whom I once wrote a



huge hit for Canadian country singer, Joan Kennedy. This one, too, has hit written all over it. "While You Sleep" is an established theme—"Sometimes I lie awake and watch you sleep"—but the melody is great. It's sort of Charlie Rich-ish, in a nostalgic way.

The classic working man's lament—big dreams, small bank account—works with a new image: "Dreamin' in color/Livin' in black and white." And "That's How a Cowgirl Says Goodbye" is a danceable instant classic. Gut string guitar gives it a Marty Robbins feeling that excites a fan of the "older demographic," while the rock edge guitar and the B-3 organ move me in a different way on "One Step Ahead of the Storm." Friends, there just isn't any filler on this ten-song CD—it's all strong.

Lawrence deserves credit for that fact. Staying true to himself, he is able to transcend the shallow, first-person, tapio-romance that's killing the format out there in radio land. He can sing about the lost and ambiguous moments in a man's life and in the course of a relationship. There's meat on them thar bones. Consistently high quality and great song choices are the marks of a terrific commercial artist, and that's Tracy Lawrence all over. And this is the "new improved" Tracy Lawrence—short-haired, sans mustache, and with a new bride. What's not to be happy about? He comes on here like a guy ready to finish out the rest of the decade atop the sales charts. The coast is clear for adding this CD to your collection.

—BOB MILLARD

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4. Winners will be chosen by a select panel of judges comprised of noted songwriters, producers and music industry professionals. Songs will be judged based upon originality, lyrics, melody, production, melody and composition. The quality of performance and production will not be considered. There will be awarded priority to all authors of winning entries who reside in the U.S. and who are U.S. citizens.

5. Winners will be notified by mail and must sign and return an affidavit of eligibility by receiving letter, outlining income within 14 days of notification date. The affidavit will state that winner's song is original work and retains full legal rights to song. Failure to sign and return such affidavit within 14 days or provision of false/incorrect information forms will result in immediate disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Affidavits of winners under 18 years of age at time of award must be counter-signed by parent or legal guardian. Affidavits subject to verification by J.L.S.C. and its agents. Entry constitutes permission to use winners' names, addresses, and photos for future advertising and publicity purposes without additional compensation.

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I have read and understand the rules of The John Lennon Songwriting Contest and I accept the terms and conditions of participation. (If entrant is under 18 years old, the signature of a parent or guardian is required.)

Signature Date

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Tanya Tucker

Been There, Done That, Doin' It Again



After 25 years in country music, with more than her share of ups and downs and twists and turns, Tanya proves she's still got it—and she's ready for more.

by Michael Bane

“She's 41 and her daddy still calls her baby; And all the folks 'round Brownsville say she's crazy...” —“Delta Dawn”

“Who da man?” shouts Beau Grayson Tucker; just before he sails up toward the high ceiling of Tanya Tucker's attic.

“I da man!” I shout in return, bracing myself and my aging knees for the first hit of the trampoline. Beau Grayson is five years old; I, on the other hand, should know better.

“You're not da man!” he shrieks, bouncing back up. I wonder if this trampoline is age-rated; maybe with a warning label like the ones on mattresses, something along the lines of, “If you're over 21 and still jumping on a kid's trampoline, you deserve whatever you get.”

“You ain't da man!” Beau Grayson adds emphatically, landing on his butt. “You stink!”

“You da man!” I respond, about four feet in the air. The trampoline is getting easier; I'm thinking about a backflip.

“I da man!” shouts the kid.

“You da man!” I shout back.

“I da man!” shouts Bouncing Beau G.

On the other side of Tanya's sprawling attic, which features

not only walls full of photos chronicling nearly 30 years on the road, but a small Elvis shrine as well, a record company publicist is slowly starting to sweat bullets. Interviews are like locomotives—when everything is going smoothly, the suckers run right along on the tracks. Every so often though, you get a runaway train.

“I've got more toys than Presley,” Bouncing Beau G. says, momentarily throwing me off guard until I realize he's talking about his seven-year-old sister; not the late King of Rock. “A hundred more.”

“Darn right,” I say. “The guy with the most toys wins.”

“I da man,” he replies. “You stink.”

“Michael,” says Tanya from the car phone. “I'm running late. Just stay at the house and we'll figure something out.”

I start to say something about a hotel, and she cuts me off.

“Hell, Michael, stay at the house. Ain't like I don't have the room. Besides...” she says, and pauses, firing up a patented Tanya Moment, “...Stone Phillips did.”

“I'm there, Tanya,” I say. “No problem.”

So what are we to make of Tanya Tucker; 38 years old with an odometer that's got to have turned over at least twice? I'm sitting in a rocking chair on the porch of her 500-acre estate in Franklin, about an hour outside of Music City. There are white columns and a perfectly manicured lawn that could pass for a moderate-sized city park, except for the scattering of kids' toys. There are also horses and houses and Harleys, awards, tributes and stacks and stacks of Tanya's new autobiography, *Nickel Dreams*, open and ready to be signed.

Tanya storms in behind the wheel of a new BMW Z3 convertible, and in a few minutes, a red-haired Tanya in jeans, a T-shirt and cowboy boots rounds the corner of the house.

“You met the kids?” she asks.

Oh, yes, I say.

About that time Presley catches sight of her mama's red



"I want everyone to remember the queens of country music. They're the ones we have to remember. I'll never forget one night, I was 15...no, 14, and Loretta offered me her chair. I said, 'No way, I'm not sitting in that chair!'"



hair, which Tanya has tried to strategically stuff underneath a National Cutting Horse Association baseball hat.

"Oh, my god!" says Presley. "Is that your real hair?"

"The hairdresser's not done yet," says Tanya.

Presley can't decide whether to scold or break out laughing.

"I was getting a little too blonde there," says Tanya, motioning me out of my rocker. "C'mon, Michael."

Back in the Old Days, when women country singers—especially young women country singers—were novelty acts almost on par with dancing bears, and, as such, needed nicknames, Tanya was dubbed "The Texas Tornado." For all her much bal-

lyhooded mellowness brought on by motherhood, there's still that wound-tight, coil-spring energy around her; a person—say, me, for instance—is not so much taken on a tour of the Big House as towed along in Tanya's wake, a little like that Holstein cow caught in the big special effect of the movie *Twister*.

"Wanna see the fire room?" she says. A while back, the house suffered a small fire that engulfed several rooms, including her bedroom, before being contained. The damage still hasn't been repaired—"Too busy, you know?"—but she wants to show me the biggest casualty.

"Look at this, Michael," she says, wading through the smoke-scarred rubble toward her former closet. The top shelves of the closets are lined with soot-stained, water-damaged hats. "All my hats," she says mournfully. "Can you believe it?"

We tear through the house, which has approximately a million rooms and would require those little museum signs and velvet ropes to successfully navigate alone, into the living wing, where Tanya sweeps into her present bedroom.

"Make-up!" she says. "Hey, Michael, how often do you get tours of singers' bedrooms, huh?"

While the rest of the house could make the genteel pages of *House & Garden*, Tanya's bedroom looks like...a hotel room. A lavish hotel room, maybe a suite at the Beverly Hills Hilton, but definitely the room of someone who's just passing through. A well-used treadmill and stair climber, haphazardly arranged, take up a big chunk of the room. There's a television, VCR and stacks of tapes—mostly of cutting horses and country music performances—boxes of photos ("You know how I am with photos," she says. "We could sit here all day and go through this stuff"), tables, bureaus and endless pieces of paper, the minutiae of a traveling musician.

"Over there in the corner, that appears to be dog pee," says Tanya. "Well, this is my life. Whatdaya think?"

But who has time to think? We're out the door, through the hall, down the stairs, through the kitchen, on the way to the garage before a single thought can work its way through my head.

"Check this out," she says, lifting the cover on a pristine Bentley touring car. "Bo, my daddy, gave it to me. One of these days I'll get to drive it."

Two more covers reveal a shining Heritage Softtail Harley, followed by a custom-painted Sportster.

"The Sportster's my baby," she says.

When was the last time you rode, I ask. "Gotta be a year," she says. "You know how it goes, the road and all."

In Tanya Tucker's case, "the road



and all" covers a lot of ground. In the decades since "Delta Dawn" and an adulatory cover story in *Rolling Stone Magazine* turned her into a 14-year-old country music phenomenon, Tanya has surfed each incoming wave in country music, hanging onto the leading edge like some kamikaze pilot. And she's had her share of wipeouts. Her tumultuous early-1980's relationship with Glen Campbell ended in a haze of liquor, cocaine and abuse. Their 1981 breakup sent Tanya into a viscous spiral, which she described this way in her new autobiography, *Nickel Dreams*:

"I went into a downward spin that almost cost me my career and my sanity. I was about as sorry a case as anyone would ever want to see..."

While Bo Tucker was able to resuscitate her career, it took at a stretch at the Betty Ford Center in 1988 to give Tanya enough breathing room to step back and address the demons around her.

"You wanna drive?" she says, flipping me the keys to the Beemer. "On second thought, give 'em back. You can drive later."

Tanya and I head down a long dirt road to the barn. The Tennessee sun is setting, shades of pink and orange turning the white-columned house into a set from *Gone with the Wind*. She rounds a narrow corner and stops the car, and we sit for a while in the sunset. Tanya talks about horses—riding, training, cutting cattle—and the silver buckle she recently claimed at the cutting horse championships. Thinking back over the years, the only time I've ever seen that coiled tension leave Tanya Tucker was when she talked about her horses.

"Can you cut?" she asks me abruptly.

"Not even in my dreams," I say.

"See, you still got something to learn," she says, and we continue with the tour.

Eventually we come to rest at one of three houses on the property. The children are back at the main house with the nanny. It's officially Interview Time!

"Ask me anything," Tanya says.

What's to ask, I reply. "You just wrote a tell-all biography. Everybody knows everything."

Tanya, as if on cue, starts singing, a new song about the Opry, women singers and Kitty Wells' chair.

*How many miles must a country girl go down
Before she sits down in the chair...*

There's something disconcerting about watching a songwriter work out a song. Disconcerting, because there's always the sense that the song already exists somewhere out there in *X-Files* land, and the songwriter is struggling to pull the remain-



Tanya graced our cover several times in the 70's—she was still in her teens. Below, left, as was, in 1975. From the beginning, the mastermind of her career was her father, Bo or Beau (Tanya gave him the second spelling). Tanya's son bears the same name. Below, very early on with mom and dad in Las Vegas.



ing pieces through the veil. Tanya talks about Kitty Wells, about Loretta Lynn, about drinking songs, shifting from spoken narrative to song and back again. She even asks me questions about snatches of lyrics, but I can tell she's slipped away—the song has caught her, and she's incapable of putting it down just yet. She hums and sings and mumbles to herself, then breaks into song, then stops.

"Wait, Michael. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait....Okay, okay, okay, here it is..."

And she sings some more.

"You know, Michael," she says, slipping back. "I want to talk about all my heroes. People are always talking about their heroes, and they always seem to be men. I want everyone to remember the queens of country music. They're the ones we have to remember: I'll never forget one night, I was 15...no, 14, and Loretta offered me her chair. I said, 'No way, I'm not sitting in that chair!' We've all got to step down. But it's so cool that when it's time to step down, we can see somebody like LeAnn Rimes step up."

Tanya jumps up and takes a bow.

"Ta-da! 'The Chair,'" she says.

"Well done!" I say.

"Well done? Well done?"

"Okay, perfect," I say.

"Nooooo," she scoffs. "It's not perfect. Perfect would sell 15 million records. And even then it wouldn't be perfect. But I'd

"When I was 12, my daddy told me, 'Tanya, do everything I tell you to do—everything—and you can retire when you're 26. Never work again!' Well, I'm 38, and it looks like I'm in it forever."



change my name, become 'The Artist Formerly Known as Tanya Tucker.' I could see that. Change my name to 'Orgasm,' like Dennis Rodman. Put me in the ring with him—I can take him."

Later—much later, in fact—Tanya's songwriting collaborator, Tony Howell, will explain what we'll refer to as the "Tanya Effect": "Even when you think you know what she's talking about, you really only know about half of what she's talking about. And even then, you're only sure of about a quarter of that."

"You know what I hate?" Tanya is saying. "I hate it when I can do a job better than somebody, and I've hired them. I want people to be better than me. I want my kids to be better than me, not Tanya Tucker Juniors."

I was going to ask about the kids, but I don't have to.

"It seems harsh, you know, but sometimes I've got to sit them both down and say, 'Look, this is what Mommy does,'" Tanya says. "Don't you think for one minute that, if I had a choice, I'd rather play a gig than be with you guys. It's just not true.' Of course I'd rather be with them....But I gotta make a living, you know. When I was 12, my daddy told me, 'Tanya, do everything I tell you to do—everything—and you can retire when you're 26. Never work again!' Well, I'm 38, and it looks like I'm in it forever. Have another beer, Michael."

Beers, time and stories pass. Outside, a full moon rises to its zenith, and crickets sing in the damp fields.

"Didn't it feel like being in analysis doing that book?" I ask.

"Naw," says Tanya scornfully.

"Did you have fun doing it?"

"I didn't even want to write it," she says. "My dad went 'Heeyyyyyy...' I didn't want to write it, because I lived it. And with a book you have to...well, I saw Billy Graham on *Larry King* the other night talking about his new book, and I thought, 'Okay, let's see what Billy says.' Larry King asked him if he'd told it all, and Billy Graham said, 'No, some things are secret.' See, I use that word, too. There are secrets people have told me in confidence. I can't say that. Hell, I could write a whole book on Glen Campbell. I haven't read my book, and I don't plan to, either. One interview said, 'If you do, you're in



for a really good read!"

Things get a speck hazy here; non-linear, so to speak. On tape, Tanya is singing a song she wrote—actually, is continuing to write—for Johnny Cash, doing a credible imitation of the Man in Black. She also does an excellent John Wayne. Tony Howell and his wife, Elaine, drift in somewhere around three-ish, guitar in hand, and he and Tanya start batting songs around, interspersed with stories from the Old Days.

Odd, I think, smacking the cap off another Corona with the edge of the countertop. Thirty-eight years old, and she's the last man standing, the last commercial connection to the old days of country music. She has surfed through the end of the legends, the dog days of Countrypolitan, the excitement of the Outlaws, the rise of Urban Cowboy, several apocalyptic collapses, the New Traditionalism, the Hats, now Alternative Country, and has, occasionally, found herself welcomed in each camp. She has survived a personal life with enough angst and genuine tragedy in it to end a dozen careers. Heck, even the two kids out of wedlock were guaranteed by some to "poison you with the country fans." Yet she looks out on an estate that would break your heart and has just released her 30th album, which Geoffrey Himes, writ-

ing in the *Washington Post*, called the best of her career.

"Test me," says Tanya Tucker. "Go ahead, test me. I ain't afraid. Don't God test you every day?"

Every day, I echo, and Tony Howell nods.

Outside, the first pale rose beams pierce the predawn gray. I have been lucky enough to travel around the world, and I don't believe there is anything as beautiful as a Tennessee dawn. My eyes are a beach-ful of grit, and my stomach has the slightly queasy feeling of someone who's drunk himself sober.

"So what do you want, Tanya Tucker?" I ask. "What do you want?"

She actually looks fresh, a woman at the peak of her game.

"Music," she says. "Just music."

"Now, Michael," she whirls on. "Are you so old that you need to lie down for a while?"

She's grinning, but damned if she isn't right. ■

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

A Letter from the President

When we started the Country Music Society of America and its *CMSA Newsletter* in 1984, we knew it was a hit when more than 200,000 of you joined. Here was a place for country music fans to have their say. A place for your meetings with the stars, your record reviews, your concert reviews, your artwork, your favorite albums and more. And we have been rewarded by your loyalty and participation. After several years of publishing the *Newsletter*, some general themes came up again and again. Many members lamented the lack of stories on country music legends, and wanted more information about old favorites. So, at members' urging, we started The American Academy for the Preservation of Old-Time Country Music, and its publication, *The Journal*.

The Journal had a mission: To document and report on the history of country music, from the early part of this century, right up to the 1950's and early 60's. Now there was a place to read about traditional, old-time, "real" country music. In the first issue, we listed many old-time artists we planned to cover, performers both national and regional, everyone from Gid Tanner, Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper and Eddy Arnold, to Jimmie Rodgers, The Delmore Brothers, Lefty Frizzell and, of course, Hank Williams. And lo and behold, after seven years of publication, we've about covered every one of those performers on that list. Mission accomplished! What now?

We, and those of you who joined The Academy, love *The Journal*, and don't want to see it retired. We could continue it as is, and revisit many of the same topics, with a different take. But would that be worthwhile and in keeping with the high standards we set for *The Journal*? We didn't think so.

What if we redefined the *Journal's* mission, broadened the scope to include the 1960's and even the 70's? Heck, what was "news" when we started *Country Music Magazine* in 1972 is now "history." Cash and Willie and Waylon and Merle and Tammy and Jones are now Legends, and their past, so well-documented in the early days of *Country Music Magazine*, needs to be preserved—just as Jimmie Rodgers' and Hank Williams' have been in *The Journal*.

Good, you say, but why am I telling you all this? Well, we also realized that while some 50,000 members of CMSA enjoyed the *Journal* from its start, there are many more of you out there who never saw *The Journal* or weren't interested in Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett, but are *definitely* interested in The Statler Brothers, Loretta Lynn and Ferlin Husky. But to get *The Journal* you would have had to pay Academy dues, too. Even though you got a big discount because you were already a CMSA member, total dues would have been about twice as much.

So how to get it out to all CMSA members without charging everyone twice as much? We know it can get expensive subscribing to a number of publications and societies, and not everyone can buy every magazine they might like. So we came up with yet a better idea. One that would save both you *and* us a lot of money. And give all CMSA members membership in the Academy and a subscription to *The Journal*...all at no extra cost to CMSA members.



The Premier Issues of both the CMSA Newsletter and The Journal. Coming next issue: A merger and a new look for both.

Instead of sending out *The Journal* as a separate publication, starting with the next issue—September/October, our special 25th Anniversary Edition of *Country Music Magazine*—the CMSA and the Academy will be merged together into one association, and *The Journal* will go to all members along with their copies of *Country Music Magazine*, just as the *CMSA Newsletter* does now, and *all* CMSA and Academy members will receive the new publication at no additional charge. Your current dues will cover everything: *Country Music Magazine*, membership in the CMSA, membership in the Academy and the new, combined *Journal/Newsletter*. When your membership comes up for renewal, your dues, as CMSA Charter members, are guaranteed to be the lowest offered. You'll continue receiving all of these benefits at regular CMSA membership rates—about half of what combined CMSA and Academy dues are now. That's a big saving to you. And to us...Plus, we don't have to send separate dues notices and bills...our way of saying thank you for these past 25 years.

And one last note: You'll still have plenty of room to have your say, and we *absolutely* still want your record reviews, concert reviews, travel notes, favorite album lists, and, especially, your photos. This is still your publication, and we look forward to your continued participation.

Russell D. Barnard
President

In This Issue

- Changes to Come, RDB Explains
- Member Top Tens
- A Pennsylvania Music Park
- Homer & Jethro in Legends

Editor: George Fletcher

Executive Editor: Helen Barnard

Art Director: Katheryn Gray



Newlyweds and music park owners Suzy Dalton and Pat Garrett meet Garth.

Pennsylvania Music Park

It's summertime, and what better way to spend an afternoon or evening than at one of various outdoor amphitheaters, taking in a concert by one of your favorite country music artists. The Pat Garrett Music Park in Strausstown, Pennsylvania, is one such park. Owned by CMSA member Pat Garrett and his wife, Suzy Dalton, the theater is located about mid-way between Allentown and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on I-78. Your editor has passed their highway billboard many times during Pennsylvania railfan jaunts! Is there a country music park near you? We'd love to hear about it. Why not write something up and send it in for a future issue?

Newlyweds Pat Garrett and Suzy Dalton, owners of the Pat Garrett Music Park Amphitheater, spent some time in Nashville on their way to their honeymoon in Hawaii. While there, they had the opportunity to meet Garth Brooks. They introduced themselves and told Garth about their country music park. An hour later, Suzy decided she'd like to have Garth's autograph, so she got back on line to see him. She was impressed by the fact that he remembered everything about their earlier conversation, even though he had probably talked with 70 or so other people.

Pat and Suzy are singers and songwriters, and they often perform at their park, opening shows for the stars. This year's line-up includes Billy Ray Cyrus on July 12, the Jimmy Sturr Polkafest on July 19, an Elvis Tribute with Nick Ferraro and The Heartbreak Band on August 2, an Ole Time Southern Gospel

Show on August 9, George Jones on August 16, Mark Chesnutt on August 23, Confederate Railroad on September 13, and on September 20, a Make-A-Wish Foundation Benefit Concert featuring several local country acts. For information, call 610-488-1782.

Remembering Faron Young

Members Betty and Chuck Smith of Toledo, Ohio, counted Faron Young as a family friend. Betty has written the following heartfelt note as a tribute and a remembrance of The Singing Sheriff. Just sat here and cried when I read the article on Faron Young in the March/April issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Faron was family to us—a dear friend for over 30 some years. No one loved him more than we do, and Faron said he knew that. It's so sad it took this tragedy before Faron could get any write-ups in the papers or magazines.

His talent as an entertainer and his beautiful voice have been overlooked for years, and now it is too late. He helped other singers, started *Music City News*, could sing any kind of music, and was what I'd call "a singer's

singer." There's not many of them around. Yes, Faron had two sides sometimes, and if you were lucky enough to know Faron and had seen them both, you can understand why we love him so.

Faron should be in the Hall of Fame. He should have been in there long ago. He never received all the awards he deserved. It's too bad you can't see or hear the singers like Faron or Marty Robbins, or the ones who are left, like Ray Price, Ricky Van Shelton, Connie Smith and Billy "Crash" Craddock. They're still with us! So why do we just see and hear all new ones who won't last 30 years in music like the ones I've named?

Faron, you're loved and missed. The pain hasn't let up for us.

**Betty and Chuck Smith
Toledo, Ohio**



Faron Young—from our files. Betty and Chuck Smith remember him fondly.

January 1997 Poll

| | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| George Strait | <i>Blue Clear Sky</i> |
| George Strait | "King of the Mountain" |

It's now five in a row for George Strait as the top pick in both albums and singles. A remarkable achievement, and with another new album now in the racks, and new singles on radio, good old George will probably keep his spot at the top of the heap. Following his *Blue Clear Sky* in album picks are teen queen LeAnn Rimes and *Blue*, and a pair from that other CMSA member favorite, Alan Jackson. His *Everything I Love* takes third place, while *The Greatest Hits Collection* nabs fourth. Rounding out the album picks is Bryan White and *Between Now and Forever*.

In singles, the King of the Poll's "King of the Mountain" is followed by the title track from Alan Jackson's latest album, "Everything I Love." In third is stone country Mark Chesnutt with "It's a Little Too Late." LeAnn comes up in fourth with her cover of the classic "Unchained Melody." And fifth place goes to last issue's cover star, Patty Loveless and "She Drew a Broken Heart." Don't forget to vote!

Remembering Mae

James K. Walker is a CMSA member in Lexington, Kentucky, and also a member of the Patsy Cline Fan Club. It was at a Patsy fan club function that he met the late Mae Axton shortly before her death. He shares his story and photograph here.

This photograph of Mae Axton was taken April 3, 1997, at the premiere of the show, "Just a Closer Walk with Patsy," at the Texas Troubadour theater in Nashville. I am a member of Patsy's fan club, and about six of our members attended the show that evening. When I saw Mrs. Axton, I asked her if I could have a picture taken with her, and she was kind enough to pose.



James Walker met Mae Axtan in Nashville just one week before her death.

Mae had already played a part in our fan club gathering. Before the show, we met up with Joe Loftis of Bellvue, Tennessee. He had acquired some session music that Patsy had used for her recording sessions. And in that "find" was the restaurant menu on which Mae had written her original version of "Pick Me Up on Your Way Down." We were really honored to see this, and then to meet Mae, just one week before her death.

James A. Walker
Lexington, Kentucky

More Member Top Tens

Here are favorite album lists from four more CMSA members. This time around, Katie Moore of Fort Jones, California; Helen A. Vitunjski of Burlington, Ontario, Canada; Tim Moule of Grass Valley, California; and Wanda Montgomery of Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, all share their Top Ten albums with us. This is one of our most popular—and most fun—recurring features. It's never too late or too soon to get your list in! You can make it your all-time favorites, or favorites from one year, or a mix of both. You can also add comments on why they're your favorites. Send 'em in!

FAVORITES OF 1996

Scott Joss
Souvenirs

Randy Travis
Full Circle

Trisha Yearwood
Everybody Knows

Suzu Bogguss

Give Me Some Wheels

Sammy Kershaw
Politics, Religion and Her

Marty Stuart
Honky Tonkin's What I Do Best

Vince Gill
High Lonesome Sound

Rosanne Cash
10 Song Demo

Alan Jackson
Everything I Want

Wynonna
Revelations

Katie Moore
Fort Jones, California

TOP TEN OF 1996

George Strait
Blue Clear Sky

Trisha Yearwood
Everybody Knows

Brooks & Dunn
Borderline

Alan Jackson
Everything I Love

Ty Herndon
Living in a Moment

Reba McEntire
What If It's You

Lorrie Morgan
Greater Need

Billy Ray Cyrus
Trail of Tears

Tracy Byrd
Big Love

Faith Hill
It Matters to Me

Helen A. Vitunjski
Burlington, Ontario, Canada

MY TEN FAVORITE ALBUMS

Dwight Yoakam
Dwight Live
Could do without "Two Doors Down" and a couple of others, but the other 14 songs here are totally awesome!

Lorrie Morgan
Greater Need
"I Can Buy My Own Roses" and "Good As I Was to You" are the two best songs I've heard since Lorrie's "War Paint" and Dwight's "Fast As You."

Lorrie Morgan
Greatest Hits
"Standing Tall" should have been a Number One song for four to six weeks!

Dwight Yoakam
Gone

"Don't Be Sad" and "Heart of Stone": totally different and both totally great!

Lorrie Morgan
Leave the Light On
"Far Side of the Bed," "Dear Me" and "Five Minutes" are better than any song on, say, Clint Black's *Killin' Time* (which came out around the same time). The rest of the album is pretty good also.

Mary Chapin Carpenter
State of the Heart
Take all the hype that her tedious *Stones in the Road* album received, and instead apply it to this great album.

Dwight Yoakam
If There Was a Way
I'm sorry, but *This Time* was a step down after this album.

Lorrie Morgan
Something in Red
"Something in Red" is the best country song I ever heard. "We Both Walk" and "In Tears" are great, too.

Rodney Crowell
Diamonds & Dirt
Contains five *real* Number One songs.

Lorrie Morgan
War Paint
What can I say? Lorrie's the best.

Tim Moule
Grass Valley, California

TOP TEN COUNTRY ALBUMS

Mindy McCready
10,000 Angels

John Michael Montgomery
What I Do the Best

Shania Twain
The Woman in Me

James Bonamy
What I Live to Do

LeAnn Rimes
Blue

Faith Hill
It Matters to Me

Clay Walker
Clay Walker

Clay Walker
If I Could Make a Living

Clay Walker
Hypnotize the Moon

Clay Walker
Rumor Has It

Wanda Montgomery
Waynesburg, Pennsylvania

CMSA COLLECTIONS

Attention, Members!

The Collections page is operated as a benefit to members. Entries are printed at the discretion of the editors. Please keep in mind the following guidelines when submitting your entry: 1) Membership number must accompany entry. 2) Entries must be kept to 40 words or less. 3) Entries for Pen Pals from members under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a note from a parent or guardian giving permission. 4) Only one entry per member per issue. 5) We reserve the right to edit for space and style. 6) Requests for romance or photos will *not* be printed. 7) Entries that do not follow these guidelines will be discarded.

Collecting the Magazine

Members help each other complete their magazine collections.

• For sale: back issues of *Country Music Magazine*, March 1981 through July/August 1995 complete (including Hank Jr. "no date" issue). In all, 79 issues. Buyer takes all. **Scott Anderson, 504 5th Ave., St. Libory, NE 68872.**

Information, Please

Please write each other directly about information or items listed. When corresponding, include SASE. Entries are printed at the discretion of the editors.

• Will buy or trade guitar picks with country artist/band names printed on them. Have a few to trade, also have many great photos of lots of artists. Also want anything on The Bill McCorvey Band. **Jeanne Nai, 30 Brookside Ave., Naugatuck, CT 06770.**

• Desperately searching for the Skeeter Davis album called *Skeeter Sings Standards* (LPM 3463). Also want any articles or items about her. Other Skeeter albums wanted: *The Best of Skeeter Davis* (LPM 3374), *Written by the Stars* (LPM 3382) and *I'll Sing You a Song and Harmonize Too* (LPM 2197). Thank you. **Nola Bleechmore, R.S.D. 291A, Burnie, Tasmania, Australia 7320.**

• For sale: photos, magazines, buttons, VHS tapes and keychains of old and new artists. Also have 8x10's (some autographed). Send SASE and favorites (will not answer without SASE). **Robin Garfoot, 808 E. Vine, Sullivan, MO 63080.**

• Wanted: Shania Twain posters, photos, magazine articles, anything

else you have that has Shania in it or on it! Also seeking items on Deana Carter and MTV's Jenny McCarthy. Please send list and prices. Also would like to correspond with other country fans. **Chad Sexton, 203 Oak Park Dr., Oneida, TN 37841-2811.**

• For sale: country music star pictures, articles, tapes, addresses, etc. Send \$1.00 and long SASE for catalog and information. **J. Coleman, 899 Amboy Ave., Perth Amboy, NJ 08861.**

• Here's how to get free autographed photos of all your favorite country stars. The only directory available dedicated exclusively to country music fans. Hundreds of addresses updated weekly. Proven method guarantees results. Send \$10. Also have celebrity autographs for sale: movie, rock, country, political, sports. Send \$2.00 and SASE with two stamps for list. **D. Luhn, 3504 Westview Rd., Westminster, MD 21157-7735.**

• For sale: life-size cardboard stand-ups of Reba, Dolly, Faith Hill and John Michael Montgomery. Send SASE and want list with best offer. **J.M., 176 E. Idlewood Cir., West Columbia, SC 29170.**

• For sale: new/sealed country CD's and cassettes. CD's—\$8.00, cassettes—\$5.00. Price includes postage and bubble-bag mailers. Please send for list of items available. **David Hume, 3636 W. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80204.**

• For sale: several country soundtrack tapes with lyrics sheets. Songs are for female country singers. Send SASE for listing. Very reasonable prices. **R. Richardson, P.O. Box 468, Seneca, IL 61360-0468.**

• For sale: 45's, LP's, magazines, concert photos and small stand-ups on old and new artists. Garth, Alan, Loretta, Reba, Anne Murray, Lorrie, Dolly, Sawyer Brown, Tanya and many more. Send SASE. **Pam Loftis, 709 Tulip Cir., Gallatin, TN 37066.**

• Note to Ernest Jones, who corresponded with me from this section regarding K.T. Oslin material: I do not have your return address! Yes, I am interested in purchasing what you have on K.T. for your asking price. Please write me with your return address, and I'll send you a money order. **F. Brooks, P.O. Box 150712, Nashville, TN 37215.**

• Wanted: Statler Brothers book, *Happy Birthday USA* (1971), and any Statler or Lew DeWitt memorabilia. Will pay reasonable prices, or trade for my duplicate items. **Terri Corey, P.O. Box 1919, Staunton, VA 24402.**

• LP's for sale: country, rock 'n' roll and others. Bob Wills, Elvis, Carter Family and many other fine artists. Also have country magazines and 45's for sale. United States orders only, please. **Mary Barker, 17876 Sequoia Ave., Hesperia, CA 92345.**

• Wanted, VHS tapes of the following TV programs starring Randy Travis: *Happy Trails* (TNN special), *Down Home* (NBC special), *Dead Man's Revenge* (USA network TV movie), *The Legend of O.B. Taggart* (TV movie), *A Holiday to Remember* (CBS TV movie). Would also like to correspond with Randy Travis and Conway Twitty fans. **Trecia Floyd, 510 Boston Hill Rd., Monticello, KY 42633.**

• For sale: very large Alan Jackson collection. Includes 15 autographed items, over 200 "professional quality" concert photos, custom-made gold and silver AJ jewelry, over 75 magazines with AJ on the cover, all TV appearances and performances on VHS tape (TNN, CMT, PBS, VH1, E!, CNN, CBS, NBC and ABC), all fan club merchandise items and newsletters. **Laura Zatta, 166 St. Botolph St. #1, Boston, MA 02115.**

• Lee Roy Parnell items wanted: photos, magazines, T-shirts, memorabilia, video, etc. **K.P., 1026 Linwood Ln., Palm Bay, FL 32905.**

• Spring cleaning! Have the following for sale: promo CD's, magazines, posters, trading cards and album flats. Send SASE with wants. **Lisa Luck, 180 Brandegee Ave., Groton, CT 06340.**

• Wanted: old swords at reasonable prices. I am just starting to collect them. Also, any history and information about swords. **Robert L. Thatcher, 5715 Winchester St., San Diego, CA 92139-3039.**

• LP's, CD's, cassettes and 8-tracks available. 45's are coming soon! Rare and out-of-print recordings found and stocked. Videotapes also available. No 78's shipped or carried anymore. Send want lists, collect phone numbers, SASE's or IRC's. **Joel J. Hollin, 2113 Parkdale Ave., Glenside, PA 19038.**

• Wanted: Garth Brooks photos from State College, Pennsylvania, concerts, April 3-7, 1997 (especially April 7). Also looking for any live audio or video from any tour, but especially *Fresh Horses* tour 1996-97. **Frank Carey, RR#1, Box 169, Pittston, PA 18643-9734.**

• For sale: Elvis collection. Have all his albums, original and perfect condition. Also, books and special

booklets written about him, and large painted picture of him on velvet. **Lee Smith, 11510 Crosby Dr., Fenton, MI 48430.**

• Wanted: anything pertaining to George Jones. Books, magazines, photos, etc. Also interested in hearing from others who love George Jones and his music as much as I do. **Judy Wilson, 142 Red Cedar Rd., LaFollette, TN 37766.**

• Wanted: VHS videotape of April 19th performance of Tanya Tucker on *Grand Ole Opry* and *Opry Backstage* (aired on TNN). Also, 15th Country Showdown with Tanya, T. Graham Brown and Jimmy Dean. Will pay reasonable price. **Ken Sisler, 1336 Cherry Ln., Morgantown, WV 26505.**

• For sale: entire collection on The Judds and Wynonna. Books, magazines, fan club newsletters, pictures, albums, videos and more. Send SASE for list. **K. Johnston, P.O. Box 1069, Gulf Shores, AL 36547.**

Pen Pals

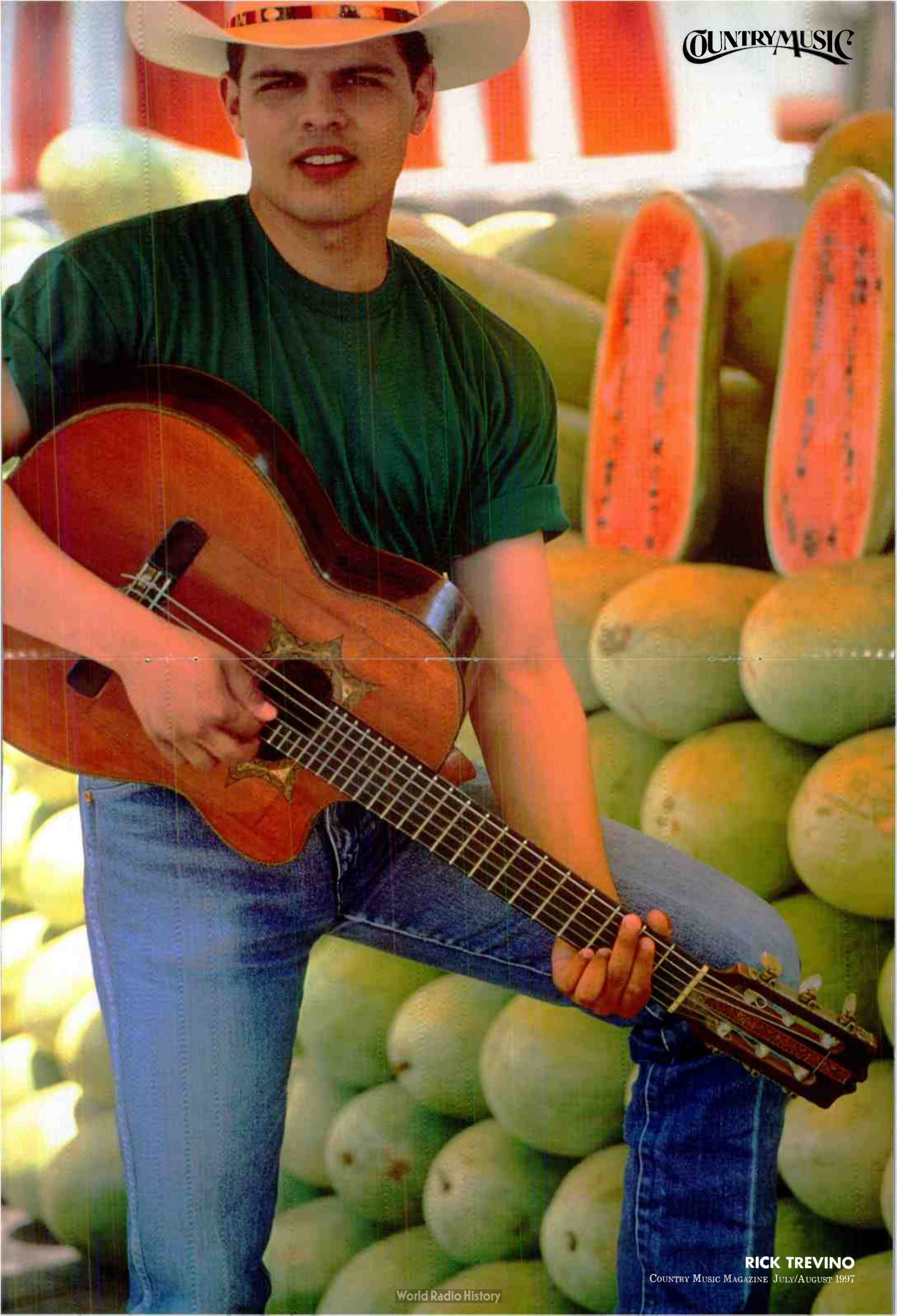
Make new friends by mail. *Pen Pals* is a means of introducing CMSA members who wish to correspond. It is *NOT* a "personals" column. Entries are printed at the discretion of the editors. Physical descriptions and requests for romance or photographs will not be printed. Parent's written permission required for those 16 and under. See additional rules in box at the start of this page.

• Hello there! I'm a 25-year-old Scottish male, and I'd like to hear from guitar-playing cowgirls, ages 16-25. I play the guitar, and have many interests. **Derek Porter, 5/5 Lady Nairne Loan, Willowbrae, Edinburgh EH8 7NL, Scotland.**

• Hey! I'm 17, and country music is my life! Favorites include Bryan White, Tim McGraw, etc. Hobbies are traveling, rodeos and pen pals. Looking for pen pals from around the world, especially cowboys 16-24. Will answer all. No inmates, please. **Crystal Harvell, 2151 Brittany Tr., Pleasant Garden, NC 27313.**

• Hello from Pennsylvania. I'm a 42-year-old country music fan who enjoys animals, flowers, art, movies, reading, American Indian culture, and writing. Those on Indian reservations and other countries especially welcome. Very interested in foreign cultures. Will answer all ages, world-wide. **Sue A. Pacior, 205 Plummer St., Oil City, PA 16301.**

• Hi! I am a country music fan who needs his mailbox full. Faves are Clay Walker, Bryan White, Reba,



RICK TREVINO

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE JULY/AUGUST 1997

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

RICK TREVINO

Facts of Life

.....

Personal Data

Full Name: Ricardo Trevino Jr.
Birthdate: May 16, 1971
Birthplace: Houston, Texas
Residence: Austin, Texas
Family: Wife, Karla; father, Rick Sr.; mother, Linda; younger brother, Adam, and younger sister, Crystal
Musical Influences: George Strait, Garth Brooks, George Jones, Merle Haggard, Elvis Presley, Billy Joel

.....

Vital Statistics

Height: 5' 8.5"
Weight: 155
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Green

.....

Recording Career

Record Label: Columbia Records, 34 Music Square East, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

| Albums | Release Date |
|---|--------------|
| <i>Rick Trevino</i> | 1994* |
| <i>Dos Mundos</i> (Spanish version) | 1994* |
| <i>Looking for the Light</i> | 1995 |
| <i>Un Rayo De Luz</i> (Spanish version) | 1995* |
| <i>Learning as You Go</i> | 1996 |

*Gold album

Singles

"Doctor Time"
"She Can't Say I Didn't Cry"
"Just Enough Rope"
"Honky Tonk Crowd"
"Bobbie Ann Mason"
"Looking for the Light"
"Save This One for Me"
"Learning as You Go"
"Running Out of Reasons to Run"
"I Only Get This Way with You"

Videos

"Doctor Time"
"She Can't Say I Didn't Cry"
"Just Enough Rope"
"Honky Tonk Crowd"



"Bobbie Ann Mason"
"Looking for the Light"
"Save This One for Me"
"Learning as You Go"
"Running Out of Reasons to Run"

Awards
1997: Nova Award/American Society of Young Musicians

.....

Trivia

•Trevino began classical training as a pianist at age five, performing his first piano recital at age six. His piano prowess received national exposure when he was featured on an *Entertainment Tonight* segment with Van Cliburn, a fellow Texan who vaulted to international fame after winning the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1958.

•Trevino originally sought a career in baseball, but in 1991, decided to pursue music after winning a talent competition at Texas A&M University, where he was

a sophomore majoring in Business Administration.

•Trevino's career is a family affair: His mother, Linda, is the president of his fan club while his father, Rick Sr., accompanies him on the road as a guitar technician.

•Rick and his wife Karla celebrated their one-year wedding anniversary in May, and are expecting their first child (reported to be a boy) in late August.

•Trevino read for the lead in Steven Spielberg's *Zorro*, a part that eventually went to Antonio Banderas. He had previously been offered roles in the Kevin Costner comedy, *Tin Cup*, and the Keanu Reeves romance saga, *A Walk in the Clouds*.

.....

Fan Club

Rick Trevino Fan Club, P.O. Box 500148, Austin, Texas 78729.

She's been called the *greatest* female singer of her generation. Now she has delivered the *greatest* song of her career.

all the GOOD ONES GONE

are



PAM TILLIS

greatest hits

INCLUDING

All The Good Ones Are Gone
Land Of The Living
Don't Tell Me What To Do
Spilled Perfume
Maybe It Was Memphis
Shake The Sugar Tree
Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)
In Between Dances
When You Walk In The Room
Cleopatra, Queen Of Denial
Let That Pony Run
The River And The Highway

Produced by Billy Joe Walker Jr. and Pam Tillis
*Produced by Paul Worley and Ed Seay for Artistic Endeavors Inc.
†Produced by Paul Worley and Ed Seay for Artistic Endeavors Inc. Associate Producer, Anthony Martin
‡Produced by Pam Tillis and Steve Fishell for Jackalope Productions
§Produced by Pam Tillis, Associate Producer, Mike Poole

MANAGEMENT
Mike Robertson
Management,
Nashville, TN

ARISTA
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Shania and Brooks & Dunn. Looking for new friends, especially males. Will answer all. Come on, cowboys and cowgirls, write me today! **Tom Genaw, 1957 Haywood Rd., Apt. 4, Hendersonville, NC 28791-1976.**

• This cowgirl, born 2/16/74, is looking for some real cowboys to write to. I love the outdoors and ranching. I listen to most artists, but faves are George Strait, Brooks & Dunn, Chris LeDoux and Randy Travis. Please, no inmates or chain letters. **Jennifer Trusty, 13004 County Road 22, Granada, CO 81041.**

• Howdy! Young 57-year-old woman wishes to hear from fans everywhere. All ages, men and women (no inmates). It would be faster to list the stars I don't like: none! If you are a musician, willing to make music for my poems/lyrics, even better. I will answer all. **Marilyn Dunne, P.O. Box 19982, Denver, CO 80219.**

• Would like to meet country music fans from all over the world. I am 27 years old; hobbies include writing country songs and photography. Seeking pen friends of all ages with a love for country music. **Jay Glenewinkel, 4810-A Explorer Dr., San Antonio, TX 78219.**

• Hello, country fans! I'm a 39-year-old single female who loves to sing, dance, play the piano, and theater. In music, I like everyone from Elvis to Shania. Love to hear from females and males, 38-43. Please, no chain letters or inmates. **Lisa Bartolotta, P.O. Box 842, Portland, CT 06480.**

• Howdy, country lovers. I'm an 18-year-old female looking for pen pals. My favorite singers are George Strait, Vince Gill and Brooks & Dunn, among all others. I like to party, listen to country music and have fun. **Staci Wells, P.O. Box 454, Marionville, MO 65705.**

• Howdy! 20-year-old country boy loves the outdoors, a good rodeo, camping, reading, writing, art, country music and much more. Favorites include: Garth, Alan, Hank Jr., Smokin' Armadillos, Don Williams and many more. Try to answer all who write. No chains or prisoners. **John Womack, P.O. Box 15, Steedman, MO 65077-1251.**

• 50-year-old fan of Dwight Yoakam, Kenny Chesney, Alan Jackson and Elvis looking for pen pals. Other interests include computers, science fiction (and fact), and biblical research. **Janet G. Allaire, 550 Oakmont #2117, Las Vegas, NV 89109.**

• Single female, 20, looking for pen pals ages 19-35 who love country

music. Enjoy Bryan White, Alabama, Alan Jackson, LeAnn Rimes and many more. I also enjoy outdoors, poem writing and art work. **Wendy L. Shreffler, 7220 S. US #1, Titusville, FL 32780-8104.**

• Hello! I'm a single, 18-year-old female who loves country music. Would like to hear from single males who also love country music. Please write, will answer all. **Fatham Frihart, P.O. Box 238, La Farge, WI 54639.**

• Mother, 65, and daughter, 41, would like to correspond with guys and gals of any age. Both married, love country life, animals and country music. Favorites are George Jones, Alan Jackson, George Strait, Marty Robbins and Elvis. Please write. **Jeanne Smith and Slim Smith, 769 Bodle Rd., Wyoming, PA 18644-9392.**

• 27-year-old male from Central New York seeks pen pals. Favorite singers include Alan Jackson, Clint Black and Brooks & Dunn, to name a few. I also enjoy antiques, dance music and meeting new people. Would like to correspond with other males, 18-35, with common interests. **Gregory D. Avery, 23 Locust St., Apt. B, Waterloo, NY 13165-1324.**

• Hi! 25-year-old mother of three looking for new friends to correspond with and meet. I like horseback riding, rodeos and other outdoor activities. I also love to cook, write poetry and listen to country music. Some favorites are Alan Jackson, Rick Trevino, Clay Walker and Ty England. Also like Lorrie Morgan and Martina McBride. **Cindy Hopkins, 413 N. Broadway St., Sayre, OK 73662.**

• Hi! I'm a 44-year-old married woman. Husband is a truck driver. I love country music—it's hard to pick favorites! Also love writing and making new friends. Looking for pen pals of all ages, especially overseas. Will write to prisoners who don't want anything but a friend. Everyone makes mistakes. No chain letters. **Patty Wright, 201 W. Bonta Ln., Greensburg, KY 42743.**

• Hello! I'm 16 years old. Interests include animals, drawing and any type of music. Favorites are Bryan White, Garth, Reba and more. **Patricia VanEnkevort, 1144 Old Hwy 2-41, Bark River, MI 49307.**

• Hi! I'm a 15-year-old Christian cowgirl looking for a cowgirl or cowboy around the same age to write to. Hobbies include basketball, hiking, movies and photography. I also love country music. My faves are Reba, Garth, Wynonna, Trisha and many more. **Lynnae**

Schooler, 5060 W. Osborn Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85031.

• Hey, y'all! 27-year-old, single country female wishes to correspond with other country folk, male or female. Favorites include George Strait, JMM, Reba, Patty Loveless, NASCAR, concerts, country dancing and much more. Write soon! Will answer all. **Sheryl Paul, 17350 E. Temple #194, La Puente, CA 91744.**

• Howdy, country lovers. I'm an 18-year-old female looking for pen pals. My favorite singers are George Strait, Vince Gill and Brooks & Dunn, among all others. I like to party, listen to country music and have fun. **Staci Wells, P.O. Box 454, Marionville, MO 65705.**

• I am 19 years old and love country music. Faves are John Anderson and Dwight Yoakam. I have many different hobbies. I would like to receive pen pals from all over the world (and the US!). Will answer all. **Lucille Johnson, 403 N. Griffin, Danville, IL 61832-4930.**

• Hi, I'm 54 years young. I like reading, writing, walking and country music. I like George Strait, Garth Brooks, Tanya Tucker. Looking for pen pals, will answer all. No inmates, please. **Elizabeth Tindall, 3070 S. Nellis Blvd., Apt. 3070, Las Vegas, NV 89121.**

• Hello. I'm a 46-year-old male desiring mail from other males who are country music lovers. Will answer all. **Bob Kibler, 7630 Timber River Cir., Orlando, FL 32807.**

• Hello, friends! I'm 29 and considering moving to Georgia. I would like to start building some friendships with open-minded people in the area from Sharpsburg to Fayetteville or surrounding. **Richard McGuire, 613 Morris Rd., Vermillion, OH 44089.**

• I'm a 37-year-old Cajun/country music fan. Seeking pen pals from all over: no inmates or chain letters! Faves are: Loretta, LeAnn, Belton Richard, Alabama, Jimmy C. Newman, Jo-El Sonnier, Mark Chesnutt, Tracy Byrd, Reba, Hank Thompson, Patsy Cline and others. Interests include concerts, drawing, letters, traveling and collecting autographs. Particularly want to hear from those of Cajun descent. **Karen Lynn Vidra, 2211 Vivian Ave., Mansfield, OH 44906-1346.**

• 39-year-old, divorced male seeking pen pals interested in country music. **Danny Daniels, P.O. Box 1453, Pekin, IL 61555.**

• Correction: My Pen Pal entry in the March/April issue stated that I was looking for pen pals in Africa. It should have said that I have many pen pals in Africa to give out

to others. Thanks! **Jessica Squier, 13 West St., East Hampton, CT 06424-1411.**

• Hi! My name is Jodi Rupert. I'm 21 years old and love to watch and play sports. Favorite singers are Anne Murray, Reba, Garth, Kevin Sharp, LeAnn Rimes, Tim McGraw, Vince Gill, Bryan White, Brooks & Dunn and many more. Like going to movies and concerts, and listening when people need someone to talk to. Would love to hear from men and women, ages 19-27. Will try to answer all. **Jodi Rupert, 1938 SW Andrew Rd., P.O. Box 452, Towanda, KS 67144.**

• 20-year-old country boy enjoys rodeo, fishing, camping, art, history, country music. Favorites include Garth, Alan, Smokin' Armadillos, Dan Seals, LeAnn Rimes and more. Fill my box! Will try to answer all. No prisoners or chains. All ages welcome. **John D. Womack, P.O. Box 15, Steedman, MO 65077-1251.**

• Hi. I'm a wife and mom, 39, and I love music: country, rock and New Age. I enjoy art, crafts and crochet. Big animal lover, especially cats. Looking to share thoughts and ideas with someone from a different place. No inmates. **Norma Pemberton, 8830 Mission Vega Ct., Apt. 4, Santee, CA 92071.**

• Hello from Germany! I'm a 39-year-old, married female seeking female pen pals. I enjoy most types of music, but country is my favorite. Interests include reading, animals, the outdoors, writing and getting letters, and more. No men or inmates, please. Only U.S. postage needed. **Barbara Clare, CMR 475, Box 525, APO, AE 09036.**

• Hello. I'm 48 years old, recently single. Looking for pen pals, 35-50. I love country music, dancing, travel, shopping, bowling, rodeos and cross stitch. Favorites are Reba, Alabama, Brooks & Dunn, George Strait, Tracy Byrd, Alan Jackson. Would love to hear from males or females. **Norma J. Hogue, 7864 1/2 Big Bend, Apt. 4, Webster Groves, MO 63119.**

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Homer & Jethro

Top-notch musicians and successful parodists and spoofers, Homer and Jethro carried country comedy into the national arena.

By Rich Kienzle

Jethro Burns was ready to kick some butt. The year was 1949, and he was in Cincinnati to confront Syd Nathan, owner of King Records, the country and rhythm and blues label Homer and Jethro recorded for. Earlier that year, they'd had their first hit with "I Feel That Old Age Comin' On," a country novelty the pair had written. Now, Nathan had King R&B shouter Wynonie Harris record it—and gave him composer credit on his record.

When Jethro confronted Nathan, whose arrogance and sleazy business practices were as much a trademark as his asthma, cigar and thick glasses, the label boss' bluster faded fast. Not only did he fear that Jethro would dismember him, he knew he'd lose a lawsuit. When Nathan offered anything to clear up the problem, Jethro got what he wanted: Homer and Jethro's release from their five-year King contract. They were now free to join RCA, who wanted them. Soon they would become stars, heralding a new, smarter country comedy beyond baggy pants humor.

It started 14 years earlier, by accident, in Knoxville, Tennessee, where Henry Haynes, a guitarist, had been born in 1917. Kenneth Burns, who played mandolin and guitar, came along in 1923. They met at a 1935 audition for an amateur show for WNOX radio. Both loved the swing music sweeping the nation, and when they met, they jammed backstage. Impressed WNOX officials hired them as staff musicians. They soon built a jazz quartet called The Stringdusters that included Burns' brother Aychie on bass and guitarist Charlie Hagaman. Working at WNOX and for a time at Chattanooga's



Henry Haynes and Kenneth Burns—Hamer & Jethro.

WDO, they took inspiration from both Benny Goodman's orchestra and from Belgian gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt's groundbreaking work with violinist Stephane Grappelli in the Quintet of the Hot Club of France.

When Haynes and Burns decided to work as a duo in 1938, The Stringdusters disbanded. Introducing the pair at WNOX one day, announcer Lowell Blanchard forgot their names and referred to them as "Homer and Jethro." The name stuck. Their comic formula was singing sophisticated pop tunes of the day in a raw mountain style reminiscent of The Blue Sky Boys, Homer strumming guitar and Jethro plucking away on mandolin. Both sometimes suppressed their

flawless jazz instincts to keep it country; sometimes they let fly anyway.

By 1939 they'd left Knoxville for Kentucky's *Renfro Valley Barn Dance*, where they stayed until the World War II draft caught up with Jethro in 1941, then Homer. After their Army hitches, they reunited in 1945 and set up shop at WLW in Cincinnati. WLW barred their performers from making records, but did allow Homer and Jethro to work as anonymous session musicians at King Records. Their musical skills stronger than ever, they served, along with Roy Lanham, as session musicians on various King sessions with Cowboy Copas, Hank Penny, Hawkshaw Hawkins and others. Jethro occasionally played lead guitar, as he did on the riproaring Cowboy Copas swing instrumental *Jamboree*.

Weary of WLW's ban on recordings, in 1946 they signed a five-year contract with King as artists and recorded a hillbilly version of the pop song, "Five Minutes More." Issued under their name, the record did well and promptly got them fired by WLW, so in early 1947 they returned to WNOX. A year later, they joined forces with WNOX and WLW veteran Chet Atkins, who'd also returned to WNOX (and was Jethro's brother-in-law). In 1949 the pair would back Chet (and other artists) on some RCA recording sessions in Atlanta where they met A&R man Steve Sholes. Impressed by their skills, he wanted to sign them. The King contract made that impossible—until Nathan's "mistaken" composer credit.

Sholes saw the limits of their hillbilly exaggerations and suggested they try new ideas. Their first successful stab at parody came in 1949 when they dueted

CINCINNATI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

with June Carter on "Baby, It's Cold Outside," a hit pop tune of the moment. Their version reached Number Nine that fall and hit the pop charts as well. They experimented with different styles, but eventually zeroed in on parodies of both pop and country hits, most penned by Jethro. Late that year they had a Number 14 hit with "Tennessee Border No. 2," a parody of Red Foley's hit. In 1952 they sought permission from venerable pop composer Frank Loesser to spoof his material. He agreed, stipulating that they include the line "With Apologies to Frank Loesser." The composer also penned the enthusiastic liner notes to *Homer and Jethro Fracture Frank Loesser*. In Nashville, it became an honor for artists, including Hank Williams, to have their songs "butchered" by the pair.

The duo never settled in Nashville. In 1949 they followed Atkins to KWTO in Springfield, Missouri, remaining there into 1950. Bandleader Spike Jones' booking agency got them into nightclubs. They also showed up often on Chicago personality Don McNeill's *Breakfast Club* radio show, broadcast from WLS radio over the ABC network, which led to their joining WLS's fading *National Barn Dance*. The experience was not pleasant for Haynes and Burns, who faced hostility from many minor-league *Barn Dance* stars who resented their fame. Still, though they soon left the show, they settled with their families in the Chicago suburbs.

The early 50's were in many ways their peak period. In 1953, they turned Patti Page's pop hit, "How Much Is That Doggie in the Window," into "How Much Is That Hound Dog in the Window," which got to Number Two on the country charts. In 1954 came a country spoof of the pop hit, "Hernando's Hideaway." They did come to Nashville to work as studio musicians, backing various singers and recording with other studio pickers including Chet, fiddler Dale Potter and steel guitar virtuoso Jerry Byrd for RCA as the Country All Stars.

Rock 'n' roll gave the pair a new sound to spoof, resulting in the "Heartbreak Hotel" parody, "Hart-Burn Motel," and "Two Tone Shoes," a take-off on "Blue Suede Shoes." Another big hit came in 1959 in the wake of Johnny Horton's recording of Jimmie Driftwood's historical saga song, "Battle of New Orleans." "The Battle of Kookamonga" (which wasn't written by the pair) told the tale of Boy Scouts "attacking" a Girl Scout camp. Though it charted both country and pop, it was a bigger pop success. To preserve their onstage spontaneity, the pair rarely socialized offstage.



Great musicians and even greater clowns, until Haynes' death in the early 70's.

Their mainstream exposure grew in the early 1960's, when they became national spokesmen for Kellogg's Corn Flakes, built around the company's "Ooh! That's Corny" and "Cornfucious Says" slogans. Concerned about its image, Kellogg's had to approve all their nightclub dates to assure they weren't playing any unsavory places. In 1962 Atkins produced *Playing It Straight*, an all-instrumental LP that allowed both to indulge their love of swing. Two years later, as the Beatle era dawned, they parodied "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "She Loves You." In 1965, they briefly revived their old style with the LP, *Homer and Jethro Sing Tenderly*, featuring bluegrass arrangements of pop standards (Jerry Reed playing banjo) and also continued touring. Along the way, bluegrass mandolinists began to be influenced by Jethro's virtuosity. Along with Homer, the two were regular members of Chet Atkins' RCA recording group, The Nashville String Band, an extension of The Country All Stars.

Homer Haynes' sudden death from a heart attack on August 7, 1971, forced a devastated Jethro to reinvent himself as a solo artist. He recorded an LP for RCA in 1973 which was never released, worked on various Chet Atkins projects and taught mandolin in Illinois. For a time, he revived Homer & Jethro with guitarist Ken "Homer" Eidson, a schoolteacher who finally decided against a performing

career. Jethro recorded solo albums and an LP each with two Texas Playboy legends: fiddler Keith Coleman and mandolinist Tiny Moore. Along with accompanying singer-songwriter Steve Goodman, Jethro appeared with the "Million Dollar Band" on *Hee-Haw*. The late 80's saw him battling prostate cancer, to which he succumbed on February 4, 1989.

Only now is Homer and Jethro's true legacy being rediscovered. Fans of bluegrass and of stringband jazz now recognize their virtuosity. Their influence on parodists and even earlier parody masters like Sheb Wooley's comic alter ego, Ben Colder, and, more recently, Pinkard and Bowden is beyond question. No comic team in country got as many laughs for their comedy—and so much respect as musicians.

A final word: this is the last Legends of Country Music, a column I've had the pleasure of writing since 1983. With the upcoming changes that will merge the CMSA Newsletter and *The Journal*, there is no longer a need for this feature as it is. Rest assured, *The Journal* will cover even more legends in the future. Special thanks to Dave Samuelson, a regular contributor to *The Journal*, for his help on this piece.

Albums Available

See For CMSA Members Only page.

Readers Create

Wanderlust Wins Out

Member Catherine C. Quigg hails from Albuquerque, New Mexico, and that location no doubt provided some of the inspiration for her poem below. Here's her tribute to cowboys and lonesome trails.

Goodnight Cowboy

Goodnight Cowboy...
Sleep Well...
Dream of Me...
Goodnight...
Like Every Night...
Even this Last Night,
Until...
Whatever "Happy Trail"
You're Looking for
Turns your Direction back Around.
Until...
The Sunset You keep Riding into
Burns the Wandering from Your Soul.
Goodnight Cowboy...
Sleep Well...
Dream of Me...
Take Whatever Part...
of My Heart that Still Loves You
For Company.
Cover my Memory in Trail Dust...
Cover your Tracks with Dirt...
You always keep a Map
of a Leavin' Trail
Tucked up under Your Shirt.
Goodnight Cowboy...
Sleep well...
Dream of...
Whatever Suits your Rambling Heels,
Your Heart Belongs More,
To an Old, Winding Trail
Than it Ever did to Me.

—Catherine C. Quigg

A Poem for LeDoux

Cowboy singer Chris LeDoux is a favorite of many CMSA members, and Alice Gore is among his fans. Alice hails from Denton, Texas, about 30 miles from "The World's Largest Honky Tonk"—the famous Billy Bob's in Fort Worth—which provides the setting for this tribute to LeDoux. Here's Alice sounding a lot like our own Hazel Smith!

Chris And The Bucking Machine

I drive down to Billy Bob's and make it just fine.
Pay for my ticket after standing in line.
I wait for the show perched high on this bar stool.
Tappin' my foot and sippin' my Coke.
I'm a real LeDoux fan and that ain't no joke.

Then out comes Chris and the boys.
The crowd just goes wild.
Chris has us on our feet.
With his rock 'n' roll cowboy style.

When out of the music, the lights, and the smoke,
I see a strange object appear.
Hey, it's a bucking machine
Made for Chris' cute little rear.

Chris mounts to the top and puts on his glove.
This is the part we are all going to love.
The crowd starts to scream and the guys go wild.
Chris rides that contraption in true rodeo style.

Chris has singing talent no doubt.
He used to ride the rough ones and not turn one out.
This is our champion and he shows no fear.
But I just got to wonder—did he hurt that cute little rear?

Now, I may be older than Chris.
And proper rhyme I may miss,
But what the hey—that doesn't mean
I can't appreciate those Wrangler jeans.

—Alice J. Gore

Poem for a New Arrival

Isabel Mahoney is a CMSA member from Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, and she has a special poem to share with us. It was written by her postman, Michael Basciano, upon the birth of Isabel's granddaughter. Isabel says: "I have a most unusual mail carrier. Not only does he deliver all mail promptly and correctly, when my granddaughter was born, he wrote this delightful poem, which is now an important part of my granddaughter's baby book." Adds Isabel, "I'm sending it to you to see if it would merit publication in Readers Create."

Little Girls

Little girls, sweet little things
So pretty and pink and such
Add joy to almost everything
And to the lives they touch...

With glowing and angelic faces
Their growing years unwind
Going through the many phases
Leaving broken hearts behind...

Until the day when it's all done
And to no one's surprise
They marry, wed "become as one"
Before one can realize...that...
Little girls, sweet little things
So pretty and pink and such
Grow up so fast that your heart strings
They had barely time to touch.

—Michael Basciano

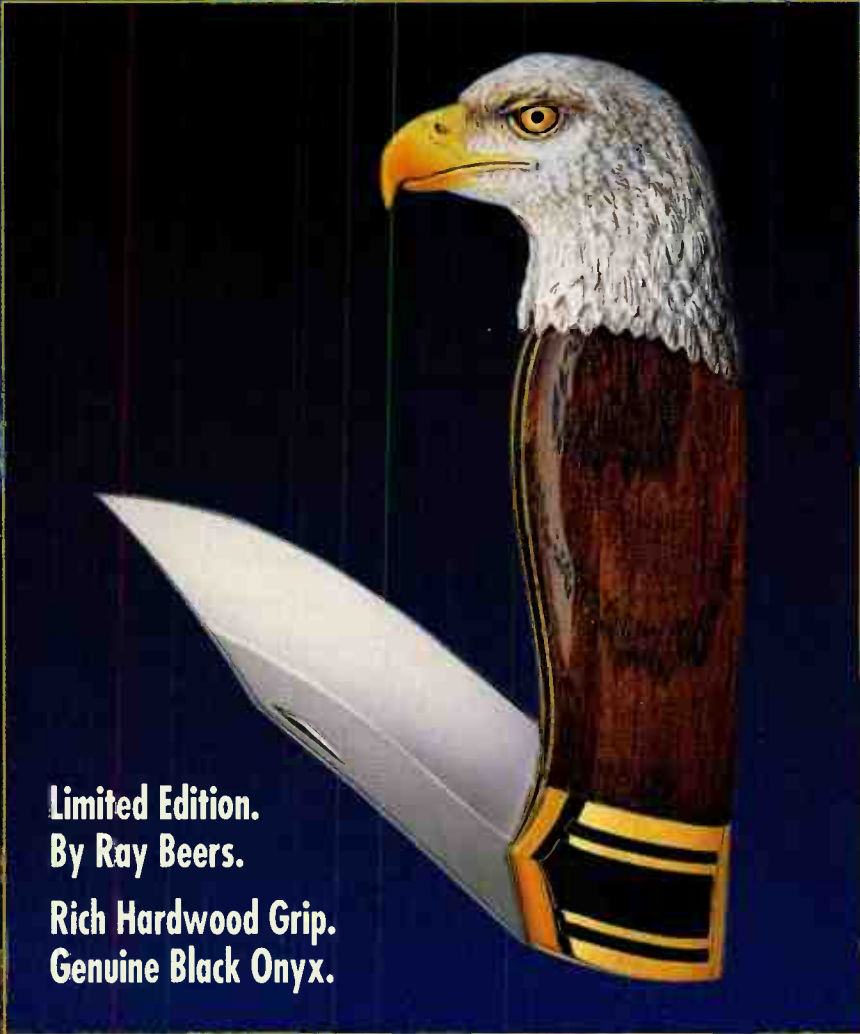


A Look at LeAnn

One of our regular contributors, Steven R. Ferris Jr., of Beaumont, Texas, gives us a couple of takes on newcomer LeAnn Rimes. This is LeAnn's first time in Readers Create, but probably not the last: The teenager took home an armful of trophies at the Academy of Country Music awards show in April. She signed the drawing for Steven when he met her at a recent concert.

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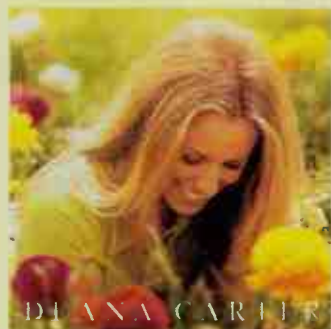
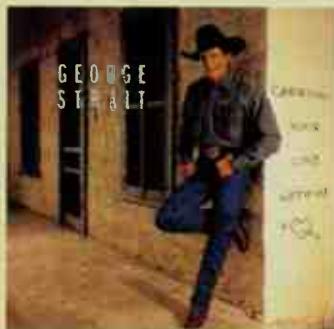
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STATE _____ ZIP _____

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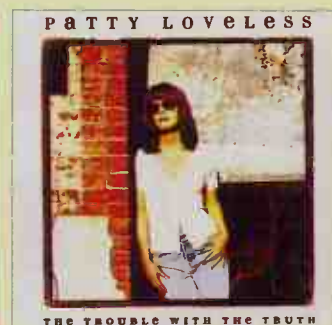
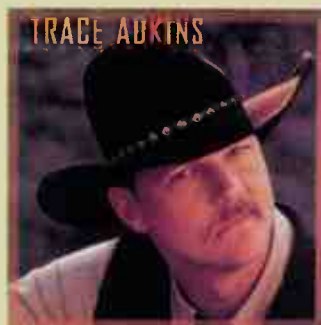


Singles

Albums

1. George Strait *Carrying Your Love With Me*
2. LeAnn Rimes *Blue*
3. LeAnn Rimes *Unchained Melody/The Early Years*
4. Deana Carter *Did I Shave My Legs for This?*
5. Clay Walker *Rumor Has It*
6. Bill Engvall *Here's Your Sign*
7. Alan Jackson *Everything I Love*
8. Trace Adkins *Dreamin' Out Loud*
9. Kevin Sharp *Measure of a Man*
10. Brooks & Dunn *Borderline*
11. Tracy Lawrence *The Coast Is Clear*
12. Alison Krauss & Union Station *So Long So Wrong*
13. Sawyer Brown *Six Days on the Road*
14. Alabama *Dancin' on the Boulevard*
15. Lee Ann Womack *Lee Ann Womack*
16. Collin Raye *I Think About You*
17. Wynonna *Collection*
18. Reba McEntire *What If It's You*
19. Alan Jackson *The Greatest Hits Collection*
20. Kenny Chesney *Me and You*
21. Clint Black *The Greatest Hits*
22. George Strait *Blue Clear Sky*
23. Lorrie Morgan *Greater Need*
24. Mindy McCready *Ten Thousand Angels*
25. Tanya Tucker *Complicated*

1. Bryan White *Sittin' on Go*
2. George Strait *One Night at a Time*
3. Tim McGraw with Faith Hill . *It's Your Love*
4. Mindy McCready *A Girl's Gotta Do (What a Girl's Gotta Do)*
5. Alan Jackson *Who's Cheatin' Who*
6. John Michael Montgomery . *I Miss You a Little*
7. Kevin Sharp *She's Sure Takin' It Well*
8. Vince Gill *A Little More Love*
9. Alabama *Sad Lookin' Moon*
10. LeAnn Rimes *The Light in Your Eyes*
11. Lorrie Morgan *Good As I Was to You*
12. Tracy Lawrence *Better Man, Better Off*
13. Brooks & Dunn *Why Would I Say Goodbye*
14. Sawyer Brown *Six Days on the Road*
15. Collin Raye *On the Verge*
16. Reba McEntire *I'd Rather Ride Around With You*
17. Ty Herndon *Loved Too Much*
18. Tanya Tucker *Little Things*
19. Deana Carter *Count Me In*
20. Mark Chesnutt *Let It Rain*
21. Mark Wills *Places I've Never Been*
22. Pam Tillis *All the Good Ones Are Gone*
23. Lee Ann Womack *Never Again, Again*
24. Trace Adkins *I Left Something Turned On at Home*
25. Sons of the Desert *Whatever Comes First*





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John Anderson's press agent has a saying he's fond of: "John has nine lives. Now he's on number three." It makes sense when you consider some of the monumental contributions Anderson has made to country music's vast lexicon these past couple decades—from his early 80's breakout with hits like "Wild and Blue" and "Swingin'" (his first life), right on through to his early 90's resurgence with "Seminole Wind" and "Money in the Bank" (his second life). Along the way, he's charted a loopy boom-bust career path that resembles the trajectory of a roller coaster. Anderson's been up, down, and back up again, bouncing back and forth between the arenas and what he calls "some of the smallest little honky tonks America had to offer."

These days, ol' Big John is back on the upswing once more. He's on a brand-new label (Mercury), and he's got a brand-new album, *Takin' the Country Back*, produced by Mercury A&R chief Keith Stegall, one of Nashville's hottest producers and the man behind Alan Jackson's amazing success. *Takin' the Country Back* already has people in the music industry bouncing up and down—just like the hillbilly family on their backyard trampoline in "Jump On It," a song included on it. We caught up with Anderson on the road, getting ready to play a casino in St. Croix, Wisconsin. We figured it was a good time to pop him 20 questions about the most recent of his nine musical "lives."

1 John, your new single, "Somebody Slap Me," is out there! Kinda reminds me of a combination of "Swingin'" and "Keep Your Hands to Yourself," that Georgia Satellites song that you covered a while back. It's one of those songs that kinda gets inside your head and gets stuck there.

Wow! I hope so, Bob! I hope you're right! To be honest, I had my reservations about that one at first. I just...ya know—I just didn't wanta



20 Questions with **JOHN ANDERSON**

By Bob Allen

come off silly on this record. But over the years I've learned to pay attention when everybody else around me is sayin'. "Oh, Dad, that could be a hit." Even my daughters!

Bob McDill and Roger Murrah wrote that one, and Keith Stegall was the first to bring it to my attention. It wasn't until we went in and did the basic tracks on it that I knew it was probably on its way to being a single.

And the way the album turned out as a whole, with songs like "Sara" and "Small Town" and "It's a Long Way Back," I'm not concerned with anybody thinkin' it's silly. There's a lot of depth and seriousness on the record too, for folks to get whatever they need from that end.

2 That was the rap on John Anderson a while back, wasn't it? Before you bounced

back with "Straight Tequila Night" and "Seminole Wind," there were people saying, "Aw, he just recorded too many silly songs, that's what did him in."

(Long, ominous silence.) Those people that said that weren't listenin' to the albums. And you gotta remember, some of those choices of puttin' those funny songs out as singles I didn't have anything to do with. That was the powers-that-be doin' their thing.

Myself, I don't think that was the cause at all. I mean, we could go into a story almost as big as a book about the things that I think went wrong—and someday I probably will write a book and mention all of it. (Laughs.)

Naw, I don't think it was just the funny songs. Maybe that was the easiest answer, but there were things behind the scenes that the public never would know that contributed to the slow period we had.

But looking back, I'm glad we went through that down time. I really am. It gave me a whole fresh perspective and a whole new outlook on my music, as well the music business itself. I've got no complaints, and I'm sure happy now.

3 But things were lookin' pretty bleak there for a while before you got your second musical "life" going, weren't they?

Indeed. It did get kinda touch and go. But I made up my mind to work it out, regardless. We finally had to drop our price way down and go back to playing the smallest little honky tonks that America had to offer.

4 What was that like? Tell us about it.

Uh, it was a little depressing. (Laughs.) When you see some of your ol' buddies buyin' new ranches, and there I was, worried about tryin' to save the old one!

5 "Seminole Wind" and "Straight Tequila Night" and "Money in the Bank"

changed all that.

Oh, yeah, they changed a lot of things!

6 Turns out you not only got to keep the ranch, you got to buy a new one, too.

Yeah, we've brought several plots of land adjacent to us.

7 How much land do you have altogether now?

Oh, Lord, probably about 900 acres there at the house. Then we have a hunting preserve that's about an hour away. That's about a thousand acres.

8 Wow! Talk about privacy! You've really got it.

Oh, yeah! From my house you can't see nobody or nothin'. I had my friend Mark Knopfler up at the house one day. He said (*John feigns a stuffy British accent*): "Must be tough living up here in all this crowd!"

9 "Seminole Wind" was a big "impact song" for you, yet it's also a very personal song, isn't it?

Oh, yeah. I first came up with the idea on a trip to Florida. My sister Donna and my brother Tim and I were drivin' down to visit my grandmother, who had been ill for quite a while. She was, like, 95 years old at the time. She was born in Florida, as I was, and as my dad was. Though I've made my home in Tennessee now for the past 25 years, there's a part of Florida I'll always miss.

When I wrote "Seminole Wind," I wasn't concerned about it being a hit—at that point we weren't having any hits! It was just me wanting to write a good song about where I come from, and my closeness with the outdoors and the environment, and how a lot of it's being destroyed. It was a song that I was just proud to write. I never really thought of it as a potential hit until I played it for James Stroud, my producer at the time. I played it for James one day, along with five or six other songs I'd written, and he said, "That Seminole song is one we've gotta do." I sorta went, "Oh, really?"

10 Were there any big changes in the way you approached the sessions for the album, *Takin' the Country Back*, working with Keith Stegall for the first time?

Well, as you know, Bob, havin' freedom to do creatively what a person needs to do in the studio is one of the most essential things in making an album. Especially at the stage I'm at in my career, because at this point I think we've got a pretty good handle on what we should be doin', as far as that goes.

I co-wrote about half the songs this time, but it does seem like as far as choosing [outside] songs, we had a lot more freedom—or let me say it this way: There was less input. I've always had creative freedom. I've maintained that since I co-produced the *Wild & Blue* album back in the early 80's. But this time around I do think we were dealing with less input from various departments within the label. I pretty much chose the songs, and the one thing everybody at Mercury just kept telling me was, "Don't do somethin' you don't wanta do." Which, of course, is what you wanta hear!

11 I guess if you get a hit off it like "Swingin'," you'll be in good shape.

Oh, yeah! Ya know, people still love to hear "Swingin'," man. Whenever I play it, like just last night up here, people still get up outa their chairs! (*Laughs.*) And as long as I see that, I'll keep on playin' it!

12 "Swingin'" is such a quirky song. It always struck me as one of those songs that you could never sit down and "plan" to write.

No, you're right. It just had to happen. "Swingin'" came during a period when me and Lionel Delmore were writing a whole lot of songs, like "Girl at the End of the Bar," "Low Dog Blues," "Mountain High, Valley Low" and "I Danced with a San Antone Rose".... Some of 'em were pretty heavy country songs. And "Swingin'" began maybe as

just an outlet for gettin' light-hearted and havin' fun in the midst of all that seriousness. We were just doin' so much writing back then—hey, that was basically our only jobs! (*Chuckles.*) We had to!

13 *Takin' the Country Back* isn't your only new project. I understand you're also a restaurateur now.

Oh, yeah! John Anderson's Steak House & Barbecue. We're just now gettin' off the ground with it, to be honest. It's up near where I live, up in Smithville, near Center Hill Lake, about 60 miles from Nashville.

14 I understand you helped develop some of the recipes being used there.

I went in at first and did some cookin' to show 'em how I wanted things. But at this point they're gonna have to carry on that part without me. (*Laughs.*) I'm enjoyin' bein' on the bus and doin' shows, now that things have heated up on the road again.

15 Guess anyone looking for sprout sandwiches or sushi on the menu is gonna be out of luck.

Yep, guess so. (*Laughs.*) It's a meat house for sure. But now, in the summer you'll be able to get some vegetables fresh from our gardens at home. But, no, I don't think you'll find any sprouts or avocados.... Well, maybe some avocados on Mexican night!

16 Tell me about your barbecue. Everyone who takes pride in their barbecue seems to have a secret recipe. Do you?

Yeah, actually we do. We have two different kinds of barbecue sauce, our own concoctions. We also have a steak sauce that's made by Joe Spivey, my fiddle player, and his wife. We're hopin' to market these sauces one day, if we can get things off the ground. And, hey, if not, then, you know, we can say we gave it a good try and get back on that ol' bus.

17 I know you pride yourself on your home-grown tomatoes. How are they doing this year?

It's been cool this spring, but so far it looks like they're gonna be fine. Actually, I have people who take care of my garden for me these days. I wish I did have time to do it all myself, because that's something I've always enjoyed. Foolin' with the garden. Even more so, I sure enjoy eatin' from the garden. We probably have more garden planted this year than ever—about two, three acres—on account of the restaurant.

18 So you'll be serving up home-grown vegetables, along with the chicken and steak and such?

Yessir. And this time of year we lean on that ol' garden pretty heavily at home, too. The summer is when the road schedule gets really hectic, so when we are home, me and the boys in the band really like to be able to eat good. Those home-grown vegetables kinda keep us all down to earth.

19 What do you think of this "Nine Lives of John Anderson" theory?

(*Laughs.*) Well, I don't know. I've heard people say that, but I haven't given it a lot of thought. At this point I just try to stay focused on the music ahead of me. I always will love to sing my old hits as long as people love to hear 'em. But it's kinda my objective to try and write another "Swingin'." So, I still feel real comfortable with the whole process, and hope to keep right on with it for a long time.

20 Well, I would guess you're about to be in as much demand on the road as ever. Are you all set for that?

Oh, yeah. We've had some great time off in the early part of this year. I did a whole lot of turkey huntin' and had a great time enjoyin' the woods. So now we really have a nice fresh view as far as goin' out on the road. Every show is really refreshing, and my band has never sounded better. So, yes, indeed! We're good to go.



BR5-49

Searching For a Good Time

This honky tonk rockabilly revivalist band was working the room for tips at Robert's Western World when they struck a chord. Taking old songs and presenting them to a new audience worked. It even got some old-timers excited about them too.

by Bob Allen

The moon is out and all the tour guides and staff at Nashville's Country Music Hall of Fame have long since gone home. It's the witching hour when you imagine that the shadows of Hank Williams and Webb Pierce must creep out into the darkened galleries of the museum to contemplate the exhibits devoted to their earthly glories. Or maybe they even take a spin in the old Packards and silver dollar-studded Pontiacs they once commandeered in this corporeal world.

But tonight country music's holy ghosts have been preempted by the bright lights of a film production crew. The large crew, with its cameras, klieg lights, mike booms and mobile phones,

has taken over the Hall of Fame's exhibit areas and driven all the phantoms back into the shadows. Some footage for a TV promotional campaign for Southwest Airlines touting Nashville as a travel destination is being filmed. The commercial stars the ubiquitous Marty Stuart and his pals, the five members of the hit honky tonk/rockabilly revivalist band, BR5-49.

Stuart and the BR5-49'ers are all lined up for the cameras in front of Webb Pierce's gaudy silver-dollar Pontiac. The guys in BR5-49, decked out in their usual Western ties, baggy 40's suits and fedoras, are all smiles and even a bit giddy over the dizzying chain of events that has, in just a few months, transformed them from a struggling Lower Broadway bar band to the pre-

vailing national poster boys for what's loosely called the new "alternative country" movement.

In between shots, the band members reminisce skeptically about their recent trip to the Grammys. It's a big "celebrity cluster" deal, one of them notes dryly: "A buncha seven-foot-tall models talking about the models they crashed." And they lay plans for the rare-record shopping expeditions they hope to squeeze into a trip to New York City the next day where they'll guest on *Good Morning America*. At one point their manager sidles up to co-frontman Gary



BR5-49'ers "Hawk" Shaw Wilson, "Smilin'" Jay McDowell, Gary Bennett, Chuck Mead and Dan Herron with Marty Stuart at the Hall of Fame.

Bennett and hands him some print-outs pertaining to the band's upcoming musical jaunt to Europe. "Here's your itinerary and hotel information for Paris," he says casually.

"Aw, no problem," Bennett drawls, studying the itinerary as if it was ancient Arabic. "I can pronounce *that!*"

"It's kind of unbelievable," stand-up bass-player "Smilin'" Jay McDowell notes with a slightly dazed look in his eyes as he pauses and gently runs his fingertips across the gleaming hood of Webb Pierce's boat-sized silver-dollar car. "Here we are, gettin' ready to fly up to New York tomorrow to be on *Good Morning America*, and ABC's *In Concert* is putting two of our songs on tomorrow night. We'll reach *six million* people! Ten months ago we were still workin' the room for tips at Robert's Western World!"

Meanwhile, The Nashville Network has also sent a crew down to the Hall of Fame to shoot a piece on the *making* of the Southwest Airlines commercial. (All the news that fits, I guess....) The TNN interviewer asks the BR5-49'ers and Stuart just how they came to be spokespersons for the airline.

"They needed some detectives who knew their way around town—everywhere from the Starlite Club on Dickerson Road to the Opry," replies Stuart, whose extensive private collection of Hank Williams memorabilia, recently loaned to the Hall of Fame, is also featured in the commercial. "And we jumped at the chance—because Southwest has the best peanuts in the business!"

"And they don't have assigned seats—it's every man for himself," quips BR5-49's co-frontman, Chuck Mead.

"Not to mention all the free tickets they're gonna give us," a bandmate chimes in slyly, before he's reminded he's not supposed to say things like that.

In the midst of all this, Jay McDowell stares longingly at Webb Pierce's gleaming silver-dollar 'mobile again and grins. "Maybe we *could* take this out for a spin. Nobody'd mind, would they?"

If you've somehow managed to miss hearing about BR5-49 lately, I'm not sure how. This immensely affable ensemble with its flashy brand of retro-country-rockabilly-boogie revivalism has clearly captured the fancy of the national media to a degree that has thus far considerably outstripped its relatively modest CD sales (the band's debut nine-song EP and their follow-up studio album have sold a little more than a quarter of a million units combined) and even more modest radio airplay. *USA Today*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times Magazine*, even the hip new underground country magazine, *No Depression*, have all jumped on the bandwagon and made treks

down to Robert's on Lower Broadway to champion BR5-49 as the flag bearers of an "insurgent" country movement that includes a stunning array of gifted and stylistically diverse artists—everyone from Kim Richey and Iris DeMent to Junior Brown, The DeRailers and Slobberbone—whose only apparent shared trait is that they don't get played much on country radio.

Admittedly, BR5-49's raw enthusiasm, exuberant showmanship, fierce affection for vintage 50's and 60's country music and sheer devotion to having a good time on stage

are infectious—just ask the patrons who were jamming Robert's every night the band played there, even long before they had a record contract.

On the other hand, BR5-49 is basically working territory that's already been explored by any number of other gifted revivalist bands over the past 20 years—like Asleep at the Wheel, Commander Cody & The Lost Planet Airmen, The Stray Cats, The Kentucky Headhunters and, more recently, Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys. In a nutshell, there's nothing terribly new or original about it all.

Yet BR5-49 (the name is taken from an imaginary phone number in a Junior Samples skit from *Hee How*) has, in a style that is both flashy and hip yet endearing and earnest, recycled the sounds of vintage Webb Pierce, Johnny Paycheck, Mel Tillis, Johnny Horton and Moon Mullican so that this classic music of yesteryear not only sounds fresh, but perhaps even totally new to a younger generation of listeners, many of whom have probably never heard it before, and never would have heard it in its original incarnations. (It's only fair to mention that BR5-49's repertoire also includes quite a few inspired originals written in a similarly retro vein.)

All in all, BR5-49, whose 1996 nine-song EP, *Live From Robert's*, was actually recorded at the Lower Broadway Western wear store-turned-tavern where they got their start, brings such extroverted flair and visual excitement to this music of yesteryear that it's mighty hard not to get pulled in.

Jay McDowell, whose loose-jointed, frenetic approach to playing the stand-up bass verges on performance art, points out that the band's gaudy stage garb and gregarious showmanship was initially a sort of reaction to the stuffy, introverted atmosphere that the various bandmembers came up against in Nashville's "songwriter showcase" scene when they individually hit town in the early 90's, from locales as far-ranging as Moundsville, West Virginia; Lawrence, Kansas; Lafayette, Indiana; and Cougar, Washington.

"We showed up in Nashville around the same time, all looking for the same thing and not finding it, which was people going out and playing music and having fun," McDowell recalls. "I went to so many writer's night showcases that bored me. I saw some great talent, and some not so great talent. But it just seemed like everybody was so serious about selling their songs, rather than having a good time."

McDowell insists that this search for a good time is what initially drew the five members of the band to throw in together in a quite different musical environment: Lower Broadway, which with Tootsie's Orchid Lounge and its dwindling handful of old-time beer joints, still serves as a welcome, unpretentious contrast

to the self-serious musical ambiance of the Bluebird Cafe and other prestigious writer's showcases.

"The only thing that we envisioned when we first got together down at Robert's was that it was gonna be the *funnest* thing we'd ever done," McDowell insists. "It sounds corny, but really the first night that all five of us played together down there, I just saw it takin' off, and so did the people in the bar. There was maybe only a hundred people there that night, but they saw it and all five of us saw it. We were all lookin' at each other thinkin, 'Man, this is really *happening?*' From then on, we realized we were on to something.

"It's made us real believers in something that's bigger than us," he affirms. "The power of the *beat* and the *song*. And when it takes us over, I know that it's taking over the people who are watching us, too."

It wasn't long before word-of-mouth about this hot new Lower Broadway house band made Robert's, a dingy little hole in the wall, one of the most "in" spots in town. "One of the local papers wrote about us, and they referred to the club as 'BR5-49,' and to us as 'the boys,'" McDowell remembers. "It got to where enough people in Nashville were sayin' 'Hey, let's go down to BR5-49!' that they started callin' the building that before they even realized we had a name, or what it meant."

McDowell and his fellow BR5-49'ers still sound a little breathless when they recall some of the famous faces that started turning up at the front tables during their marathon 9 P.M. to 2 A.M. sets at Robert's: Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Tom T. Hall, guitarist Steve Cropper, who tipped the band a hundred bucks....

"The Mavericks were down there from Day One. They even brought the editor of *Billboard* down to see us, and he wrote an article that really got things going—we still thank The Mavericks every chance we get, and we still run into people all across the country who tell us The Mavericks told them about us a year ago. And Marty Stuart's always been good about spreading the word, too.

"One of the greatest compliments we got was one night Tracy Byrd came in with a lady and was dancing and making requests—he started requesting a lot of Western swing. He also tipped us a hundred bucks; then he called back the next day to reserve four tables up front for his whole band. They came down around 9:30 and they all stayed until 2:00. Duane Eddy came in with his wife the last night in April, before we went out on the road. I looked out, and he was playing air guitar along with us! That was a special thrill—I've got every record he ever made.

"The night we'll never forget, though, is when Cowboy Jack Clement and Johnny Gimble and Chet Atkins all came in and sat right up front. We were a little shaken by that, but pretty soon they were out there dancing. They stayed for a couple hours, and Johnny Gimble got up and played with us. Since that night anybody else who'd come in, we might be nervous, but we'd tell ourselves, 'Hey, we played in front of Chet Atkins! We can play in front of anybody!'"

With country radio even opening its doors to them, and their first studio album, *BR5-49*, selling well enough, it hardly seems to put a dent in the band members' fenders that they've man-



At the Ryman for the Arista/TNN *Peace in the Valley* gospel project. BR5-49 joined other acts for the album and TV special.

aged to rattle a few thin-skinned critics and gray-haired purists—those who question any young, good-looking, self-styled hipster band that attempts to retrofit those classic sounds of yesteryear that they hold almost sacred.

"Ninety-nine percent of the time when I read somebody who's taking negative shots at us, they're saying something that's a true fact," McDowell shrugs. "Things like: 'These guys don't play enough new material.' Or, 'They're just reworking oldies and trying to pass that off as a show...' Well, that's written as a slam, but it's factual, and we're okay with that."

This is where I chime in with my two cents worth and make the observation that when a lot of the artists of the 1940's, 50's and 60's, whose music BR5-49 reprises, originally wrote and sang those now-classic songs, they weren't thinking "musical history" or "popular art." In most cases *their* aspirations probably didn't go far beyond just picking up girls, showing off a little and getting the folks on the dance floor to shake their booties.

The mild resistance BR5-49 faces, it seems to me, derives from some of the folks who grew up on this music and revere it in its original, pristine form. The down side is that a lot of these people are now in their 50's or even 60's, and have already lost sight of the spirit of youthful abandon that originally inspired this great music. And nowadays they tend to hear it through muted layers of precious nostalgia and cherished personal history. Thus they sometimes take offense if anybody from a younger generation comes along and tampers with it.

"That makes sense," McDowell readily agrees. "Each of us has a number of songs that are sacred—songs that just sum it up for us. And yours would be different from mine. Like 'Be-Bop-A-Lula' by Gene Vincent. It's been done, and I would not really wanta touch that one. And it's gonna be hard for me to hear anybody else do it and not get past the fact that it's *not* Gene Vincent playing. In that regard I can totally understand that attitude.

"I was on a computer chat line recently, and someone had a complaint about our video of 'Cherokee Boogie,'" he adds. "That we didn't give any reference to the original artist in the video. I didn't argue with that, but I wasn't sure how we could have done that. Moon Mullican wrote it, but showing a picture of him in the video seems like a bit much.

"But I think part of my answer to that would be that the listener can interpret a song in so many ways," McDowell conjectures. "I mean, you can hear a version of a song for ten years, which you love, and you assume it's the original version, only to find out that somebody did it before that.

"What we like to do is give these old songs a fresh hearing and present them to a new audience and get them excited about them. I've also had so many older people—older folks who haven't heard these songs in years, come up to me after a show and say, 'Thank you for playing that Marty Robbins song.' Or 'Thank you for playing that Carl Smith song...' And they'll go on to tell you this long story that's very important to them, about what that song meant to them when they were kids.

"That's really what it's all about," McDowell grins and glances at the silver-dollar 'mobile again. "It's pretty powerful to touch people that way." ■

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BRYAN WHITE

Glances in the Mirror

“Anybody ever tell you ya look like Michael J. Fox?” No doubt. Bryan White, country music’s clean-cut, eager-to-please, fresh-faced new idol of the teen masses, hears stuff like this all the time. But it seems to catch him off guard this morning. (Well, okay, it’s 3 P.M., which *is* morning by road time.) He looks perplexed, then he pushes his slightly mussed and tousled hair out of his eyes and briefly contemplates his own reflection in a mirror on the wall of the back compartment of his tour bus.

“A lotta people have said that, but I don’t see it,” he replies with a bewildered shrug as he scrutinizes his own mug—a mug

which has recently graced the covers of *Sixteen* and any number of other teen magazines, including a new one called *Teen Country Magazine*, which was inspired by White’s immense popularity within the school-age demographic.

For another brief instant White assesses himself in the mirror with a look that borders on self-reproach—as if he’s not quite sure just what to make of what he sees in the looking glass. Then he tosses his head and laughs at the very notion: “I guess anybody who says that never saw me first thing in the morning, did they...I think I look like...like an *idiot*.”

White, of course, knows full well that there are a lot of other

folks—many of them young ladies—who would love to be sharing this pensive gaze into his very private looking glass in his very private mobile quarters.

And, of course, what *they* would see would be anything *but* an idiot.

Yet at the same time, there are any number of older skeptics who've take a fleeting sideways glance into that same mirror and haven't been able to see much of anything beyond White's bright-eyed, deceptively callow-looking teen-magazine exterior: It's what you might call the Dan Quayle syndrome: the assumption that anybody that young and that good-looking can't *really* have a lot going on in there—musical or otherwise.

And even as evidence mounts to the contrary, there's still a lingering tendency within the music industry itself to pigeon-hole White as a novelty of sorts. A latter-day countrified David Cassidy, a 90's-style pretty-boy teen icon whose persona is merely the invention of some cynical record company types who are trying to cash in on all those recent consumer surveys that show the country record-buying public getting younger and younger...and younger.

On top of that, White just doesn't fit the current stereotype at all: no Resistol hat, cowboy boots or hip-hugging Wranglers. He seems a bit more young Pat Boone than junior George Strait.

Even last year when White beat out LeAnn Rimes to win the Country Music Association's annual Horizon Award, there were still a few skeptics who found it tough to believe that White had much going for him beyond a flair for making teenage girls swoon. "Squeaky-clean and red-hot" was how one critic blithely summed up his appeal.

But more recently, many of these hold-outs have had to eat crow and give White a more serious listen as the awards and accolades have come rolling in by the wheelbarrow load.

For starters, both of his albums—*Bryan White* (1994) and *Between Now and Forever* (1996)—were simultaneously certified platinum (for million-plus sales) last November. Along the way, White racked up four consecutive Number One singles—"So Much for Pretending," "Rebecca Lynn," "I'm Not Supposed to Love You Anymore" and "Someone Else's Star." He also walked away with the Academy of Country Music's 1996 Top New Male Vocalist award and The Nashville Network/*Music City News* Male Star of Tomorrow laurels.

As a result of all this, White has graduated from playing clubs to a featured spot on Vince Gill's current national tour.

No less important, White has also proven himself a songwriter of vision and sensitivity well beyond his years—not only with several solid co-written originals on *Between Now and Forever*, but also as co-writer (with Sawyer Brown front man Mark Miller) of "I Don't Believe in Goodbyes," a recent Top Five single for Sawyer Brown.

"A lot of stuff has happened in the past year that I wouldn't have expected in a million years," White insists with a *pinch-me-I'm-dreaming* look as he leans back in a corner seat and stretches his legs out on the cushions. "The reason it surprises me so bad is that there are so many talented artists out there, how in the world did all this stuff happen to me?"

But there's more: White also earned a Grammy nomination for

"Brickyard Boogie," a cut on which he played drums on his friend, hero and mentor Steve Wariner's recent instrumental album, *No More Mr. Nice Guy*.

The earnestness and zeal with which he tackled this latter assignment tells you a lot about White and how he approaches his life and music.

"Steve called us up one day and said he wanted us to play on this track," he says. White, who was joined on "Brickyard Boogie" by several of his bandmembers, pauses and flashes that humble, *can-you-believe-this?* look again. "I still, to this day, don't think Steve realizes what that means to me. And I still, to this day, can't believe I got to play on a Steve Wariner album. Steve basically called out of the blue, and I said, 'Well, Steve, let me check my schedule....'" White laughs. "No! Believe me, I was, like—*jumping* at the chance!"

"The day before the session I practiced drums so hard that when we went in the studio, my hands were practically bleeding. I had blisters on every finger. I was so serious about it—I just didn't want a mess up. It was just incredible. That was just one of the biggest honors in life for me."

As White recounts all this, his tour bus is parked in the bus section of the vast parking lot of the USAir Arena, in Largo, Maryland, a sprawling outer suburb of Washington, D.C. Inside the huge arena there's an afternoon Harlem Globetrotters game in progress, and White's unostentatious-looking, satellite TV-equipped bus is just one of many in the parking lot, which appears to stretch further than some rural counties.

The bus shades are still drawn against the bright afternoon sunlight, and inside White and his band ("They're my friends, we're all a unit; I want them to be noticed as much on stage as I'm noticed," he insists) are still in the process of rolling out of their bunks after an early morning drive from a venue in southern Virginia where White opened for Gill the night before.

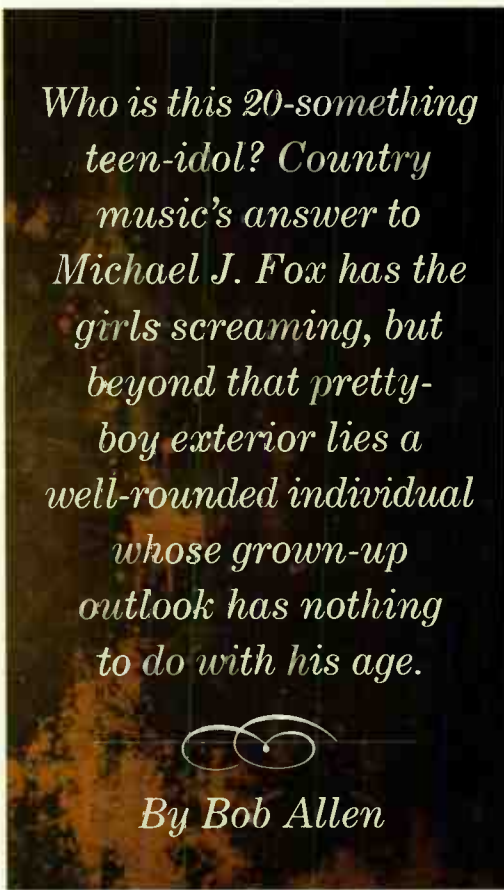
"Excuse this mess," White apologizes sheepishly as he glances around the bus' back room, where nearly every seat and surface top is cluttered with coats, sweaters, duffel bags, CD's, videos and other road gear. (My first impression is that White looks younger

than 23—his actual age—but actually appears older, and a lot less like Michael J. Fox, in the flesh than on his album covers.)

"This bus is kinda like any man's dream," he explains with a wide yawn and an expansive grin. "We got that satellite thing, with millions of channels, and you can just sit there and flip channels all day long. You can watch all the movies you want. We got a stereo. We listen to more music than we watch TV. Everybody's got their own collection that they bring along, and we'll play anything and everything—sometimes till four o'clock in the morning.

"We're all so easy to get along with on this bus—I'll always ride with the band," he adds with visible pride. "That's why we only have one bus. It's more fun—I don't wanna have a bus of my own. That's way too gaudy for me, and I don't like being by myself too often, anyway."

Mind you, all the fun White has on tour—and he obviously has a lot of it—is resolutely of the good, clean variety, with a bold G rating attached to it. The singer has a couple of particularly strict



By Bob Allen

"We're all so easy to get along with on this bus...I'll always ride with the band. I don't like being by myself too often, anyway."

rules that are in force whenever he and his band are traveling: No liquor and no wild women.

Never mind that these are two of the very things that inspired an earlier, rowdier generation of country singers to get into the business in the first place.

Granted, this may seem a little extreme in an era when country stars are still busy bedding and wedding Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders (Tracy Lawrence), Playmates of the Month (Hank Jr.) and former Hooters waitresses (Travis Tritt). But White's decision has to do with his own conservative code of values and the fact that he knows he's become a role model for countless kids across the country—so many that, back when he was touring the nightclubs, he used to turn his sound checks into impromptu shows for fans who were too young to get into the evening's club show.

"Every ice chest on here has Coke or water in it, that's all," he affirms. "I just don't allow [alcohol]. I've seen a lot of people get killed in my life through stuff like that. I just don't see any reason to get into that.

"We'll have guests on the bus—if anybody wants to bring a family member on board or something. But the whole women thing, you know...we're out here to make music, not to get into something that's gonna take our minds off what you're supposed to be doing out here."

It's not that White attempts to shun or make light of all the attention he's getting from the opposite sex these days. Far from it. He just likes to keep it at a comfortable distance.

"That stuff's all a big surprise," he insists, blushing ever so slightly. "But I'm not gonna lie—and I think I can vouch for any guy in the whole U.S.—I'm not gonna complain about it." He grins, ever so puckishly. "Actually I kinda like it just a little bit.

"One of the first times I remember anything like that happening—you know, girls screaming—I think was in an airport," he recalls with a trace of mild disbelief. "Some girls were waiting for me to get off the plane. It really caught me off guard. I asked 'em, 'Are you waitin' on me, or is there somebody else back there?' They said, 'We're waitin' on you. We want your autograph!' I thought, 'Yeah, this is pretty cool! Something's happenin' here!'"

But obviously you're used to all this by now, right, Bryan? And obviously you've always had a similar effect on the women, right?

"Oh, no," he insists. "In high school, I was basically kinda the quiet guy. I knew a lot of people, but I basically wasn't a real social kind of person. Everybody knew I sang and performed, and I think that's the title that most people stuck on my head: Oh, that's *the guy that sings*. I wasn't much of a partyer or that kind of thing."

But you probably never had problems finding a date for the Friday night basketball game, did you?

"I don't really know...," he says with a touch of uneasiness. "It always took me so long to ask somebody out that I just didn't have that many girlfriends in high school. I just didn't have the nerve to just walk up and...."

"Actually," he concedes with another sheepish grin, still talking about girls and dating, "I was so shy I didn't hardly say anything. Come to find out, though," he adds with a flash of revelation, "they are just as nervous as you most of the time.

"No, I don't have a girlfriend," White responds to the obvious question. "I had one about two and a half years ago. Actually, I...uhm...the reason being...."

He fidgets just a little as he mulls this over: "The reason being, I'm just too young. I am just really realizing it. Too young, and I can't have fun if I have a girlfriend. I'd always feel tied down, and I'm not ready for it, don't have time for it. All of the above. I'm not in a hurry."

It's hard to convey just how refreshing these sentiments are coming from a 23-year-old who seems to have the world—and many of its young ladies—potentially at his beck and call. As the conversation continues, it becomes clear that White has both feet planted firmly on the ground when it comes to life's other pressing issues, as well. He comes across as the sort of sincere, intelligent, immensely polite and people-oriented young fellow that nearly every young lady would jump at a chance to show off to her mama, and just about every middle-aged mama would probably love to adopt.

It also becomes clear, as White recites the particulars of his personal history, that his success story has been two generations in the making. Where he is today owes a great deal to the support and encouragement of his parents, Bud and Anita, who are both musicians, and who divorced amicably when he was quite young.

White's mom, who first got him started singing, is a life-long Oklahoma club singer who only recently retired. ("I think she's crazy!" White laughs. "She's a great singer and needs to keep singing.") His dad lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, and sings with his second wife in a duo called Easy Street. White's 21-year-old brother, Daniel, also sings and currently plays sax and drums in a "praise group" called Ninth Hour. "His big idol is Steven Curtis Chapman," says Bryan. White himself was banging on the drums by age five, and took up guitar as a teenager. By the time he hit high school, he was playing and singing in a Christian rock band and a jazz trio in his hometown, Oklahoma City.

But country music was



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Wednesday's child is full of woe,

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where he saw his real future. He remembers being deeply inspired by one artist in particular: Steve Wariner. Once, when White was 15, he went with his grandfather to see Wariner perform locally and ended up writing the singer a two-page letter letting Wariner know what a big fan he was. Then he waited outside Wariner's tour bus and handed it to the first person he saw getting on. White wasn't sure if the letter actually got to Wariner or not. But after the show, Wariner walked offstage and right over to White to shake his hand and thank him for his kind words.

"When Steve played in Oklahoma, I always went to see him," White recalls. "I met him a couple of times, but I was always just one of many standing in line. He claims he remembers me from back then, but I don't know how he could."

"Steve's pretty much been my hero. He's been a huge influence on me as a singer—I've never heard a voice like that. I didn't even realize he was such a great guitar player too till I bought one of his records, then saw him live again. After that, I started learning how to play guitar. He's just been a big influence on me in a lot of ways, and he's just a great guy and has become a great friend—I can honestly say that," White adds with typical humility. "He's sure done a lot for me since I've been in Nashville—he and his wife Karen, both. They're just great people."

Inspired by Wariner's example, and following up on contacts in the Nashville music business ("friends of friends of mine back in Oklahoma"), White borrowed his grandpaw's van, packed up his gear and moved to Nashville almost before the ink was dry on his high school diploma.

"I'd already made a couple of trips up there, and I came home after the second trip and said, 'Y'all, I'm outa here!' I'd made some connections by then and had a window of opportunity that I wasn't sure would open up again. So I wanted to get after it while the gettin' was good."

In a matter of months, White was writing songs for Glen Campbell Music, the same company responsible for launching the career of former fledgling songwriter Alan Jackson.

He made ends meet by moonlighting as a "bar-back bus boy" and occasional stand-in singer at a nightclub called the High Noon Saloon on the outskirts of Nashville. His mom and grandparents back in Oklahoma would send him money, and he cut costs by sharing an apartment with Derek George, then a member of a band called Pearl River, which had fleeting chart success in the early 90's. "Pearl River was happening at the time, and I was going on the road with them every now and then, seeing how it all worked. I'd sell T-shirts for them sometimes. Two of the guys in Pearl River are in my band now."

In recent months, with his career in overdrive, White's thoughts, and efforts, have repeatedly turned back to his hometown. He's worked extensively, hosting a celebrity auction and giving benefit concerts to raise money for the education of children whose parents were killed in the Oklahoma City bombing.

Not surprisingly, being from Oklahoma City himself, it's something that still hits terribly close to home.

"I was playing Wichita Falls, Texas, the day it happened," he recalls. "I tried to call home, but you couldn't get through on the



White at an industry event with longtime idol, Steve Wariner, and, left, at work on the video for "I'm Not Supposed to Love You Anymore" with producer Jeffrey Phillips. Opposite, in California for a private concert at Disneyland. At age 23, the boy's getting around and then some.

lines. My family came to the show that night, and when they showed up, I sure breathed a sigh of relief.

"My grandpaw, who's an auctioneer and owns an antique store, actually did have an appointment down in the Murrah Building the morning of the bombing," he adds. "But fortunately something else came up, and he didn't go."

"From just having talked to some of the survivors, I know they're learning how to cope with it," he points out. "But I just don't want it to fade in America's—in the world's—mind. If we let that happen, it's almost like we're saying, 'Oh, it's no big deal anymore.'"

"That's why I don't want us to forget it. The more people know about it, the more will donate their time and money to helping those kids, all those people, to get back on their feet."

"Every day somebody's life is affected by that, still," White adds, once again sounding introspective and earnest beyond his years. "It's something that's going to affect their lives for the rest of their lives, and I'm trying to do whatever little I can to help them out." ■

FOR **CMSA** MEMBERS ONLY

Homer & Jethro in Legends

A decent sampling of Homer and Jethro's best material is available, the best package being the 20-song *America's Song Butchers: The Weird World of Homer & Jethro* (RE 2130), covering most of their best-known parodies and novelties from 1949 through 1965. Included are "Tennessee Border No. 2," "Baby It's Cold Outside" with June Carter, non-hits like their novelty "The Billboard Song" and still more parodies including "I'm Movin' On No. 2," "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyeballs," "Sixteen Tons" and "The Battle of Kookamonga," and spoofs of pop hits like "You Belong to Me," "Mister Sandman," "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "Misty," (whose arrangement undeniably influenced Ray Stevens' 1975 hit version). The set also includes their well-known "Hart-Burn Motel" and "Let Me Go, Blubber." One never-issued number is included: the novelty "She Was Bitten on the Udder By an Adder" featuring a brilliant mandolin solo by Jethro. *Journal* contributor and Homer & Jethro authority Dave Samuelson compiled and annotated this set. Available on cassette or CD. Regular price \$13.98 cassette, \$17.98 CD. Members' price \$11.98 cassette, \$15.98 CD.

For those without CD players, the German Bear Family label still has available a vinyl LP on the pair, *Homer & Jethro Assault the Rock and Roll Era* (BFX 15281). This CD-song collection concentrates on their spoofs of pop and rock hits with two duplications of the above set. It includes "Houn' Dawg," "Hart-Burn Motel," "Two Tone Shoes," "Rock Boogie," "At The Flop," "Screen Door," "Hernando's Hideaway," "Middle Aged Teenager," "Little Arrows," "She Loves You," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "No Hair Sam," "Winchester Cathedral," "The Ballad of Davy Crew-Cut," "Yaller Rose of Texas, You-All" and "The Battle of Kookamonga." Dave Samuelson again wrote the notes and selected the songs. Available on LP only. Regular price \$21.98. Members' price \$18.98.

To order either of these items, see the How to Order section at the bottom of this page.

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Big News for Members!

There are big changes in store for the CMSA *Newsletter* and the Academy's *Journal*. We'll be merging the two publications together and expanding *The Journal's* scope to cover more of your all-time favorite classic artists. Plus, in honor of our 25th Anniversary, we're offering the combined publication to all of our CMSA members at no extra charge! And, when your subscription comes up for renewal, you'll get the benefits of both the CMSA and the Academy at a deep discount. Just our way of saying thanks for all of your support over the past 25 years. See publisher Russ Barnard's letter on the front page of this issue of the *CMSA Newsletter* for all of the details.

How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 070897N, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, TN 37229. Include \$3.00 postage/handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional.

VOTE

MEMBERS POLL/JULY 1997

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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No
How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____

2. In the boxes below, write the numbers of any of the albums on the Top 25 list in this issue which you bought in the last month.

3. For any albums you bought in the last month not on the Top 25 list, write performer's name and album titles in the space below. (Attach a separate sheet if you need more room.)

Your Choice for Album of the Month

4. List numbers of your five favorites from Top 25 in this issue.

| | |
|--|--|
| Singles (list 5 numbers) | Albums (list 5 numbers) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

Your Participation Requested

5. As noted elsewhere on this page, and in the *Newsletter*, all CMSA members will soon receive our new, combined *Newsletter* and *Journal*, bound into the magazine. This merger presents some great opportunities for your participation! Please list three favorite country music legends—from the early 70's and before—whose histories you would like to read.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6. Please select your favorite era of country music:

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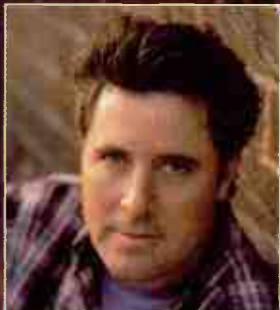
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Fill out poll and mail to: July Poll, *Country Music Magazine*, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880.



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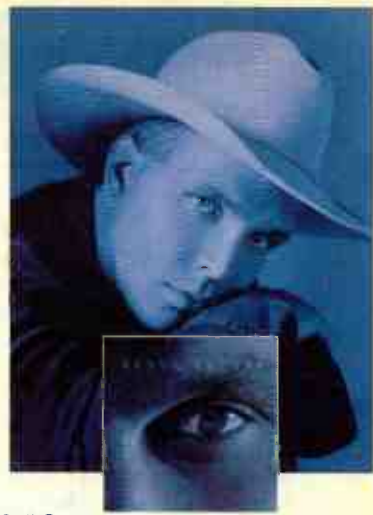
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Ricky Skaggs—Solid Ground (Atlantic) 141-812

Willie Nelson—Stardust (Columbia) 283-887

Bryan White (Asylum) 110-734

Neal McCoy—No Doubt About It (Atlantic) 474-619

David Lee Murphy—Out With A Bang (MCA Nashville) 488-916

Trisha Yearwood—Thinkin' About You (MCA/Nashville) 118-703

Dolly Parton—Something Special (Columbia) 135-822

Wade Hayes—Old Enough To Know Better (DKC Music/Columbia) 117-028

Collin Raye—All I Can Be (Epic) 431-445

Vince Gill—Pocket Full Of Gold (MCA) 418-459

Jeff Wood—Between The Earth And The Stars (Imprint) 182-113

Randy Travis—Always & Forever (Warner Bros.) 356-329

Reba McEntire—Starting Over (MCA Nashville) 168-294

George Strait—Pure Country (MCA) 448-753

Toby Keith (Mercury/Nashville) 458-315

Don Williams—Borrowed Tales (American Harvest) 134-536

Aaron Tippin—Read Between The Lines (RCA) 123-950

Outlaws—The Outlaws (RCA) 155-465

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Steve Kolander—Pieces Of A Puzzle (River North Nashville) 168-351

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Smoky Mountain Players—Smoky Mountain Old Time Favorites (Brentwood) 446-302

Jeff White—The White Album (Rounder) 165-100

The Cache Valley Drifters—White Room (CMH) 157-073

Alison Krauss—Now That I've Found Me (Capitol Nashville) 120-345

The Stars Of Bluegrass Music—Various Artists (CMH) 318-139/398-131

Best Of The New Grass Revival (Capitol Nashville) 476-069

The Osborne Brothers—Greatest Bluegrass Hits (CMH) 185-041

Mila Mason—That's Enough Of That (Atlantic Nashville) 162-024

Ray Stevens—Hum It (MCA Nashville) 182-840

Noel Haggard—One Lifetime (Atlantic Nashville) 170-266

Terri Clark (Mercury/Nashville) 136-291

Tracy Lawrence—Sticks & Stones (Atlantic) 432-211

Alan Jackson—Who I Am (Arista) 486-233

Mindy McCready—Ten Thousand Angels (BNA Records) 155-473

Clay Walker—If I Could Make A Living (Giant) 103-440

Brooks & Dunn—Brand New Man (Arista) 429-969

Wynonna Judd—Wynonna (MCA/Curb) 435-909

Mavericks—Music For All Occasions (MCA Nashville) 168-286

Mandy Barnett (Asylum) 150-441

Reba McEntire—Rumor Has It (MCA) 411-538

Steve Earle—Guitar Town (MCA) 345-793

James Bonamy—What I Live To Do (Epic) 144-279

Alabama—Cheap Seats (RCA) 123-505

Dwight Yoakam—If There Was A Way (Reprise) 414-243

Trisha Yearwood—The Song Remembers When (MCA Nashville) 469-924

Paul Brandt—Calm Before The Storm (Reprise) 159-053

Joe Ely—Honky Tonk Masquerade (MCA Nashville) 175-786

Deryl Dodd—Ona Ride In Vegas (Columbia) 167-619

Doug Supernaw—You Still Got Me (Giant) 141-002

Alan Jackson—Don't Rock The Jukebox (Arista) 420-935

The Mac Wiseman Story (CMH) 270-949

Bluegrass Masters—Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, Jim & Jesse, more (Vanguard) 163-238

Original Dueling Banjos: The Sequel—Various Artists (CMH) 185-173

Bill Monroe—The Country Music Hall Of Fame (MCA) 416-388

Lester Flatt And Earl Scruggs—The Complete Mercury Sessions (Mercury Nashville) 445-163

The Del McCoury Band—The Cold Hard Facts (Rounder) 166-793

Bill Monroe—13 Gems (Columbia/Legacy) 151-142

The Cox Family—Just When You're Thinking It's Over (Asylum) 161-760

Alison Krauss—Now That I've Found Me (Capitol Nashville) 143-016

Rice, Rice, Hillman & Pederson—Out Of The Woodwork (Rounder) 179-457

The Best Of Austin City Limits: Country Music's Finest Hour (Columbia/Legacy) 167-338

Brooks & Dunn—Waitin' On Sundown (Arista Nashville) 102-277

Reba McEntire—It's Your Call (MCA) 450-361

Sammy Kershaw—Politics Religion And Her (Mercury/Nashville) 156-927

George Strait—Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind (MCA) 330-704

Little Texas—Kick A Little (Warner Bros.) 103-457

Don Williams—Flatlands (American Harvest) 173-351

Pam Tillis—All Of This Love (Arista Nashville) 142-687

Collin Raye—Extremes (Epic) 473-025

Mavericks—What A Crying Shame (MCA Nashville) 474-403

Willie Nelson—Spirit (Island) 158-592

Chris LeDoux—Stampecks (Capitol Nashville) 151-563

Kris Kristofferson—Singer/Songwriter (SMS/P) 430-165/390-161

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Tanya Tucker—Can't Run From Yourself (Capitol Nashville) 449-728

Asleep At The Wheel—The Wheel Keeps On Rollin' (Capitol Nashville) 142-141

Bob Woodruff—Desire Road (Imprint) 182-121

David Ball—Thinkin' Problem (Warner Bros.) 487-066

Joe Diffie—Regular Joe (Epic) 431-262

Martina McBride—The Way That I Am (RCA) 123-760

Billy Ray Cyrus—Trail Of Tears (Mercury) 164-632

Billy Dean—It's What I Do (Capitol Nashville) 153-965

Jeff Foxworthy—Crank It Up—The Music Album (Warner Bros.) 164-806

McBride & The Ride—Sacred Ground (MCA) 440-446

Suzy Bogguss—Give Me Some Wheels (Capitol Nashville) 161-729

Patty Loveless—When Fallen Angels Fly (Epic) 101-048

Elvis Presley—Great Country Songs (RCA) 169-391

Joe Ely (MCA Nashville) 175-794

Marty Stuart—Honky Tonkin's What I Do Best (MCA) 176-263

Delbert McClinton—Honky Tonk 'N' Blues (MCA Nashville) 475-970

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Alabama—In Pictures (RCA) 137-018

Ray Price—American Originals (Columbia) 384-453

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Rodney Crowell—Diamonds And Dirt (Columbia) 366-211

Tracy Lawrence—Albion (Atlantic) 456-558

John Berry (Capitol Nashville) 463-265

Steve Wariner—No More Mr. Nice Guy (Arista Nashville) 151-167

Sammy Kershaw—Haunted Heart (Mercury/Nashville) 456-541

Vern Gosdin—Chiseled In Stone (Columbia) 365-155

Texas Tornados—4 Aces (Reprise) 161-539

Freddy Fender Collection (Reprise) 430-934

Clay Walker (Giant) 467-449

Lee Greenwood—American Patriot (Capitol Nashville) 438-580

Charlie Rich—Behind Closed Doors (Epic) 135-657

Mark Chesnut—What A Way To Live (Decca) 103-283

Diamond Rio—IV (Arista Nashville) 149-146

Bryan White—Between Now & Forever (Asylum) 151-357

Rick Trevino—Looking For The Light (Columbia) 120-451

NASCAR: Runnin' Wide Open—Featuring Joe Diffie, Jeff Foxworthy, Collin Raye, more. (Columbia) 122-762

Vince Gill—When I Call Your Name (MCA) 402-867

Tracy Byrd—No Ordinary Man (MCA) 484-758

Mark Chesnut—Longnecks And Short Stones (MCA) 440-487

George Jones—The Bradley Barn Sessions (MCA Nashville) 110-999

Alabama—American Pride (RCA) 123-497



Trisha Yearwood—Everybody Knows (MCA Nashville) 168-591

Travis Tritt—The Restless Kind (Warner Bros.) 164-822

Travis Tritt—Ten Feet Tall And Bulletproof (Warner Bros.) 480-244

The Highwaymen—The Road Goes On Forever (Capitol Nashville) 122-952

Travis Tritt—Country Club (Warner Bros.) 405-068

Diamond Rio—Love A Little Stronger (Arista) 487-611

NASCAR—Hotter Than Asphalt—Tracy Lawrence, Alabama, Little Texas, more. (Columbia) 147-850

John Michael Montgomery—Kickin' It Up (Atlantic) 473-157

Lorrie Morgan—Something In Red (BNA) 123-281

Ty England—Two Ways To Fall (RCA/Novus) 165-696

Lorrie Morgan—Greater Need (BNA Records) 157-859

Joe Diffie—Honky Tonk Attitude (Epic) 454-629

Joe Ely—Letter To Laredo (MCA) 173-286

Dwight Yoakam—This Time (Reprise) 456-913

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Letters

Patty Loveless and Then Some

Just received my May/June issue of your great magazine. I really enjoyed the article on Patty Loveless, and I loved the centerfold photo and info on Brooks & Dunn! Also, the review of Tanya Tucker's new album, *Complicated*, was right on the money. This is an excellent album. I've been a fan of Tanya Tucker since "Delta Dawn," when she was 13 and I was 11.

I also loved the article and photo of David Lee Murphy in the January/February issue. I first became a fan of his when I saw his video, "The Road You Leave Behind," on CMT. Since then I've seen all his videos, and I saw him on *Today's Country* on TNN. Great show!

Keep up the great work! CMM is the best.

Charlotte Palmer
Longmont, Colorado

Patty So Pretty, and More

Just a letter to say thanks so very much for putting such a pretty picture of Miss Patty Loveless on the front of the magazine (May/June). Loved all the pictures of Patty, also liked the story on her. Enjoyed reading the People section and all the pictures. Enjoyed reading the *Newsletter*; loved the picture in there of the late Marty Robbins.

Loved the big pull-out picture of Brooks & Dunn. Would like to see one on Loretta Lynn, Vern Gosdin and Patty Loveless.

Thanks for the story on the late Charlie Rich. Loved the two pictures of Charlie. Looking to see some wedding pictures of Tracy Lawrence with his new bride and Travis Tritt with his. Always a reader,

Barbara Estes
Walls, Mississippi

Pantin' for Patty

I was very interested to see the letter in your March/April issue asking why you had not put Patty Loveless on the cover of your magazine. My sentiments exactly. Patty has finally gotten some of the awards she has so long deserved, yet you and so many others, notably TNN, still seem to ignore her. Your answer to the letter was "stay tuned." Couple years ago, you said "very soon."

John Burt
Beaufort, North Carolina
So how're we doing now?—Ed.



Vince, Vince and Then Some

Recently I obtained a copy of *Country Music Magazine* (September/October 1993) featuring my favorite country artist, Vince Gill, and I immediately mailed in one of the subscription cards inside the publication. A few weeks later I received the first copy of my subscription. Lo and behold, to my delight and amazement, Vince Gill was again featured on the cover (March/April 1997). Now you tell me, is that fate or not? I knew then and there that I had chosen the right publication to read about country artists.

After being so elated with my first

Help Us Celebrate Our 25th Anniversary

September of this year marks the 25th Anniversary of our first issue. Help us celebrate. Drop us a note about country music or *Country Music Magazine*. Don't just pat us on the back. Of course, we like that, but we'd rather hear about some specific memory important to you from your experience with country music or CMM. We'll publish a special Letters section in our Anniversary Issue. Write to: 25th Anniversary Letters, Country Music Magazine, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880.

copy. I then wondered how much good reading I had missed. I regretted I did not have the opportunity to subscribe to CMM before now.

Keep my subscription coming—for 25 more years! Happy 25th Anniversary.

M. Turner
Silver Spring, Maryland

Vince and CMM

Just a line to let you know that you publish the best publication about country music. I live in the Bronx, and country info is hard to come by.

I loved your cover feature in the March/April issue on Vince....he is one of my favorites. However, I would like to know what is going on with Radney Foster. It's been two years too long since his excellent *Labor of Love*, and I'd like to know what this talented, hunky Texan is doing. Also, how about an updated story on the two Tracys—Lawrence and Byrd. Keep up the great job!

Toni Sia
Bronx, New York

Thoughts on Vince

I just read the article in your March/April issue on Vince Gill. What a nice, wonderful man. All that talent, good looks, and most of all a kind, generous person. He is my favorite singer. I really like everything about him.

Lois Gordon
Uniontown, Ohio

Gill, Mattea and More

Bob Allen's story on superstar Vince Gill in the March/April issue was great. He covered so many different phases in the life of Mr. Gill. His review of Kathy Mattea in the same issue was also very good. *Country Music Magazine* has it all—good stories, good reviews, good photos. Thanks for a great magazine.

Benilla Chavez
Evansville, Indiana

From Gill to Joss and Beyond

Thank you for the update on Vince Gill in the March/April issue. He is much more than a haircut. I sure like his singing and his sense of humor.

I also liked your HighTone Records article in the January/February issue. I would love to see more like it on Little Dog Records, Rounder Records and Sugar Hill Records. I especially like Scott

Joss of Little Dog Records and his album, *Souvenirs*. I'd like to see Scott get more publicity and recognition. The only reason I know about him is that I am a Dwight Yoakam fan, and Scott is Dwight's fiddle player.

By the way, thank you for mentioning *Sling Blade*, Hazel (People section, March/April issue). It's the best movie I've seen in a long, long time.

Katie Moore
Los Angeles, California

Bingo on Neal McCoy

Thanks to Bob Allen for writing and you for publishing the best article I have ever read about Neal McCoy (May/June 1997). I have read quite a few pieces on him, but nothing that was this informative and well-written. I have seen his live performances, and he does as he so aptly puts it: "works his butt off." It would have been such a waste if he had not won that singing contest and been helped along by my only other favorite entertainer—Charley Pride.

Thanks again. I do like your magazine.
Jeanette Strobel
Houston, Texas

Family Ramblin' on Neal McCoy

Thank you for the article on Neal McCoy in your May/June issue. I would enjoy hearing more about Neal in the future, not because he's my cousin, but because he needs more recognition (our grandfathers were brothers).

In your article, you spelled his real name as Hubert Neal McGauhey Jr. The correct spelling is McGaughey. My dad asked him at a rodeo a couple of years ago in Jacksonville, Texas (his hometown), why he changed his name, and Neal said because he never learned to spell it until he was 18 years old. He must have never learned! Ha!

I enjoy reading your magazine and also would like to read more on George Strait, another favorite of mine.

Lois McGaughey Nelson
Grand Saline, Texas

Clappin' for K.T.

Thank you for the feature on K.T. Oslin in your May/June issue. Patrick Carr is a great writer and always makes his writing interesting and a pleasure to read. This feature is no exception. I must point out that the album was released last October, which makes this feature a bit late, don't you think? Also, next time please keep the picture away from the staples.

Marilyn A. Hilb
Arlington Heights, Illinois
Better late than never!—Ed.

From Van Zandt to Vern Gosdin

Regarding your article in the May/June issue, "Remembering a Troubadour," there is no doubt that Townes Van Zandt

was one of the greats, and in his spirit I would like to say that many of the great writers and vocalists, as well as musicians, stay around unnoticed and without much deserved recognition or fanfare.

I would like to personally place Vern Gosdin at the top of this list. Why doesn't he get the recognition he so richly deserves? He is the quintessential "Troubadour"! I'm sure Mr. Van Zandt is looking down and shaking his head about it now.

Stacey Jackson
Ville Platte, Louisiana

Chattin' with Chesnutt

Thank you for the article in the March/April issue on Mark Chesnutt. I really appreciate his feelings on how hard the music business is these days. A lot of songs don't get played and a lot of great artists don't get played in the companies' chase of the almighty dollar.

Just think of it—George Jones had some great songs this year, and they don't even get played—just one of which was "The Lone Ranger."

I have every one of Mark Chesnutt's tapes because the "whole" tape is worth listening to. His music really hits home. Whether he sells millions or not, whether he gets awards or not, he will be a country music star with many of us forever. Country music fans don't forget their music makers just because they don't get airplay, or magazine centerfolds. We keep on listening to them, and looking for news of them forever. It's so discouraging when we cannot find out how they're doing now.

To Mark, thanks for the interview. I and others will continue to buy your music and read your interviews. Please keep it up. The only way to change things is to keep at it, and we'll keep complaining on our end about airplay, too. Waylon changed things by butting the system; let's all help out by asking stations to play what we want to hear and asking magazines to print what we want to read. After all, we put up the money—if we didn't buy tapes, CD's and magazines, where would all those companies be? Filing Chapter 11?

Sheila Richardson
Turner, Maine

Concert-Goers for Chesnutt

Thank you so much for the great article on Mark Chesnutt in your March/April issue. If you have never heard him, you don't know what you have missed. In concert, it's just Mark and his band—great music, no big production, no fireworks or laser lights, no gimmicks. Just pure country music and entertainment.

We (my daughter and myself) travel from Wisconsin to anywhere. We each have been to 40-plus concerts in about 12-15 states. Our longest trip was 3600 miles round-trip. We do this four-five times a



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1. Why did Tanya Tucker call her autobiography *Nickel Dreams*?
2. Name the Nashville establishment where BR5-49 first played.
3. What is the title of John Anderson's brand new album?
4. What recent Sawyer Brown hit did Bryan White co-write?
5. How old was Rick Trevino when he began learning piano?
6. Three acts in Record Reviews had parents who were also musicians. Which ones?
7. How much horsepower is Chevy's S-10 ZR2 with the optional V6 capable of?

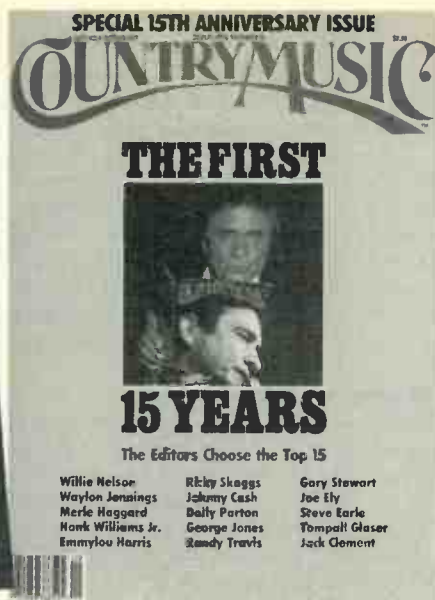
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Bonnie and Missi Boehm
West Bend, Wisconsin

A Story About Faron Young

I was deeply saddened to hear of Faron Young's death last December. Thank you for your tribute to him, in your March/April issue. I, like some of your other readers, feel that Faron did not receive the recognition that he so richly deserved.

I first met Faron in the 50's, when, along with my ex-husband, I ran a restaurant in Amarillo, Texas. I ran the night shift, and the club where these entertainers played was across the street from our business. We were one of the only restaurants that was open after the club closed, so everyone, including the entertainers, came in to eat. Faron was young, about my age, enthusiastic, just thrilled to be out there singing his heart out and that the people loved him. I think this was always important to Faron, to be loved by the public. He was a flirt, always happy. And, he didn't always mean to cause trouble by his flirting, he was just being friendly and having fun. They were in one night, and I walked up to the table to take their order. Faron very briefly touched me on the arm, below the elbow, and said something like, "Hey, good to see you." My then husband happened to be in the restaurant, and immediately came over and ordered Faron to leave and *not come back*. From then on, when Faron was in town, he would come to the

door, throw in a hat, to see if it was safe to enter. We had so many good laughs over this, and even in later years, I heard him relate that innocent story so many times.

I had some limited communication with Faron in his last years. He felt shunned by his fans and by the music industry and mostly by the radio stations. I can understand the stand the radio stations take, but what I don't understand is when we, as listeners, call in and request a particular song from the past, we rarely get to hear it. It's like they have either destroyed these older recordings or pushed them in the background. I don't think this is right, as I know a lot of younger people who loved Faron Young, as well as others of the past. It's important that these artists are not forgotten. They are a part of our history, our past. Their songs are *still* some of the best music we have today.

Kathy Nix
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Black Birds and Centerfolds

Your rating just went sky-high with this reader for enhancing your March/April issue with that fabulous centerfold and "Facts..." on Ty Herndon! I've always rated your magazine tops, but lately was becoming annoyed that this gifted and popular artist hadn't been featured in an article or on your cover. Now you've reinforced my faith in you, and I'm here, munching on crow, to say "Thank you!"

Last fall my husband and I vacationed in Virginia Beach, where we attended one of Ty's concerts—an experience we will never forget! Earlier in the day, while strolling the Beach near the concert area, we had a chance meeting with him! We found ourselves talking with exactly the warm, genuine person we knew he would be, and he gave me a wonderful hug that

my husband captured on film. (Talk about "Living in a Moment"!) That photo is now displayed in my office at the high school where I work—and where Ty has fans among our students and staff. When they admire his picture, I remind them all, "He's just as nice as he looks!"

So thanks again for putting my favorite star in your centerfold spotlight. That poster will be added to my office display (and if any part of this letter should be published, it will be clipped beside it).

Donna Dicker
Lee, Maine

Remembering Bill Monroe

Mrs. Smith:

In the November/December 1996 issue of *Country Music Magazine*, in the People section, you said that you could not write an obit for Bill Monroe.

What better obit could a man receive than what you wrote? Fancy words and long, drawn-out speeches do not always do a man honor, but to be known as a true friend is the greatest honor that could be bestowed on an individual. Mr. Bill will long be remembered by musicians around the world, and he will forever be in the Hall of Fame. But the greatest Hall of Fame that a man can be in is the heart of those who loved him.

His kindness to you will be passed down from your children to their children. Each time they visit the Hall of Fame and see his display, their beautiful memories of his kindness will resurface. You did him more honor than all of the tribute shows that could be put on TV.

As a lover of bluegrass music and a lifelong admirer of Mr. Bill, I thank you. Keep up the good work.

Charles FeBuary
Woodbine, Georgia

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Hazel Has It Right

Ms. Smith:

I really enjoy reading your "People" pages each issue; and since I saw you tonight on TNN's *Today's Country*, I now know who I'm reading! I had to agree completely with your comments regarding the latest tasteless incident involving Tanya Tucker. As you say, the other ladies of Nashville didn't have this sort of thing in mind when they brought country music up to where it is today, and it isn't necessary. Nor is it a good thing. You know, I have to wonder—does Tanya intend to grow up before her children do?

Keep your great columns coming! You have faithful readers out here!

Lucille VanDusen

Wrightstown, New Jersey

For more on Tanya, see cover story.—Ed.

Support BRC

Thanks for the mention of Billy Ray Cyrus and the money he donated in *People* in the March/April issue. We fans certainly *do* continue to support this deserving artist! But, what about some support from country *radio* and more of the country music industry.

Myrene Northey

Kennewick, Washington

Soccer Mom Bites Back

The worst kind of critic is a critic who thinks being vicious is funny. That's the impression I got of Rich Kienzle from reading your May/June 1997 issue.

It's one thing to honestly pan an album, but even with work Mr. Kienzle deems fit to listen to, such as Sara Evans' *Three Chords and the Truth* (Record Reviews), he goes after other artists and in this case their listeners, saying of Faith Hill "consistently mediocre" and Trisha Yearwood "making music for soccer moms."

I am a proud soccer mom, Mr. Kienzle. I am also a professional woman who is definitely intelligent enough to pick quality music to listen to, and for you to suggest otherwise is an "amazing bit of audacity" (your term used to describe another artist).

Melissa Jackson

Eugene, Oregon

Rutland's for Kersh

To answer Rich Kienzle's question regarding David Kersh and his *Goodnight Sweetheart* album (Record Reviews, May/June issue), "Is there any substance behind all this hype?" Yes!

In the city of Rutland, Vermont, David Kersh has blessed us not once but twice with his presence. I was very fortunate to see him both times, and I'm looking forward to his *third* visit in September. If that's not enough, maybe Mr. Kienzle should come to Vermont and look at how many copies of *Goodnight Sweetheart* he can find on the shelves. It's not a real easy

thing to find. If no one else wants David Kersh, just send him back to Vermont!

Tammy Jordan
Rutland, Vermont

Searchin' for Sylvia

I read your review on a new CD by Sylvia Hutton in Record Reviews in the March/April issue. The title of the CD was *The Real Story*.

I'm a big fan of Sylvia's and was wondering if you could give me the address of the record company that produced it (Red Pony). I tried a couple of record places in Erie, Pennsylvania, where I live, and they say their suppliers do not carry this CD. Thank you. By the way, I love *Country Music Magazine*.

Jim Lyons

North East, Pennsylvania

Red Pony Records, P.O. Box 158467,
Nashville, TN 37215-8467.—Ed.

Mentioning DeMent

Thanks for the review of Iris DeMent's *The Way I Should* in the March/April issue. I've had the great pleasure of seeing Iris in concert twice, and I got to meet her last time. All her albums are top quality, and she is one of the best songwriters ever. As usual, country radio is too busy playing fluff to notice a real talent like Iris. I hope you will do an article on her real soon. Iris DeMent Fan Club, P.O. Box 28856, Gladstone, Missouri 64188. Concert line 1-816-436-1997.

Michael Merandino

Salem, Massachusetts

Gabbin' 'Bout Gilmore

I have to thank Rich Kienzle for his review of Jimmie Dale Gilmore's new album in Record Reviews in the March/April issue. My only question is: Why did it take him so long to get around to it? Better late than never. I'm still waiting for an article or interview, though. Most of us have about given up on anyone paying any attention to him and others of the same like Butch Hancock, Joe Ely, Guy Clark, and Townes has to die to get mentioned.

Oh, well, such is life. I'm just so glad that someone is listening to JDG's music. His shows are sold out every time I go. Looking forward to more on this man with the beautiful voice. As for Hazel Smith and her hatted hunks, how long has it been since she's seen Jimmie?

La Shanda Epp

Jonesboro, Georgia

Yoakam on Celluloid

I recently went to see the movie *Sling Blade* with our very own Dwight Yoakam. It was in an indoor theater. Dwight was super as Doyle. If he wasn't my main man, I would have hated him. Thank goodness he was only playing the part. You should have heard the com-

ments from people on his role. He has earned the right to star in movies after his portrayal of Doyle. I just hope he does not quit singing and going on tour. Can't wait for a new album. I am wearing the other ones out.

Edith Vuxta

Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Another Elvis Cousin

Noting that numerous Elvis memoirs have been penned, Rich Kienzle says, "Still, as it turns out, Elvis' cousins haven't been heard from—until now" (Essential Collector, May/June issue). That is not quite correct. The memoir by Gene Smith, Elvis' first cousin, *Elvis's Man Friday*, for which I wrote the introduction, was published in 1994 by Light of Day Publishers, Nashville. Best wishes,

Peter Nazareth

University of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

Cash 'n' Carr

Nice work and you got it, hanging out with John Cash (Final Note, March/April issue). Remember the first time I heard him on the radio. I was in the Navy and stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, 1954-58. It was a very exciting new sound, Luther Perkins and Johnny Cash.

I'm writing because you mentioned Dick Curless, and I thought nobody remembered him but us old Maine-e-acts. I got to meet him through friends of his. I saw him perform many times. It would have been in the early 60's, after he left the Buck Owens outfit. I always felt he never got his due as an outstanding artist. What a voice!

So thanks for remembering and mentioning the great Dick Curless.

Cal West

Pinos Altos, New Mexico

Washington 'n' Carr

Kudos to Patrick Carr for his recent Final Note (March/April) mention of blues/pop/jazz vocalist Dinah Washington. Although the closest Ms. Washington ever got to singing country was her cover (of Tony Bennett's cover) of "Cold, Cold Heart," it is gratifying to know, over 30 years after her passing, that her distinctive talents are appreciated by one of country music's most passionate and articulate journalists.

Michael Mill

Birmingham, Alabama

Reader Digs Coverage

Thank you for covering older artists and artists on smaller independent labels. I've given up listening to the prepackaged pablum on radio. Whenever I get a new issue of your magazine, I turn to Record Reviews and Buried Treasures and Patrick Carr's column first. I've especially enjoyed the articles on Dead Reck-

oning (March/April 1996) and HighTone (January/February 1997) record labels. Could you please consider writing more articles about other small independent labels such as Justice, Little Dog, Watermelon, etc.? I saw a wonderful group called Freakwater perform this summer here in Toronto...their albums are on a small Chicago label called Thrill Jockey, and they have the most beautiful harmonies.

Thank you for opening my ears (and wallet!) to some of the incredible music being made outside of the "mainstream."

Anne MacLellan
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Breath of Fresh Air

I had to write. I couldn't help it. Nowadays all I have to do is skim through the quote unquote "country" CD racks, radio stations and magazine stands, and I begin to wonder once again why I became a country fan in the first place. Wait, did I say "magazine stands"? Ahh, *your* magazine remains a breath of fresh air in the currently stifling "country" format. You continue to let all who complain about the state of "country" these days know about artists like Dale Watson, The Derailers and many others. Keep up the good (great) work.

Li Patterson
Red City, Michigan

The Other Side of the Coin

This is a letter filled with disgust. Why disgust, you ask? I'm disgusted at the way that you constantly blow it. The magazine that some tout as the number one source of information on the country music industry has continually left me feeling very misled by those who have done the touting.

I'm at a loss as to why CMM has attained this reputation. The "juicy," "exclusive" gossip that Hazel Smith brings us isn't of any value in most instances. Hazel should do a lot less bragging about all the movers and shakers she schmoozes with and get to the meat of what's happening of real interest in the lives of our Music City favorites.

I'm also more than slightly troubled by the contradictory stance on the music you comment about. To listen to your staff critics, the country music apocalypse is upon us, and all the artists who get country radio airplay except for Alan Jackson, the self-proclaimed Messiah of the return to "traditional country," are perpetuating the demise of the musical genre. He can be put up on this pedestal of greatness for doing alcohol-drenched, mind-numbing lyrics from George Jones' "Tall, Tall Trees" and Tom T. Hall's "Little Bitty" as this purveyor of "traditional country," but you on the other turn of the quarter blast Billy Ray Cyrus for doing a supposed blatant rip-off of Bill Monroe on "Trail of

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Tears." Rip off of Bill Monroe? Give Billy Ray some credit for doing his most traditional country of his life and doing it well. If your critics don't stop using the "reviews" to vent their own personal vendettas and are not able to critique the music itself, your subscription department is going to be a barren wasteland as more and readers look for what they want to read.

Scott Budzien
St. Francis, Wisconsin

Music Makes Memories

I really enjoy your magazine. I was surprised in that it isn't published there in Nashville. I get a kick out of how uptight some of your readers get over their favorite entertainer. I love the Grand Ole Opry and its great entertainers, both young and old. Sure have some good new talent among the young folks.

My husband and I were treated to a trip to Opryland in November. The hotel, park, all of it was just great. I was in a wheel chair, but we had a beautiful time. We had only been back one night, and my husband had a heart attack and was gone. I made some beautiful pictures while there. I try to remember the good time there and the good memories of the 47 years we had together.

I recall when I was growing up, Grand Ole Opry was a part of our life. We looked forward to Saturday night. My dad never went to bed until the Grand Ole Opry signed off on radio. I only regret that he never lived to at least see it on TV.

Keep up the good work.

Margie Galletta
Savannah, Georgia

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

COUNTRY LEGENDS, BLUEGRASS, COWBOY SONGS, COUNTRY WOMEN, COUNTRY ROCK: SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN NEW CD/BOOK SERIES

The new Life, Times & Music series from Friedman/Fairfax features five different volumes of interest to country fans. Each set includes a extra-length CD and an informative book, lavishly illustrated with both color and black-and-white photos. Each volume contains between 12 and 22 all-time classic songs, digitally remastered for Compact Disc. The books contain biographical sketches about each artist featured, and make these sets come alive.



Country contains 22 of the all-time best country songs by some of country's all-time best performers: "Can the Circle Be Unbroken"/The Original Carter Family, "Wabash Cannonball"/Roy Acuff, "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart"/Patsy Montana, "Back in the Saddle Again"/Gene Autry, "New San Antonio Rose"/Bob Wills, "Blue Moon of Kentucky"/Bill Monroe, "Country Boy"/Little Jimmy Dickens, "If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time"/Lefty Frizzell, "Release Me"/Ray Price, "Walkin' After Midnight"/Patsy Cline, "The Battle of New Orleans"/Johnny Horton, "El Paso"/Marty Robbins, "Tis Sweet to Be Remembered"/Flatt & Scruggs, "Flowers on the Wall"/The Statler Brothers, "Stand By Your Man"/Tammy Wynette, "Folsom Prison Blues"/Johnny Cash, "Restless"/Carl Perkins, "Me and Bobby McGee"/Kris Kristofferson, "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain"/Willie Nelson, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia"/Charlie Daniels, "He Stopped Loving Her Today"/George Jones and "Are the Good Times Really Over"/Merle Haggard. **Country** is Item #BD-01, \$16.98.

Women of Country spotlights top country females from the 1950's right up to today. Among the 18 best-loved hits included here are: "Keep on the Sunny Side"/The Carter Family, "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart"/Patsy Montana, "When My Blue Moon Turns to Gold Again"/Cindy Walker, "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels"/Kitty Wells, "Lonely Street"/Patsy Cline, "Let's Have a Party"/Wanda Jackson, "I'm Sorry"/Brenda Lee, "Honky Tonk Girl"/Loretta Lynn, "Here Comes My Baby Back Again"/Dottie West, "Til I Get It

Right"/Tammy Wynette, "Rose Garden"/Lynn Anderson, "The Midnight Oil"/Barbara Mandrell, "I Will Always Love You"/Dolly Parton, "If I Could Win Your Love"/Emmylou Harris, "You Needed Me"/Anne Murray, "Seven Year Ache"/Rosanne Cash, "Don't Tell Me What to Do"/Pam Tillis, and "This Shirt"/Mary Chapin Carpenter. **Women of Country** is Item #BD-02, \$16.98.

Bluegrass provides 12 examples of the music at its purest. Featured on this set are: "Kentucky Waltz"/Bill Monroe, "My Lord Keeps a Record"/Carl Story and The Rambling Mountaineers, "I Know You're Still Married (But I Love You Still)"/Reno & Smiley, "Jimmy Brown the Newsboy"/Mac Wiseman, "Rank Stranger"/The Stanley Brothers, "Salty Dog Blues"/Flatt & Scruggs, "Sunnyside of the Mountain"/Jimmy Martin and The Sunny Mountain Boys, "Memphis"/Jim & Jesse, "Fox on the Run"/Bill Emerson and Cliff Waldron, "Bringing Mary Home"/The Country Gentlemen, "Rocky Top"/The Osborne Brothers" and "Go My Way"/Front Porch String Band. **Bluegrass** is Item #BD-03, \$16.98.

Legendary Singing Cowboys brings back memories of the Old West, Saturday matinees, and cowboy heroes in its 12 historic tracks: "Ridin' Down the Canyon"/Gene Autry and Smiley Burnette, "Mama Don't Allow No Music"/Smiley Burnette, "A-Riding Old Paint"/Tex Ritter, "Roving Cowboy"/Sons of the Pioneers, "Dust"/Roy Rogers, "Back in the Saddle Again"/Ray Whitley and His Six-Bar Cowboys, "Drifting"/Smith Ballew, "I'm a Happy Cowboy"/Herb Jeffries, "On the Banks of the Sunny San Juan"/Eddie Dean, "Along the Santa Fe Trail"/Jimmy Wakely, "Cimarron"/Johnny Bond and "Cowpoke"/Rex Allen. **Legendary Singing Cowboys** is Item #BD-04, \$16.98.

Southern Fried Rock focuses on the rowdy side, with 12 thundering country-rock classics: "Sweet Home Alabama"/Lynyrd Skynyrd, "There Goes Another Love Song"/The Outlaws, "Can't You See"/The Marshall Tucker Band, "Don't Misunderstand Me"/Rossington Collins Band, "Trudy"/Charlie Daniels Band, "Street Corner Serenade"/Wet Willie, "Doraville"/Atlanta Rhythm Section, "Dixie Chicken"/Little Feat, "Flirtin' with Disaster"/Molly Hatchet, "Fooled Around and Fell in Love"/Elvin Bishop, "I'm No Angel"/Greg Allman Band, and "Tuff Enuff"/Fabulous Thunderbirds. **Southern Fried Rock** is Item #BD-05, \$16.98.



HOT PRODUCT! ALAN JACKSON BIOGRAPHY: GONE COUNTRY

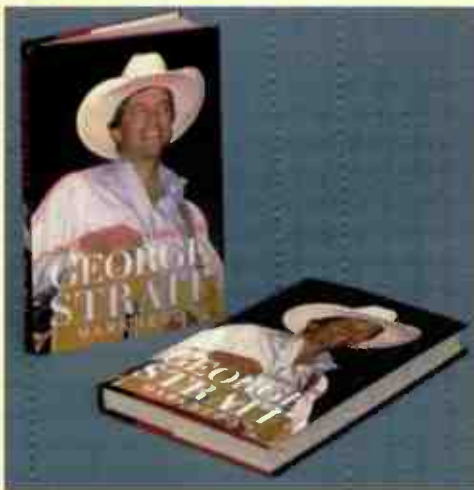
Loaded with more than 100 full-color and black-and-white photographs, **Alan Jackson: Gone Country** is a celebration of this great vocalist and an insightful look at his life and music. It examines his hardscrabble roots, when his family lived in a converted toolshed that his grandfather built for his parents. After working as a carpenter, Jackson started playing small clubs and bars in a band called The Strayhorns. Bestselling author Mark Bego also explores Jackson's big breakthrough in the 90's, his rise to the top of the country charts, his philosophies about music, his inspirations and his off-stage pastimes. Jackson's life has been as vivid and unusual as any country lyric. **Alan Jackson: Gone Country** is a candid but affectionate account of the popular singer's life and music. Ask for Item #B5A, \$19.95.



TOP COUNTRY STARS SING GOSPEL

There was a time in country music's past when the stars would record albums of Gospel favorites, and those days have returned with **Peace In the Valley**, a collection of spiritual anthems—both old and new—from the top stars of Arista Records. Artists included here are Alan Jackson ("We're All God's Children"), Lee Roy Parnell ("John the Revelator"), Steve Wariner ("Why Me Lord"), Diamond Rio ("Walkin' in Jerusalem"), BlackHawk ("Farther Along"), Pam Tillis ("Morning Has Broken"), Brooks & Dunn ("I Ain't Singin' That Song No More"), and **FIVE MORE!** Available on cassette or CD. Item # Arista 18821, \$10.98 cassette, \$15.98 CD. Be sure to specify cassette or CD!

(SEE ORDER FORM ON PAGE 67)



BEST SELLER! GEORGE STRAIT: THE STORY OF COUNTRY'S LIVING LEGEND

His latest album went right to the top of the charts. *People Magazine* listed him as one of the 50 Most Beautiful People of 1995. He broke Elvis Presley's record for consecutive sold-out performances at the Las Vegas Hilton. He holds the record for the longest list of Number One hits of any male country music star, with 22 hits and 17 top-selling albums. He's George Strait and, in this biography, journalist Mark Bego presents the story of his dazzling career, both on the stage and behind-the-scenes. It's the story of a small-town Texas son, groomed to take over his father's ranch after he got out of the Army. But George was bitten by the music bug while stationed in Hawaii, taught

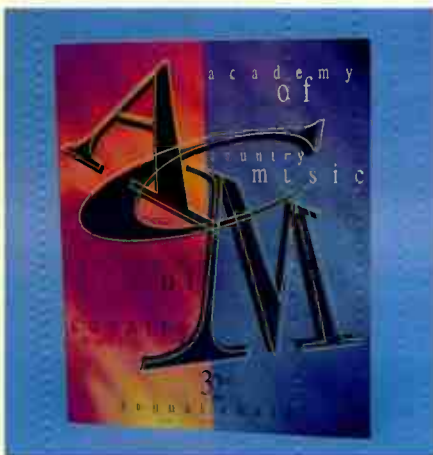
himself how to play the guitar, and was on his way to stardom. After kicking around local honky tonks with his own Ace in the Hole Band, he set out for the capital of country music, Nashville, Tennessee, and was signed by MCA Records. After his 1981 debut album, *Strait Country*, the rest is music history, with hit album after hit album. This is one story you don't want to miss! Hardcover, 304 Pages, 16 Pages of Personal and Performance Photos, Complete Discography. Item #B9G, \$22.95



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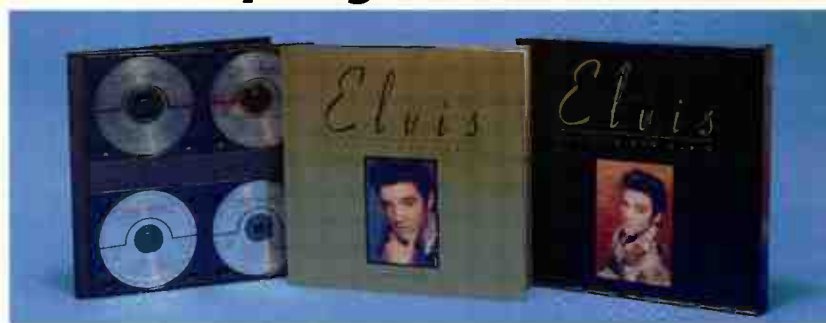
For the first time ever, the Academy of Country Music has made its *Official Souvenir Program Book* available to country fans! This is the same book given out to the stars and ACM members who attend the Awards Show. This year's 184-page program book is filled with gorgeous color photographs and biographies of all the ACM nominees for 1996, along with a complete listing of award winners from 1965-1995, behind the scenes photos from years past, and an exclusive look at ACM Awards Show highlights from the past 30 years. The candid, backstage photos alone make this a must-have item! You'll also find a history of the Academy of Country Music, and a detailed explanation of the award categories.

You watched the show on April 27, 1997, now you can treasure the memories with this one-of-a-kind Collectors' Item. Order your *Academy of Country Music Souvenir Program Book* today! Item #B5Z, \$19.95.



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Spotlight Product!



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This August marks the ten-year anniversary of the death of The King, and there's no better way to remember his contributions than with this beautiful boxed set, *Elvis: His Life and Music*. This is the ultimate Elvis collection! In addition to four CD's containing 48 of his most essential recordings, this deluxe package also includes a 176-page hardcover book that's chock-full of color and black-and-white photographs, along with a discography and complete details on his film career. Plus, there's a 16-page booklet containing complete session notes for all recordings included here. Here are just a few of the songs included on this incredible package of best-loved hits: "Hound Dog," "All Shook Up," "Heartbreak Hotel," "Jailhouse Rock," "Don't Be Cruel," "Teddy Bear," "Love Me Tender," "A Fool Such As I," "It's Now or Never," "Little Sister," "Love Me," "Love Letters," "It Hurts Me," "A Big Hunk o' Love," "Are You Lonesome Tonight," "I Need Your Love Tonight," "Treat Me Nice," "Anyway You Want Me," **AND 30 MORE!** Each one a top hit, each one digitally remastered for perfect sound quality. The entire package comes in an embossed case for easy storage. No music fan should be without this essential set on one of the top stars of all time! Ask for Item #BD-06, \$89.95.

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While our standard *Country Music* logo T-shirts in Red and Blue are longtime favorites, these Deluxe Editions in fashionable Purple or Turquoise were Limited Edition specials, and most sizes sold out quickly. Only a few remain in each color in size Medium. **G7A-M (Purple, Medium), Was \$21.95—Now \$9.95! (Only 23 shirts remain!)** **G7C-M (Turquoise, Medium), Was \$21.95—Now \$9.95! (Only 50 shirts remain!)**

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Sisters Barbara, Irlene and Louise Mandrell, along with the rest of the Mandrell clan, are featured in this gorgeous, volume. Any Mandrell fan will enjoy this sweet look at a close-knit, talented family. **B1E, Was \$14.95—Now \$5.95! (Only 112 copies remain!)**

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Known for both her talent and her kindness to fans and fellow performers, the late Dottie West was loved all over the world. Here's the story of her life, from childhood through the tragic end. A great gift for the longtime country fan. **B2W, Was \$12.95—Now \$7.95! (Only 55 copies remain!)**

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In *Dolly Parton: The Early Years*, you'll read all about Dolly's amazing rags-to-riches story, from her Appalachian childhood to worldwide fame in music, movies and more. Everyone loves Dolly! A great story on a great star! **B3V, Was \$12.95—Now \$7.95! (Only 95 copies remain!)**

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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Cliff Bruner: Texas fiddler-bandleader Cliff Bruner is one of the greats of pre-war Western swing, the man who recorded the hit version of "It Makes No Difference Now" in 1938 and a year later recorded the first country trucker song: Ted Daffan's composition, "Truck Driver's Blues." That



Bruner's music still holds up is proven by *Cliff Bruner and His Texas Wanderers* (Bear Family BCD 15932). This five-CD, 117-song boxed set (with alternate takes and unissued material) covers his 1937-47 Decca material and his 1949-1950 material for Houston's Ayo Records. Every song is reproduced with stunning depth and clarity, a tribute to Bear Family's remastering.

From the beginning, Bruner walked a funkier side of the street than Wills, who was heading toward a big band sound in Tulsa. Bruner's bands, The Texas Wanderers and Cliff Bruner and His Boys, featured topflight musicians including, for a time, singer-pianist Moon Mullican and amplified steel guitar pioneer Bob Dunn. Like most Western swing bands, Bruner's repertoire mixed pop with blues, fiddle tunes and jazz, and he had access to early honky tonk songs written by Floyd Tillman and Ted Daffan. The quality remains high throughout, even with the final Ayo recordings. Texas honky tonk and Western swing researcher Kevin Coffey interviewed Bruner and his surviving associates extensively, and has created a 60-page, lavishly illus-

trated essay that succeeds both as biography and as a chronicle of the Texas Gulf Coast Western swing scene.

Gene Autry: Few artists deserve a boxed set treatment more than legendary singing cowboy Gene Autry, whose music has become a part of Americana that transcends time or trends. Rhino Records has picked up the ball with the three-CD, 84-song *Sing Cowboy Sing* (Rhino 72630). Produced with complete cooperation from Autry himself, the set may disappoint those expecting original Columbia recordings. Though a few Columbia cuts appear here, nowadays most major labels won't license vast amounts of one artist's material to independent reissue labels. In addition, Columbia has issued two Autry CD collections of its



own. That becomes a blessing in disguise since, as a result, the bulk of the Rhino set was drawn from Autry's CBS *Melody Ranch* radio shows from 1939 through 1955, making it a truly unique collection.

Included are radio versions of most Autry hits from "That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine" and "Back in the Saddle Again" to "Be Honest With Me," "Silver Spurs (On the Golden Stairs)," "It Makes No Difference Now" and the novelty "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," as well as the Columbia version of "At Mail Call Today," Columbia duets with Rosemary Clooney and covers of various country hits. The booklet features beautifully reproduced photos and

Autry memorabilia, a bio by Ranger Doug Green, track notes by Jon Guyot Smith, tributes to Autry and a complete list of Autry films.

Jimmie Rodgers: RCA has five more volumes available in their Essentials series, including one long overdue collection by Jimmie Rodgers. Even fans



who don't care about any music recorded before Garth came along need at least one Rodgers album to put it all in perspective. Though Rounder issued Rodgers' complete output in multiple volumes, and Bear Family has a comprehensive Rodgers boxed set, *The Essential Jimmie Rodgers* (RCA 67500) assembles 20 recordings on one disc for those more budget-minded.

The set includes his most famous "Blue Yodels" such as the original "Mule Skinner Blues" and "T for Texas." Examples of his sentimental ballads are "Away Out on the Mountain," "My Old Pal," "Daddy and Home," "Sleep, Baby Sleep" and his immortal hobo ballad, "Waiting for a Train." Such songs as "Pistol Packin' Papa" and "Never No Mo' Blues" clearly anticipated honky tonk, a style built by, among others, Rodgers disciples Ernest Tubb and Lefty Frizzell. "T.B. Blues" was Rodgers' musical protest against the disease that would finally kill him in 1933. Appropriately, the excellent notes come from Nolan Porterfield, Rodgers' biographer.

Bill Monroe: Before there was bluegrass, Bill Monroe and his brother Charlie recorded for

Victor Records as The Monroe Brothers. After they parted company in 1939, Bill, after briefly heading a band called The Kentuckians, formed The Blue Grass Boys in 1939 and began to create his own music, which he first recorded for Victor in 1940. *The Essential Bill Monroe & The Monroe Brothers* (RCA 67450) reissues all 16 of Monroe's 1940-41 Victor recordings with the early Blue Grass Boys. Six more songs are earlier Monroe Brothers Victor recordings. As for the remaining three, read on.

The Blue Grass Boys material includes "Mule Skinner Blues," "Six White Horses," "Katy Hill," Bill's whirlwind mandolin tour-de-force, "Tennessee Blues," and "In the Pines." Among the Monroe Brothers sides is "New River



Train," from their first 1936 session. Annotator Ed Morris, who, like Wade Jessen, has written excellent notes for other volumes of this series, disappoints here by simply reciting facts. A Monroe authority really should have annotated this collection.

That's not the only problem. Reissue producer Steve Lindsey botched this one big-time. Not only did he omit The Monroe Brothers' best known song, "What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul," the songs "Once I Had a Darling Mother," "No Home, No Place to Pillow My Head" and "Great Speckled Bird" are *not* even Monroe Brothers sides, but come instead from Charlie Monroe's

first solo session in 1938 after he and Bill had separated.

To be fair to Lindsey, these same three songs were incorrectly identified as Monroe Brothers songs on an old RCA Camden budget compilation titled *Early Bluegrass Music*. But by not double-checking, Lindsey and RCA prolong an egregious error. One expects more in a reissue package from a prestigious label.

Porter Wagoner: *The Essential Porter Wagoner* (RCA 66934) covers 20 tracks begin-



ning with his earliest and biggest solo hits, "A Satisfied Mind" and "Company's Comin'," and continuing on through such mid-1950's hits as "Eat Drink and Be Merry," "What Would You Do (If Jesus Came to Your House)," "Tryin' to Forget the Blues" and "I Thought I Heard You Calling My Name." The 60's are covered by "Your Old Love Letters," "Misery Loves Company," "I've Enjoyed As Much of This As I Can Stand," "Sorrow on the Rocks" and the original hit version of "Green, Green Grass of Home."

Bill Anderson's compositions, "I'll Go Down Swinging" and "The Cold Hard Facts of Life," as well as Freddie Hart's original "Skid Row Joe" reflect Porter's skills at interpreting others' material. Hit singles "The Carroll County Accident" and "Big Wind" round out the 60's.

The 70's selections feature Dolly Parton's composition, "The Last One to Touch Me," as well as "What Ain't to Be Just Might Happen," "Highway Headin' South" and "I Haven't Learned a Thing," Porter's duet with Merle Haggard. The packaging is adequate, as are Wade Jessen's notes. Sadly, the designer's fe-

tish for a turquoise motif led to part of the notes (printed turquoise on turquoise) and track listings being tough to read.

Dolly Parton: It should never have taken RCA this long to put together a decent solo collection of early Dolly, and even here, they've botched it somewhat. The previously released set titled *The Essential Dolly Parton Volume 1* covered 20 songs-worth of her glitziest pop fare from 1976 through 1984. The new one, *Volume 2* (RCA 66933), covers 20 numbers from 1970 through 1978, starting when she was still working with Porter Wagoner. Though "Just Because I'm a Woman" (1968), her first RCA hit, appears, so does a pointless rendition of Ferlin Husky's hit, "Wings of a Dove."

What's more, the set omits two of her greatest 60's compositions, "In the Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad)" from 1968 and "My Blue Ridge Mountain Boy" from 1969, which makes no sense.



The remaining tracks include her hot version of "Mule Skinner Blues" and "Joshua" (1970), "Coat of Many Colors"

(1971), "Touch Your Woman" (1972), and "My Tennessee Mountain Home" and the original "I Will Always Love You," both from 1973. "Jolene," "The Seeker" and "Love Is Like a Butterfly" all come from 1974, "The Bargain Store" and "We Used To" come from 1975, and "All I Can Do" dates from 1976.

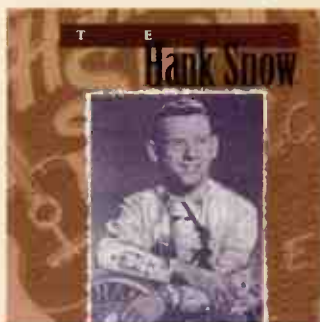
From then on, the album stumbles into her early excursions into glitzy country-pop. These include "Light of a Clear Blue Morning," "Here You Come Again," "It's All Wrong But It's All Right" and "Me and Little Andy" (all 1977), "Heartbreaker" and "I Really Got the Feeling" (1978) and so forth. These songs broadened her audience at the time, but none of them wear as well as the earlier material.

Despite the imperfections (including Wade Jessen's notes, bordering on puffery), this set does put some early Dolly out there, though not nearly as much as should be available.

Hank Snow: If you salivated over Bear Family's definitive chronicle of Hank Snow's recording career done by Bear Family in multiple boxed sets, but couldn't afford that budget-busting pile of CD's, there's *The Essential Hank Snow* (RCA 66931). These 20 tracks focus exclusively on his American hits (he had many successes in Canada before catching on here after "I'm Moving On" in 1950).

That said, this collection certainly covers the high points, including "Rhumba Boogie,"

"The Golden Rocket," "Unwanted Sign Upon Your Heart," "Music Makin' Mama from Memphis," "The Gold Rush Is Over," "I Don't Hurt Anymore," "(Now and Then There's) A Fool Such As I" and "The Gal Who Invented Kissin'." Why an alternate take of "I Went to Your Wedding" was included and not the hit version is beyond me. The set continues with "Would You Mind," "Lady's Man," "Yellow Roses," "Miller's Cave" (an early hit



composition by Jack Clement), "Beggar to a King," "I've Been Everywhere," "Ninety Miles an Hour (Down a Dead End Street)," "Let Me Go, Lover," "The Wishing Well" and "Hello Love."

Ed Morris' notes are excellent, but again, producer Lindsey needs to have done more homework. The notation "producer not indicated" appears on many of the early Snow songs in this set's track listing. However, a look at RCA's session logs would have revealed that veteran RCA country producer Steve Sholes handled these sessions until Chet Atkins eventually took over.

Worse, the insert included with all Essentials sets hypes the use of "in most cases... original session tapes and first generation master tapes" to assemble these collections. Yet track listings for the Snow set reveal that these songs were not taken from the original first generation masters, but from tapes of old Snow budget LP's on the Camden label that included the hits. To be diplomatic, their hype is simply not accurate in the case of this set. They've gone way beyond "in most cases" here.

How to Get These Treasures

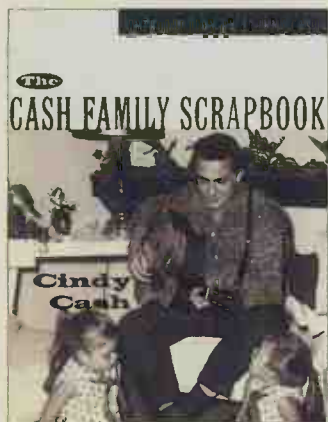
Available in formats shown at prices shown: Cliff Bruner, *Cliff Bruner and His Texas Wanderers* (BCD 15932), a five-CD boxed set, \$165.00/Gene Autry, *Sing Cowboy Sing* (Rhino 72630), a three-CD or three-cassette boxed set, \$39.98 cassette, \$49.98 CD/Jimmie Rodgers, *The Essential Jimmie Rodgers* (RCA 67500), \$12.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD/Bill Monroe, *The Essential Bill Monroe* (RCA 67450), \$12.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD/Porter Wagoner, *The Essential Porter Wagoner* (RCA 66934), \$12.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD/Dolly Parton, *The Essential Dolly Parton* (RCA 66933), \$12.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD/Hank Snow, *The Essential Hank Snow* (RCA 666931), \$12.98 cassette, \$18.98 CD. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 070897, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling. Canadian orders, add an additional \$3.00 postage. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Offer expires November 30, 1997

Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

▪ Books ▪

The Cash Family: I'm surprised that *The Cash Family Scrapbook* wasn't done years earlier. Written and compiled by Johnny's daughter, Cindy Cash, the book assembles 250-plus photos taken of Cash and family from the time of John's 1954 marriage to his first wife Vivian (mother of Cindy, Rosanne, Kathleen and Tara), up through recent years.



Those expecting a book full of performance and backstage shots will be disappointed. There are some, but this is a family scrapbook, full of photos of Cash and Vivian, with plenty more showing the daughters from infancy through growing up and into adulthood, having kids of their own.

With John's colorful introduction to the book, various anecdotes from Cindy about both her parents, selected song lyrics and a Cash family genealogy, the book has value for Cash fans. A seldom-seen early photo of John and Elvis, plus backstage candids and publicity shots give the book value for collectors. Certain of Cindy's anecdotes involve her parents' divorce and her mother's life; her own story will most interest fans when she discusses, with some obvious bitterness, her eight-year marriage to Marty Stuart and the family's ordeal when complications developed after John's 1989 open-heart surgery.

In the Country of Country:

For sophisticated New York writers and academic types (what George Wallace, from his point of view, called "pointy-headed intellectuals") seeking to chronicle the social phenomena of the late 1990's, country has become the ticket. My general take on such books is that most misunderstand the music and culture, and some barely conceal their disdain as they explain it. In other cases, the writers' advanced degrees seem to warp their perspective: Witness Nashville professor Cecelia Tichi's (to me) laughably misguided *High Lonesome*. It's now joined by New York author Nicholas Dawidoff's voluminous, overblown *In the Country of Country*.

Dawidoff tells of a love of country music that began in college, then regales us by attacking today's "hot" country as if he alone realizes its shallowness. For years before Dawidoff ever thought to write this book, CMM writers have said this, and many of you readers have agreed. In fairness, he clearly intended an affectionate look at vanishing pioneers, among them Bill Monroe, Charlie Louvin, Johnny Cash, Kitty Wells, Merle Haggard and George Jones and younger Turks, including Emmylou Harris and Gram Parsons. Western swing was not included. One wonders why.

Like any good New York journalist, he consulted books and magazines, including our own, as well as country profiles in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, where some of his own work, included here, first appeared in different form.

Good intentions notwithstanding, he profiles the artists like an anthropologist researching some exotic tribe on a far-off continent. Not a music journalist of Peter Guralnick's stature, Dawidoff is fascinated by what is really mundane, and by

darker sides of Southern life. Not only are his "revelations" common knowledge, beneath his admiration, the profiles often emit—to this reader—an air of slumming. Witness his fascination with Charlie Louvin's love of Southern cuisine, with various examples of Southern violence, with Cash's drug woes and with Chet Atkins' and Bill Monroe's troubled childhoods. A chapter on Jimmie Dale Gilmore and company is actually titled "Lubbock or Leave It."

In the final pages, Dawidoff riskily praises "alternative country," a style too often symbolized by dull garage-band rock, that hasn't yet proven itself beyond its cult following. No doubt Dawidoff's book will be embraced by some. Others may find it less than earth-shaking.

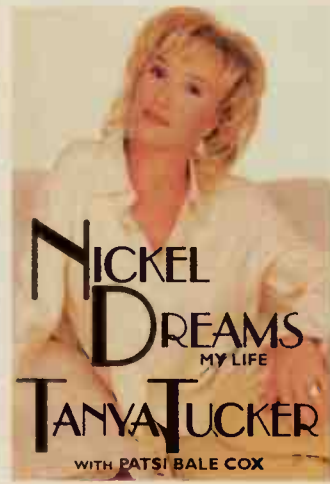
Tanya Tucker: Tanya has certainly grabbed a lot of headlines lately, with her well-crafted, mature new album, her swapping insults with Ty Herndon onstage at a record company function and her alleged pursuit of newsman-hunk Stone Phillips. She's reprising her wild child role, which she'd seemingly left behind. Coinciding with all this comes her autobiography, *Nickel Dreams*, written with Patsi Bale Cox. Surprisingly, what's here is more interesting and honest than one had a right to expect.

Tanya, well-off these days, didn't start that way. Her dad, Beau Tucker, was the spark behind her career, and when she finally found her place with Epic's Billy Sherrill and had her first hit, "Delta Dawn," at age 13, she became the first adolescent female singer since Brenda Lee to achieve success into adulthood. At first, it wasn't much fun. Kids in her school mocked her until she finally dropped out in ninth grade.

She runs down her years of Elvis worship, and his influence on her own stage act, her

partying, running with countless celebrities and so on, but undoubtedly the juiciest part for most fans will be her violent, passionate, drug-addled interlude with a coked-up, out of control Glen Campbell. She's honest about her excesses and up front about the later relationship (not with Campbell) that resulted in her two kids.

But Tanya never totally mellowed. She details her stay at the Betty Ford Clinic with a welcome cynicism, not the usual reverence afforded that institution. Tanya's wildest days may be over (but don't bet on it), but she's no hypocrite condemning her past. To call herself a "work in progress," as she does in the book's final sentence, is refreshingly honest.



Jimmy Bowen: Everyone knows record label honcho/producer Jimmy Bowen for his work with, among others, Hank Jr., George Strait, and most obviously Garth Brooks, along with John Berry and others. As head of the Nashville branches of, among others, Elektra, MCA and Capitol (which he renamed Liberty), he had much to do with what went on in Nashville in the 1980's and early to mid-1990's, until his retirement in 1996. Despite his fame, few are aware of his background growing up in the Southwest, gaining recognition playing bass in

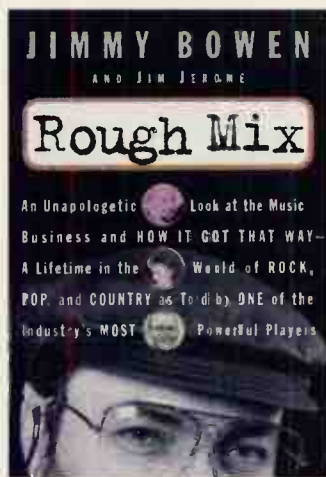
rockabilly Buddy Knox's Rhythm Orchids (he's on Knox's classic "Party Doll") and recording his own vocals with The Orchids.

To dismiss Bowen as some do is unfair. He did timeless work in the mid-1960's at Frank Sinatra's Reprise label, revitalizing the pop singing careers of Sinatra and Dean Martin. Today, both singers are hailed as geniuses by young people enthralled by the 1960's "Rat Pack" culture and its music. Over 30 years ago, when both were considered outdated amid The Beatles and Bob Dylan, Bowen brought them back to the charts with the megahits "Everybody Loves Somebody" for Martin and "Strangers in the Night" for Sinatra.

When Bowen finally came to Nashville in 1976, he attached himself to the Outlaw movement, already in full steam. He noted that Nashville wasn't always equal to L.A. in advanced recording gear, and was clannish as well. But by scorning Music Row's modest recording budgets, legendary producers and studio pickers—a combination which created many timeless records—Bowen went too far, his remarks at times dripping with smug elitism. He rightly criticized some legendary producers as cliché, but his reforms, which he explains as an attempt to broaden the music's appeal and advance Nashville's studio technology, didn't always achieve the desired results. In the process of "reform," Bowen helped spawn a new generation of excesses contributing to today's climate of high-tech, low-substance performers.

Though the book has merit, and many interesting insights into artists Bowen worked with in Nashville, most will want to hear Bowen's side of his fractious business and personal relationship with Garth, whom Bowen auditioned and rejected in 1988. He considers Brooks cold and calculating, surrounded by yes-people, hungering for power and ego. Perhaps, but is Bowen any different? Did they clash because they were too much alike? Had

a successful battle with thyroid cancer not convinced Bowen to retire, it's likely Garth would have succeeded in ousting him as head of Liberty (now Capitol Nashville).



Bowen goes out on a limb, as he states that today's country "suffers from a disturbing conformity," oblivious to his own role in that problem. With rumors of his return to Nashville running rampant, I can only say after reading this, for the music's sake I hope he stays healthy—and retired.

▪ Recordings ▪

The Byrds: The Byrds' groundbreaking *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* LP from 1968 was one of my first exposures to country in any form, leaving an impression that influenced my musical tastes—and those of many others—forever. Today that 29-year-old album, a product of the visions of both Roger McGuinn and legend-to-be Gram Parsons, is a bonafide landmark, and was recently reissued by Sony Legacy (CK

65250). The original 11 songs included covers of Bob Dylan's "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere," the traditional "I Am a Pilgrim," The Louvin Brothers' "The Christian Life," Woody Guthrie's "Pretty Boy Floyd," the George Jones obscurity "You're Still on My Mind" and Merle Haggard's "Life in Prison." Also here is the original version of Parsons' still-magnificent original, "Hickory Wind."

Parsons' contract problems with a previous label caused Columbia to replace his lead vocals on "The Christian Life" and "You Don't Miss Your Water" with McGuinn leads when the original LP was made. Here, among the eight bonus tracks, are rehearsal versions of both songs with Parsons' vocals included—a nice addition. Also included are alternate takes of "One Hundred Years From Now" and "You're Still on My Mind." Other unissued songs from the same sessions, "You Got a Reputation," "Lazy Days" and the brilliant Parsons-Chris Hillman ballad titled "Pretty Polly" are nicely complimented by the instrumental, "All I Have Is Memories." Excellent new liner notes by David Fricke and song notes by British Byrds expert Johnny Rogan put everything in the proper context. The set ends with an uncredited, super-rare 1968 radio ad for the LP.

Live Albums: In 1981, the Silver Eagle (no connection to Silver Eagle Publishers) series of live country radio concerts began its syndicated run. Recorded live at various locations, these concert perfor-

mances allowed many artists of that decade the chance to stretch out and perform for millions who might not have seen them onstage. Two new CD's taken from these shows issue live performances by two Sun Records legends.

Carl Perkins Live! (Silver Eagle 62774) comes from a 1983 appearance at the Lone Star Café in Manhattan. The 11 songs are a retrospective of Perkins' greatest, studded with country rock and blues covers, all performed with an 80's edge. It mixes Perkins favorites like "Matchbox," "Gone, Gone, Gone," "Honey Don't," "Dixie Fried" and, of course, "Blue Suede Shoes," with Muddy Waters' "Got My Mojo Working," the rock favorite "High Heel Sneakers," "Tennessee Waltz," Ray Charles' "I Got a Woman" and Elvis' "That's All Right (Mama)."

Jerry Lee Lewis Live! (Silver Eagle 61774) was recorded a year later at a show in Massachusetts, and brings together 13 numbers, many of them rock staples in The Killer's repertoire for years, some of them old favorites of his.

He begins with "Mean Woman Blues" (incorrectly titled "I Got a Woman") and a bluesy, tough "CC Rider." Included here are "Keep My Motor Runnin'" (which he'd record on the all-star *Class of '55* album with Perkins, Roy Orbison and Johnny Cash), and Charlie Rich's "Who Will the Next Fool Be," a longtime concert feature of Jerry Lee's. Also here are Chuck Berry's "Sweet Little Sixteen," and, surprisingly, a ballad version of Mel Torme's upbeat 1940's pop hit, "Careless Hands," and the rocker "Shorty." Hank Williams' "You Win Again" was a song Jerry first recorded at Sun; "Georgia on My Mind" comes from his longtime love of vintage pop music. "Chantilly Lace," the Big Bopper favorite, was a Number One country hit for Jerry Lee in 1972. The set closes with stops-out versions of "Great Balls of Fire," "Whole Lotta Shakin'" and the lascivious "Meat Man," first heard on his *Southern Roots* LP.

How to Get These Collectibles

Books: Cindy Cash, *The Cash Family Scrapbook* (B8J), \$20.00/Tanya Tucker with Patsi Bale Cox, *Nickel Dreams: My Life* (B9T), \$23.95/Jimmy Bowen and Jim Jerome, *Rough Mix* (B8H), \$25.00/Nicholas Dawidoff, *In The Country of Country: People and Places in American Music* (B7X), \$25.95. **Recordings:** Carl Perkins, *Live* (61774-70001), CD only, \$15.98/Jerry Lee Lewis, *Live* (61774-70002), CD only, \$15.98/The Byrds, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* (Columbia/Legacy CK 65150), CD only, \$15.98. To order, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 070897EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.** Offer expires November 30, 1997



Calling All Anchors

I hardly ever watch the TV news because *a)* I prefer my sex and violence personal, and *b)* if I wanted the kind of insight into important community affairs those folks give me, I'd just go buy my own police band scanner. The other night, though, I was surfing through the local news shows on my way to the All-Golf channel (which I visit religiously once a day, trying to align myself with the psyche of the modern country star), when LO! and BEHOLD!! What did I see but three, count 'em, *three* young(ish) blonde anchorwomen, one after another, each of them really perky one minute and really sad the next, depending on the news they were reading, each of them dressed like a rich flight attendant, each of them poised and professional, sincere and, well, *caring*, and it struck me with the simple, overwhelming power of one of those once-in-a-decade ideas—you know, like when the double-helix key to human genetics first revealed itself to Drs. Watson and Crick in Cambridge, England, or the words "Jiffy Lube" first popped into the brain of Burt T. Poli of Fundermyer's Expert Oil, Grease & Fluids-In-A-Flash, Inc., while he was on a break in the shed out back.

I don't mean to overstate the importance of the idea, just to emphasize its force. Truth to tell, it wasn't really that significant in the grand scheme of things. In country music, though—an industry which, sad to say, has of late been experiencing a slight (ouch!) *sales downturn* (ouch again!), it had at least the potential to keep new Pirelli radials on a few dozen executive Explorers, Mercs and Beemers.

So, the idea: *Make TV gals into country singers!*

Think of the savings. No expensive "media training" (these women have college degrees in that kind of thing). No nasty surprises when you put them in front of a camera (they *never* panic). No zits, no bad hair, no extra poundage, no funny accents—no problems at all, in fact, just guaranteed poise, sociability, grooming skills, competence under pressure, and the clearly demonstrated ability to project emotion appropriate to their material (songs, newscripts, what's the difference? It's all either perky or sad or somewhere along the trip from one to the other). Moreover, they have the right looks: not gorgeous, but good, attractive, kinda strong, with a dash of character.

Don't forget, either, that they've all got something to fall back on when the kids

start wanting a new model (which TV executives are also prone to do, it's true, but nowhere near as quickly as teenage music fans), so feeding them into the meat grinder should be easy on the honcho conscience. Finally, there are *lots* of them—at least three in every decent-sized American city, and that's without counting the weekend relief. Some places up North, they even have brunettes!



Kris Tyler...market-tested?

So, like, no problem, dude. Get on the cellphone and tell your people to rustle 'em up. You could probably have half a dozen good'uns doing scratch vocals by next Thursday, and who knows, one or two might even sing on key! If not, of course, it's too bad, but no sweat: With all the neat little black-box gizmos in the studios these days, any junior assistant engineer in Nashville can fix *that*. As we all know, it's the marketing where you have the trouble. (Hot tip, Music Row megabrains, just in case you haven't grasped it yet: This product is *already market-tested!*)

For a moment, glorying in the rush of great conceptualization, I started planning the retirement that would ensue once I connected my idea with someone's Creative Consultant slush fund. Then, though, a little warning bell began ringing somewhere in my temporal lobe (which happens a lot). *Oh, NO!* I thought. I crawled out of the writing trench and rushed to my recycling bunker, hoping the composting worms hadn't done their job yet.

They hadn't. There it was: paragraph four in a Rising Tide record company bio of a new act, Kris Tyler.

"After college...she soon landed a job working for KNXV Television and was promoted to the I-Team...She accompa-

nied the crew on stakeouts...She even went undercover on some stories...the segment earned the team an Emmy."

I sighed. They'd beaten me to it, just like they did with the Jamaican bobsled team and the Happy Militia Teddy Bears (which I *still* think are too cute for words!). I accepted it, though. I'm a man, after all.

I rooted out the Kris Tyler CD (an advance copy: it won't be in stores until the fall). Yup, I thought, as the first two or three tracks played, that's about right: The music was professional, smooth and mildly moving in the vein worked so hard in modern Nashville by people raised on James Taylor and Carole King. Not my speed, but it sells. They should do well.

I went into my mind and wished them everything I would want for myself, then focused on my alpha waves. That didn't work, so I counted ammo.

Then, though, something happened that changed everything. Track four, "What a Woman Knows," was both catchy and compelling, with a good fiddle and what sounded like real feeling, and track five, "Old Boyfriend," was just plain great. I mean, startling. The song was a killer, and the woman was *singing*; it reminded me of when George Jones got ahold of James Taylor's "Bartender's Blues" and plunged with it into depths of feeling its writer could never hope to express as a singer—but in this case, Tyler herself wrote the song (or at least co-wrote it with Sharon Rice), so the conclusion was inescapable: Here was real talent.

This wasn't the scenario I had in mind. With hope rekindling, I scanned the bio again. Aha! For one thing, she was a producer, not an anchorwoman. For another, she said that TV was "only a sideline. I was always doing music."

I started grinning. They'd come within breathing distance but never even knew it. The idea was still secure. I could still float it.

I went to my Rolodex. Who could I call? Tony Brown? Nope, he wasn't cynical enough yet. Fax Bowen in Maui, see if *this* could tempt him back? That was it. I cranked up the modem and went to it.

I have no idea why my car blew up like that. They're taking very good care of me here, though. The bars on the window, they say, are to keep the big pink bats from bothering me again.

Editor-at-Large Patrick Carr has been with CMM since September 1972.

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