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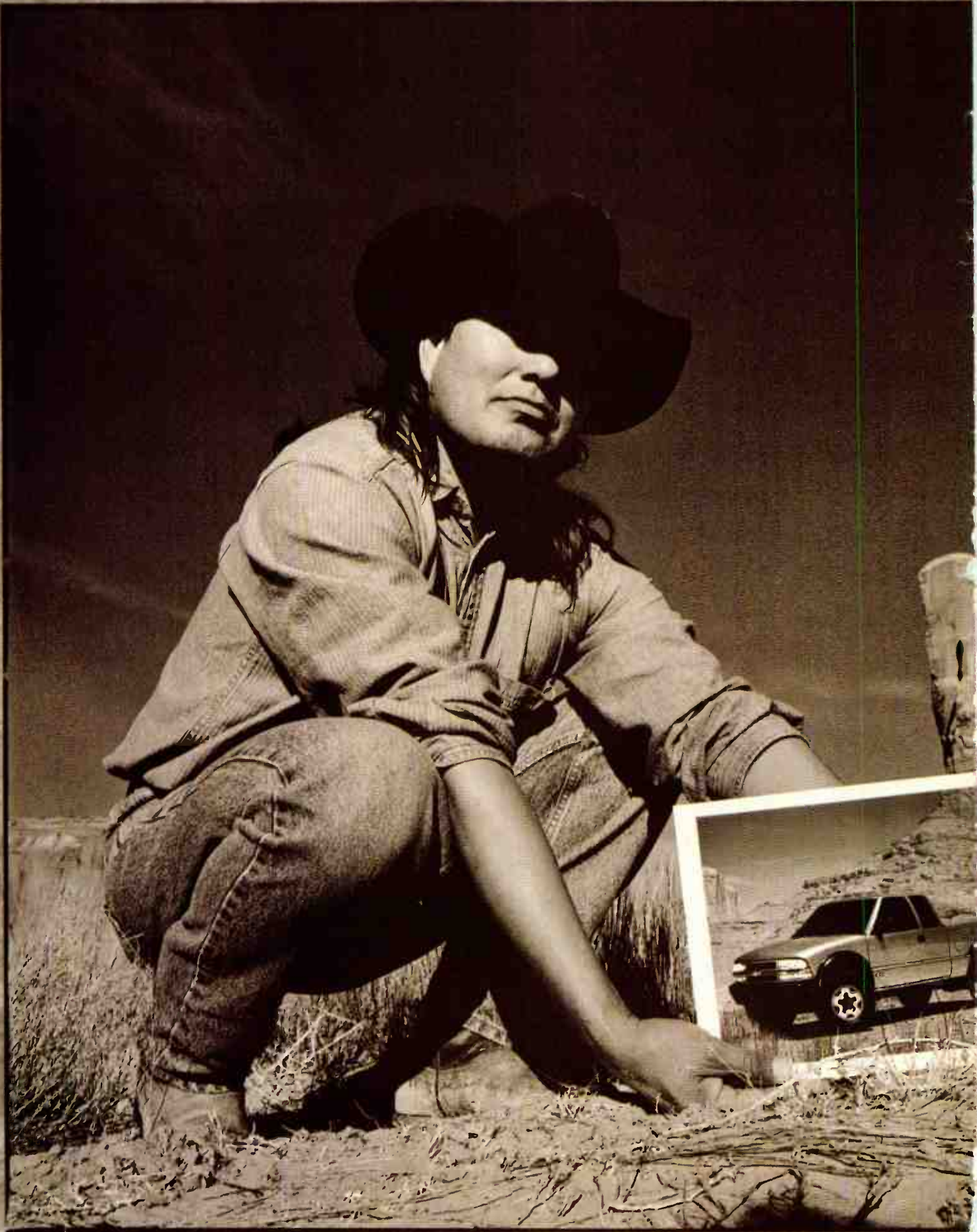
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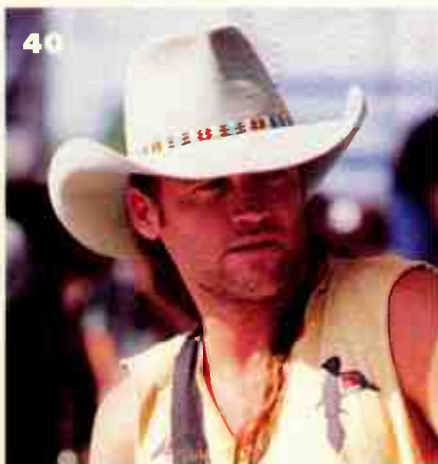
COUNTRY MUSIC



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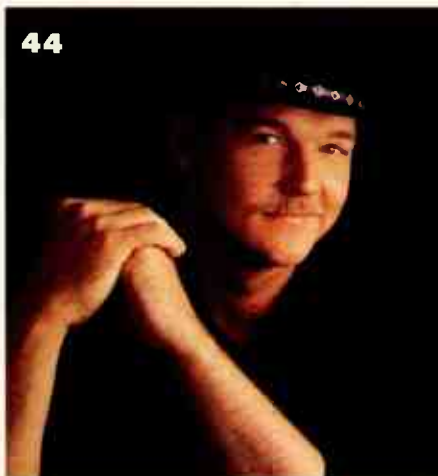
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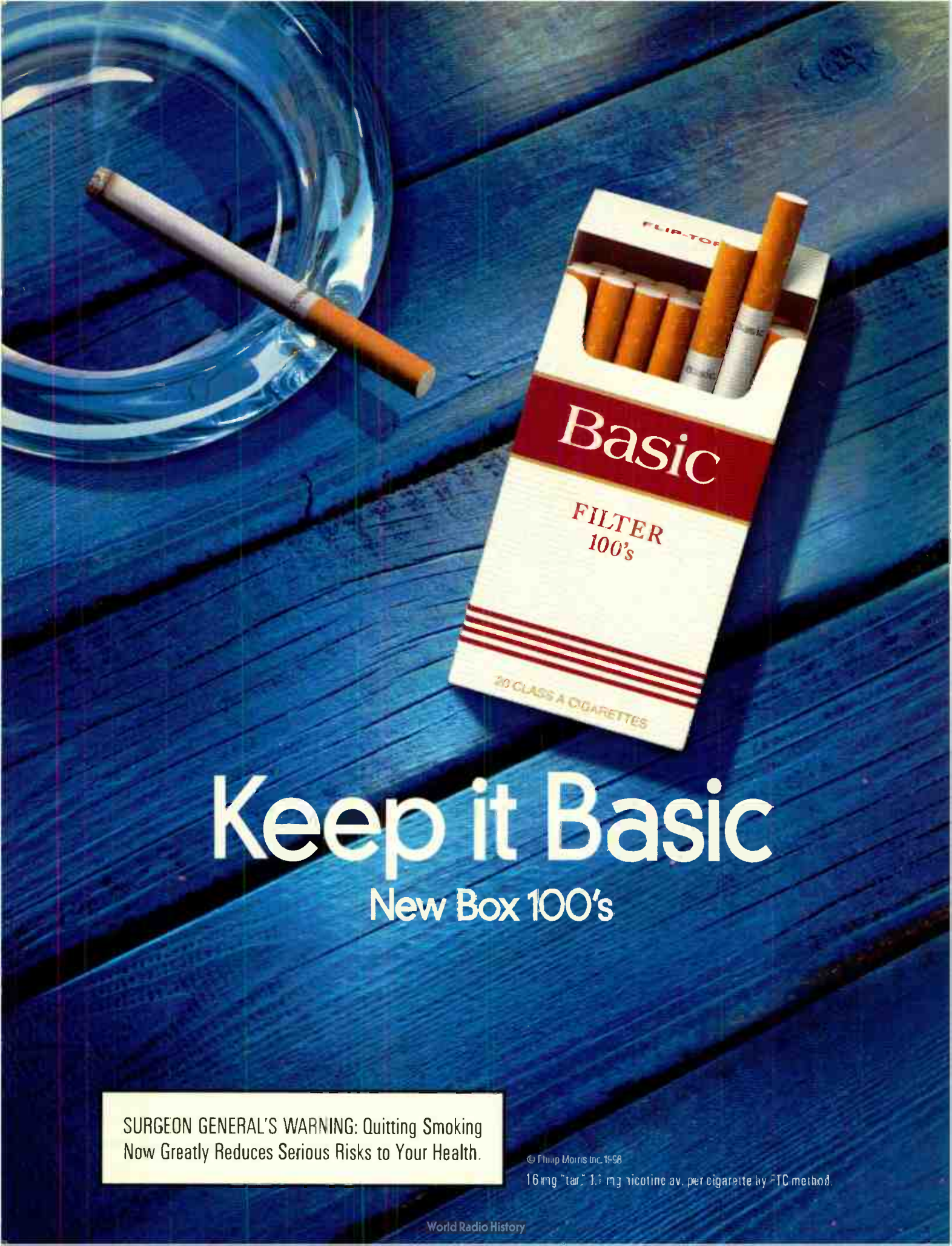


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People

PAYCHECK AILING

The Opry's newest member, Mr. **Johnny Paycheck**, was stricken with an asthma attack in Albuquerque and is hospitalized as of this writing. Johnny was on his way to do a concert with **Merle Haggard** in California when he took ill. A few days earlier, Paycheck had blown the audience away at the Nashville Arena when he performed a New Year's Eve concert with **Tim McGraw**, **Faith Hill**, **Martina McBride** and **Jeff Foxworthy**. It was funny watching the teenyboppers and barely 20's unfamiliar with Johnny. When he hit their hearts with his soulful "Old Violin," those young people ate it up. You cannot deny what's truth to youth. Don't even try.

EMMYLOU

Our illustrious leader, Mr. **Russell Barnard**, and the Man in Black, Mr. **Johnny Cash**, will both be interested in knowing that their favorite female of song, **Emmylou Harris**, performed recently in Oslo, Norway, at the Nobel Prize ceremony. See, fans, **Jody Williams**, America's Nobel Peace Prize winner, was honored for bringing attention to banning land mines. Like Williams, Emmylou has also been quite active in calling for a ban of land mines, distributing literature and generally making people aware of the situation.

HALL OF FAME \$\$\$

The name "Frist" in Nashville means medicine. In Washington, D.C., Frist means representation from Tennessee. On Music Row, the name Frist means very generous. Dr. **Tom Frist** and his wife died within hours of each other. The 87-year-old man of medicine left a pledge for a million dollars toward the relocation of the Country Music Hall of Fame from the Row area to the downtown area near the new arena.

HEY, GOOD COOKING

Naomi Judd always has something on the back burner. Her newest venture has her hawking *Naomi's Home Companion*, a



Johnny Paycheck, Tim McGraw and Jeff Foxworthy were among the New Year's Eve performers at the Nashville Arena. The crowd loved Paycheck's songs.

book about raising Judds and cooking. With all the books on the shelf bearing names that ring familiarity, like **Lorrie Morgan**, **Tanya Tucker**, **LeAnn Rimes** and **Eddy Arnold**, doubting Thomasina that I am, I wondered will Naomi's book sell? Well, the book became a best seller here in Music Town and sold 5,000 copies on QVC, one of the home shopping cable channels. Naomi and her book hit national and local TV. On one show, Naomi said her movie star daughter, **Ashley Judd**, is a vegetarian, allows that she is almost a vegetarian, and said **Wynonna** is a vegetarian between meals. After that statement, I wonder if Wy is already plumb worn out with mama and her cookbook.

TANYA FILES SUIT AGAINST HER CHILDREN'S FATHER

Tanya Tucker has filed suit against **Ben Reed**, the father of her two children—**Presley**, 7, and **Beau**, 5. Tanya claimed in court papers that Reed held the two children for 16 days without her permission in order to coerce \$20,000 a month child support from the singer, *The Tennessean*

reported. Tanya filed the petition seeking to stop Reed from interfering with the custody rights and to have the children declared legal residents of the state of Tennessee. According to sources, Reed hid the children from Tanya at his girlfriend's house in San Diego while saying they were in Los Angeles with him. He lured Tanya to a hotel room under the pretense of seeing the children, when, in fact, she was served court papers seeking to establish a parental relationship for himself. Reed, an actor who makes about \$35,000 a year, reportedly seeks \$20,000 a month child support, plus \$25,000 advance attorney's fees, leading Tucker's lawyers to assert in the court papers that Reed's sole intention in seeking custody is for his own financial gain. The two children are currently back home in Tennessee attending school in Williamson County.

OPERATION SMILE

This year's benefit for Operation Smile brought **Olivia Newton John** to the stage of the Grand Ole Opry, along with host

Reporter: *Hazel Smith*

Editors: *Rochelle Friedman/George Fletcher*

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People

LeAnn Rimes, plumb perfect Vince Gill and others. I wish all of America could see the healed, beautiful faces of children who were helped by this organization. Doctors perform surgery, and take little or no pay if the families cannot afford it or have no insurance. The organization has been operating on a shoestring. Billionaire software man, **Bill Gates**, and his wife **Melissa** recently donated a million dollars to Operation Smile. I'm so proud Music City stars have helped from the beginning.

THE BEAUTIFUL TRISHA

Trisha Yearwood has shed 40 pounds. I asked the star about her diet. She's not on a diet; she says she is just eating healthy. Seems her dad was recently diagnosed with diabetes, which he got from bad eat-

ing habits. Trisha says since her dad's eating habits and her eating habits were the same, she wanted to correct hers before it was too late and she started having problems. Apparently it's working for her, at least in the weight department, and hopefully otherwise. Trisha's career is looking just as good as she is. Her greatest hits album was one of the top ten sellers for 1997. 'Course being named CMA Female Vocalist of the Year was a big deal, too. It is Trisha time, as I've said before.

WHAT A MAN

"Heard from Shel [Silverstein]?"
 "Seen Harlan [Howard]?"
 "How's Bill [Monroe]?"
 "How's your boys?"

The above are typical questions **Owen Bradley** would ask me and always with a smile. He was such a great man, such a visionary; each time I'd see his smile, I'd think, "He doesn't remember my name." But Owen never forgot. Elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1974, Owen set precedent after precedent and is unequivocally the architect of Music Row and the Nashville Sound.

Owen's funeral was held, as it should have been, at the Ryman Auditorium. With over 1,000 people in attendance, **Brenda Lee** sang "Peace in the Valley" for her good friend and record producer since she was 12 years old. He was laid to rest with a mound of flowers, a mountain of memories and a world of songs to his credit. As long as there is country music, the name Bradley will stand as a cornerstone. Owen's son, **Jerry Bradley**, former president of RCA Records, is president of Opryland Music Group. His daughter, **Patsy Bradley**, is an executive at BMI; daughter-in-law **Connie Bradley** is executive director of ASCAP, and grandson **Clay Owen Bradley** is director of publishing of Opryland Music. So long to the man who produced records for seven members of the Country Music Hall of Fame: **Patsy Cline**, **Ernest Tubbs**, **Loretta Lynn**, **Red Foley**, **Kitty Wells**, **Bill Monroe** and **Brenda Lee**. Owen Bradley, what a man. (See tribute elsewhere in this issue for more on Owen Bradley.)

G.B. VIDEO

Fans can watch the marvelous Central Park show by **Garth Brooks** all the time. By now, probably lots of you have your own home video copy of the show. When you tire of watching the show, count the audience. I'd like to prove to those doubting Thomases that three-quarters of a million fans did attend.

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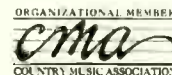
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TRIBUTE TO DAD



It's okay if you think the guy on the left looks like a young Rager Miller. Everybody thinks Dean Miller is the spitting image of his dad, including actor John Goodman, shown here holding a copy of Dean's debut CD on Capitol Records. The twosome were together for the taping of a song-filled tribute special to Dean's father, Roger Miller. Goodman and Roger became friends when Goodman appeared in the 1985 Broadway musical, *Big River*, for which Roger wrote the music. When the show airs in March on TNN, Dean and John will be joined by **The Mavericks**, **Trisha Yearwood**, **Don Meredith**, **K.T. Oslin**, **Ray Price** and **Kathy Mattea**. Keep an eye out for it.

People

LAST DATE

Top-notch Music City piano stylist, **Floyd Cramer**, died at his home following several months' illness. The 64-year-old Cramer created a slip-note piano style. When Cramer's signature instrumental hit, "Last Date," was given lyrics by the late **Boudleaux Bryant**, it became a chart topper for **Skeeter Davis** in 1961. With different lyrics, **Conway Twitty** took the song to Number One in 1972; **Emmylou Harris** had a Number One hit with the same song in 1983. Born in Samti, Louisiana, Cramer moved to Nashville at the encouragement of **Chet Atkins**. The trio of Cramer, Atkins and **Boots Randolph**, members of the A-Team, were concert favorites. The big 'C' has no mercy on talent or address. We need a cure. More on Cramer elsewhere in this issue.

CONGRATS

President **Bill Clinton** has appointed our very own **Bill Ivey** as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Congrats to both Bills for this appointment. I offer my best wishes to my friend, Mr. Bill Ivey, and, hey, pal, I hope they got some good sushi restaurants in your new neighborhood.

NUMBER ONES

I fell in like with **Michael Peterson** last June at Fan Fair. I'd heard his record, seen his video and knew the four-letter word that defined this man was "star." Me and those three wise men of WFMS were doing radio at 7:30 A.M. during Country Music Week at the Grand Ole Opry Museum when Michael showed up and we did an awesome mini-interview. Even at that hour, he was a sweetheart and by far the most grateful country entertainer I've ever encountered. An ego-less wonder, if there is such a thing in this biz of show. With that said, then you can dig why I would attend two Number One parties in celebration of the success of Michael's recent single, "From Here to Eternity"—one at the snazzy ASCAP digs at the head of Music Row, where gorgeous **Connie Bradley** hangs her diamonds, and the other at Warner/Reprise Records on historic 16th Avenue, where **Jim Ed Norman** parks his limo. The dude called Michael is a keeper. Just so you know my kisser still works, Michael kissed me right on the mouth. Friends, mine is a hard gig, but somebody has to do it. I must tell you that **Robert Ellis Orral** co-penned "From Here to Eternity" with



Number One parties abound. Above, ASCAP's **Connie Bradley**, CMA's **Ed Benson**, **Trisha Yearwood**, **Garth Brooks** and music publisher **Bob Doyle** celebrate **Trisha and Garth's** Number One duet, "In Another's Eyes." Below, gathered to honor **Michael Peterson's** first Number One are producer **Josh Leo**, **Peterson**, songwriter/producer **Robert Ellis Orral**, ASCAP's **Dan Keen** and EMI Music's **Gary Overton**.

the star, and he and **Josh Leo** produced the marvelous album.

It was a Number One do for the fabo duo of **Garth Brooks** and **Trisha Yearwood** at ASCAP with cute **Connie Bradley** at hosting duties again. The song, "In Another's Eyes," was co-written by Garth with the marvelous **Bobby Wood** and **John Peppard**. It's on Trisha's greatest hits album and Garth's latest album.

Another Number One do honored the coolest cowboy to ever straddle a horse or

drive a truck. **George Strait**, and his hit, "Today My World Slipped Away," co-written by two racehorses, the legendary **Vern Gosdin** and Decca A&R VP **Mark Wright**. This party was also held at ASCAP. Congratulations to writers and stars, especially to Vern Gosdin, who continues to improve following a stroke.

Lastly, any time I can mention **Mark Chesnutt**, I am honored. We celebrated a Number One for Mark, this too at ASCAP. The song, the marvelous "Thank

People



Robert Duvall and Emmylou Harris recorded together for the soundtrack of Duvall's new movie, *The Apostle*. The highly original film's been getting great reviews.

God for Believers," is the title track to his most recent album. I am proud for Mark, who deserves Number Ones for all his records, but I'm also proud of one of the co-writers, Roger Springer. What a talent he is and a great singer, too. Maybe someday, Roger.....

SOUNDTRACK

Academy award-winning actor Robert Duvall came to Music Town to record the soundtrack for his movie, *The Apostle*. Duvall tried for 15 years to get financing for the project to no avail. So the big guy forked out \$3.5 million of his own and made it. I hope he makes a fortune, especially since he and Emmylou Harris sang a duet of the old hymn book favorite, "I Love to Tell the Story," for the soundtrack. Duvall stars in the flick, and his friend, June Carter Cash, has a speaking role. Lyle Lovett, Steven Curtis Chapman, Russ Taff, Wynonna and Gary Chapman also sing. The soundtrack is set for release on the Rising Tide label.

VINCE'S NEW SONG

As with the unforgettable "Go Rest High on That Mountain," which superstar Vince Gill penned for his late brother and the late Keith Whitley, Vince debuted his new song about his late father on the Grand Ole Opry. One particularly poignant line in the new song is the one in which Vince, referring to his success, sings his dad's words, "It's all for nothing if you don't stay the same." The song is as wonderful and as mournful as the ones Hank Williams Sr. wrote 50 years ago.

years, the 76-year-old Hall of Famer says he's coming off the road and will appear at the Grand Ole Opry every weekend. With Grandpa Jones and Hank Snow too ill to perform, Little Jimmy is one of the last of the "originals" at the Opry. Makes me so sad. Makes the regulars lonesome.

ROCK-A-BYE-BABY

Aaron and Thea Tippin named their baby son Theodore Emory, and will call him Teddy. Aaron has a teenage daughter from a former marriage. This is the couple's first child. Four weeks after Teddy's birth, mama Thea was as thin as Cindy Crawford.

Shelby and Sheri Kennedy became the proud parents of Gavin Keith Kennedy. Shelby works at Lyric Street Records in the A&R department, and Sheri works in marketing at Capitol Records. Gavin is the grandson of the legendary record man/producer, Jerry Kennedy, who signed Reba McEntire, Roger Miller and others to their first record deals and continues to produce The Statlers.

Gary Morris and his wife, Elizabeth, became the proud parents of a son in New York. Why New York? Well, the couple flew to the Big Apple where Gary was appearing at Westbury Music Fair on Long Island. Before the show, Elizabeth went into labor, and Gary had to rush her to the hospital, then rush back and do the

LITTLE JIMMY HURT

Little Jimmy Dickens fell while hunting and cut his head, requiring 16 stitches. When he stood up, Little Jimmy said everything had stars. Part singer, part comedian, 100 percent wonderful, one-of-a-kind Little Jimmy never loses his sense of humor. The 4-foot-11-inch star quipped that he only covered half a stretcher. After 48

LET'S GO TO MANHATTAN



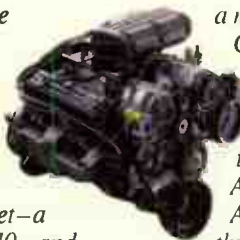
Bill Anderson, Jimmy Dean and wife, Donna Meade Dean, join Carolyn and Buddy Killen for the grand opening of Buddy's brand new dinner club, Manahattan's. The club—decked out to resemble an upscale Big Apple eatery with fine linens and big band music on the stage—is in the former "Bull Pen Lounge" of Killen's famed Nashville restaurant, The Stockyard.

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People

gig, then dash back to the hospital. Nobody said if the airline charged Gary and Elizabeth extra to fly the baby home to Nashville, but I'm sure they did....

JUDDS REUNITED

Naomi and Wynonna Judd reunited to sing at the memorial service for songwriter **Kent Robbins**, who was killed in a one-car accident in Alabama. As the duo sang "Love Is Alive," one of the hits Kent penned for them, there wasn't a dry eye in the building. Robbins went to sleep while driving. His son, **Jonathan**, who was riding with him at the time of the accident, tried to bring the vehicle back into control. Kent had said he felt sleepy and would stop at the next exit and let Jonathan have the wheel. When he passed the exit, Jonathan realized his father was asleep. The prolific Robbins wrote numerous hits, his latest being "Every Light in the House Is On" for **Trace Adkins**.

SLEEPING WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE

If the truth were known, I'd wager **Steve Wariner** is sleeping with a smile on his face these nights. Good guy Steve co-wrote **Garth Brooks'** first Number One from his *Sevens* album, "Long Neck Bottle," and appeared on *The Tonight Show* with G.B. showing off his guitar prowess and his hillbilly scat singing. Steve's been doing a lot of writing for others lately: He co-wrote **Bryan White's** smash single, "One Small Miracle," with Grand Ole Opry stalwart, **Bill Anderson**, and he and **Clint Black** co-penned Clint's hit, "Nothing But the Taillights." Course, you know about the hit duet by **Anita Cochran** and Steve. The Noblesville, Indiana, native walks around all the time with a grin on his face that would compete with a Cheshire cat.

SPLITSVILLE

The duo of **Bekka & Billy** is over. The pair—**Rebecca Bramlett** and **Billy Burnette**—remain friends and songwriting buds, however. Bekka is on tour with **Billy Joel** to far-away places with strange sounding names. When Bekka got the call, "Hey Bekka, it's Billy Joel," her reply was, "Aw, shut up, Jason," thinking it was pal **Jason Sellers** on the phone, pulling a prank. To make the story real appealing and very international...seems Bekka met Billy Joel in Tokyo when she was there with **Richie Sambora** of **Bon Jovi**, whom she was dating at the time. Seems Joel had a crush on her mom, **Bonnie**

FOR THE KIDS



Last issue we told you about Reba's single, "What If," a tribute to the Salvation Army, with proceeds from the song's sales going directly to the organization. When she debuted the song at a Dallas Cowboys/Tennessee Oilers football game, she was joined by Robert Watson of the Salvation Army; Charles Hailey, Darren Woodson and Herschel Walker of the Cowboys; and some VIP's—three children who survived the Oklahoma City federal building bombing: Christopher Nygen, Rebecca Denny and Brandon Denny. The Salvation Army was instrumental in assisting families affected by the senseless bombing.

Bramlett. Bon Jovi was gigging on the beautiful island of Japan at the time.

At a less romantic spot, Cookeville, Tennessee, **Little Texas** performed their last gig as a group. A few years back, with several hits under their belt, they saw member **Brady Seals** depart for a solo career. They promised to continue; however, after taking off almost a year, they found their last album did not sell well and radio did not play the two singles. So the group is no more.

Buffalo Club came out of the chute with a couple of harmony-driven hits in the vein of the late **Restless Heart**. Matter of fact, Buffalo Club drummer/singer **John Dittrich** formerly had the same position with Restless Heart. When talk started brewing about resurrecting Restless Heart with former lead singer **Larry Stewart**, why Dittrich sashayed back to his former band, leaving Buffalo Club. There were rumors of Buffalo Club members **Ron Hembey** and **Charlie Kelley** becoming a duo, but they hung it up and are both pursuing solo careers.

REMEMBERING AMIE

Singer **Amie Comeaux** was killed in a one-car crash on Interstate 12 near her hometown of Brusly, Louisiana, when she lost

control of the vehicle she was driving after hitting a slick spot on the rainswept highway. The 21-year-old singer, her grandmother and a ten-year-old family friend were heading home after singing with a church group. Amie's grandmother and the young girl survived and were recuperating as this is written. For many years Music Row's **Harold Shedd** worked with Amie. She was signed to Polydor Records at age 16, and released an album in 1994 which included "Moving Out" (written for her by **K.T. Oslin**), "Who's She to You" and "Takin' It Back." After the label closed down, Amie returned home but continued singing.

OAKS GETTING THEIR DUE

I was pleased to learn that TNN is finally giving **The Oak Rige Boys** the chance they deserve with their own TV show. The foursome will tape the variety-type show in Las Vegas. The 15-episode series will make its debut April 7. The Oaks, who perform often in Vegas, have hired *GQ Magazine* fashion editor **Pieter O'Brien** as image consultant for the show. O'Brien is the one who made The Oaks' **Richard Sterban** the best-dressed man in show biz. With flash and glitter, guest stars and comedy, and good ole Oaks harmony,

People

GIRLS ON FILM



Monument Records act, The Dixie Chicks, recently filmed their first video with director Chris Rogers. The clip is for their first single, "I Can Love You Better." The Chicks are, left to right: Emily Erwin, Natalie Tarabay and Martie Seidel. The lucky man at the right is Rogers. If looks are any predictor, it should be a winner.

hopefully the show will have a long run. When TNN announced they were targeting 25-to-54-year-olds with the show, Sterban drawled in his gut-wrenching, low bass voice, "And I'm glad we're embarking on this while I'm still in that age bracket." When asked if they'd be in friendly competition with **The Statler Brothers'** show on TNN, **Joe Bonsall** quipped, "I've been telling them for years they are older and uglier than us."

SYMPATHY

We send our sympathy to **George and Paul Richey** on the death of their mother. The marvelous **Stamps Quartet** with **J.D. Sumner** provided the music for the funeral in Missouri. **Tammy Wynette** is Mrs. George Richey. We also send condolences to **Doug Stone**, whose mother, **Gail Menscer**, died of cancer in Warm Springs, Georgia.

HOLLY HEADING HOME

Holly Dunn has quit her radio gig in Michigan and headed home to Nashville. Holly also expressed disappointment with her record label, River North, and the way they handled her latest product. Holly said the label made a mistake when they fired the in-house promotion staff and used independent promoters. Officials at the label said radio wouldn't have played Holly's latest album, *Leave*

hundreds are making records. **Willie, Waylon, Merle, Cash, Loretta, Tammy, Gene Watson** are not being played on radio. Advertisers' focus is youth.

HEY, RUSS, FEEL YOUR MILEAGE?

Loretta Lynn's twins, **Patsy** and **Peggy**, signed to Reprise Records, recently made their singing debut on the Grand Ole Opry. Loretta had planned to make a surprise appearance as well but came down with that awful flu everybody had. The girls did a fine job. I know our illustrious leader, **Russell Barnard**, recalls when those twins were born, and I know he can't help but feel his mileage when he reads this!

POSSUM ALWAYS DOES IT HIS WAY

TNN is trying something new, and I love the idea. It's a series of shows hosted by everybody's favorite singer, **George Jones**. They are in production as we write and include guests that George likes to have over at his house. People who can sing, like **Loretta Lynn, Sara Evans, Billy Ray Cyrus, Alan Jackson, Johnny Paycheck, The Lynns, Patty Loveless, Vince Gill** and more. They sit around and talk and pick and sing like they do at a guitar pull. If ratings are not good for this show, I may hang up my pen.

Editor's note: More country music greats who've died recently, including Carl Perkins, will be covered next issue. See also Final Note.

One Bridge Standing. It's difficult for artists at radio right now. Probably there will never again be a time where the fans requests determine the hits like they used to. There are consultants for radio who advise what records to play, and a 40-song play list, while virtually

LOVETT ON WHEELS



Motorcycle enthusiast Lyle Lovett recently taped an episode of *Bike Week* for the Speedvision network. After a few laps around the track, Lyle poses with show host Genevieve Marie and world champion bike racer Freddie Spencer. The show includes a visit to Spencer's riding school in Las Vegas, where Lovett took some lessons and picked up a few tips.

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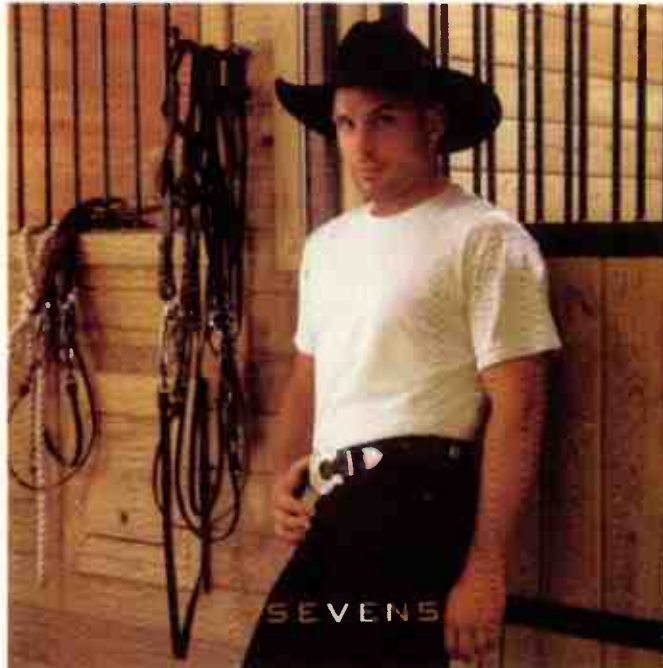
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Garth Brooks

Sevens
Capitol 56599

A smart man. No, a brilliant one. For just knowing how to play the game and work the industry, Troyal Garth Brooks has earned a place in the Hall of Fame. There was the 1997 tour, the high-rated Central Park concert broadcast over HBO. He also proved his business acumen by cleverly withholding release of *Sevens*. It wasn't released until top EMI honchos agreed to oust Capitol/Nashville headman Scott Hendricks in favor of Garth-approved execs. The jury's out on what other Capitol/Nashville artists think of that deal. One thing's beyond argument: *Sevens* helped alleviate a bum year for record sales across the industry.

Speaking objectively, it serves as a tribute to Garth's implicit knowledge of his fans' needs and how he'll travel the extra mile—no, *miles*—to give them what they expect. If they want a bit of funky Texas dance music, he digs out Steve Wariner's "Longneck Bottle," full of the stomping Western swing that Garth's hero, George Strait, used so brilliantly. Granted, his vocal gets a bit shrill at times, and the instrumental sound's a tad thin, but it's still a slick Lone Star hors d'oeuvre. Many older Garth fans undoubtedly recall Rupert Holmes' 1979 pop hit, "The Pina Colada Song," and Jimmy Buffett's 1977 tropical anthem, "Margaritaville." With the 70's nostalgia gene a vital part of Garth's music, he serves up the very similar "Two Pina Coladas." Line dancers also have their needs. For them, there's "Cowboy Cadillac," a Bryan Kennedy/Garth Brooks-penned ode to a



"honkin' tonkin'/Everything I'm wantin'/Cowboy Cadillac."

Another segment of fans love self-help tunes. Those folks receive three entire units of courage: "How You Ever Gonna Know," written by Brooks and Kent Blazy, boasts noble sentiments about dreams becoming "reality" and is buttressed by Pat Flynn's "Do What You Gotta Do" with backing by part of New Grass Revival. Realizing some fans revel in still deeper thought, he offers "When There's No One Around," a bit of late-night introspection honoring the Inner Child inside us all. What's more, you can own these three songs for a helluva lot less than buying the whole Tony Robbins inspirational series.

For those who revel in songs of friendship, there's the symphonically-arranged "A Friend to Me," a Brooks collaboration with the insufferable Victoria Shaw, boasting lyrics one only finds on the best greeting cards (check the

"Friendship" section in your local card store). For the more spiritual-minded, there's "Fit for a King," a sad, dramatic tale of a dying street preacher. "Belleau Wood," based on an actual World War I Christmas incident, may seem a cynical conclusion (the record was, after all, released before the holidays), yet its let's-live-together-as-one sentiment honors the sentiments on pop records since the hippie-dippy 60's.

On to romance, where the Blazy-Kim Williams-Brooks lost-love ballad, "She's Gonna Make It," seems an anomaly. This bittersweet little drama about a failed marriage seems surprisingly real and fresh, particularly compared to the gauzy, cut and dried "You Move Me" and "I Don't Have to Wonder." Tackling the lighter side of love's bumpy road is "Take the Keys to My Heart," though some cynics might choose to dismiss it as a witless hook song. Garth albums, of course, are events

with events inside. This time, he provides "In Another's Eyes," a duet with Trisha that can be viewed as pretentious fluff or a masterpiece, depending on your perspective. Trisha fans can buy this "masterpiece" again—on her *Greatest Hits* collection. Shrewd marketing.

So in the end, we have about what I expected: a Garth album calculated to service every major demographic within his massive audience. On a personal note, I must admit being inspired when in "How You Ever Gonna Know" he sings, "Listen not to the critics/Who put their own dreams on the shelf." The message is clear: you gotta stand for something. And, dammit, he's right. So, Garth, I'll take my stand here and now. If *Sevens* was a room instead of an album, you could assemble a computer chip inside. It's pristine, grit-free, and staggeringly sterile. No surprises, no spontaneity—just guaranteed, meticulously crafted RIAA-certified platinum.

—RICH KIENZLE

Delbert McClinton

One of the Fortunate Few
Rising Tide RTD-53042

How did this album sneak into the Top 20 of *Billboard's* country album charts?

Don't get me wrong; this is a wonderful record, full of soulful growling by McClinton and catchy tunes co-written with his Nashville buddy, Gary Nicholson. But McClinton has been making great music for years without much notice from the country charts, and this project has a lot more in common with *The Fabulous Thunderbirds* and *Robert Cray* than with *Garth Brooks*

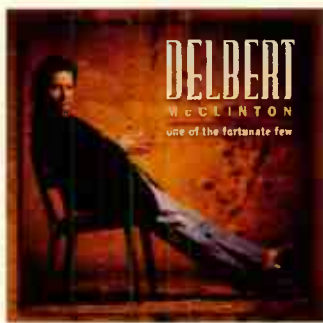
Record Reviews

and LeAnn Rimes. Ah, well, perhaps we should leave the mysteries of the marketplace to someone else's invisible hand and just sit back and enjoy the party.

When Cray and The T-Birds turned their combinations of Texas blues and Memphis soul into hit records in 1986, bar bands all across this land thought they had glimpsed the promised land of a long-awaited blues revival. There has been a flood of soul-blues releases since then, many of which have been respectable, even admirable, but they have lacked the two essential ingredients that gave the genre its artistic peak 30 years ago, as well as its brief resurgence 12 years ago—terrific songs and outstanding singers. Suffice it to say, McClinton's *One of the Fortunate Few* has both.

Some of McClinton's biggest fans are stars more famous than he, and a bunch of them make guest appearances on this album. Nonetheless, it's McClinton's own coarse-grained Texas baritone—as supple as a snake and as definitive in its bite—that dominates the soundscape. McClinton finds the place where R&B and country overlap in gospel on “Sending Me Angels,” and his slow, powerful vocal is reinforced by Vince Gill's harmonies and Lee Roy Parnell's slide guitar. Tom Petty's Benmont Tench plays the boogie-woogie piano that drives the blues complaint of “Too Much Stuff,” and McClinton shares the vocals with Lyle Lovett and John Prine. The host matches his two guests in raspy quirkiness and buries them when it comes to sheer lung power.

“Monkey Around” is a Southern-rock number with Parnell playing Duane Allman to Steuart Smith's Dickey Betts. When McClinton belts out the chorus, “Yeah, you made a man into a monkey/ Now the monkey's gonna monkey around,” Patty Loveless and Pam Tillis are on hand to add “ooh-oohs” as if they were The Ikettes. B.B. King is the



guest of honor on “Leap of Faith,” and when McClinton describes how he overcame heartbreak to get back in the romantic ring again, Bekka Bramlett appears to match him shout for shout.

It's McClinton's co-producer and co-writer, Gary Nicholson, who makes the difference in the material. Nicholson, whose day job is writing mainstream-country hits, indulges his blues jones at night and has come up with rollicking uptempo numbers and gospel-drenched ballads. Most importantly, Nicholson's lyrics contain both the irreverent wit that Cray lacks and the confessional angst that The T-Birds lack. The humor crackles in McClinton's tongue-in-cheek vocal on “Old Weakness (Coming on Strong),” but an aching need can be felt in his restrained duet with Mavis Staples on “Somebody to Love You.” —GEOFFREY HIMES

Shania Twain *Come On Over* Mercury 314-536-003

You've got to hand it to Shania Twain and her husband/producer/co-writer/all-around musical partner, Mutt Lange. The two of them (and I do mean the two of them, since Lange, who made his big mark producing those aging arena rock boys, Def Leppard, even sings harmonies on his wife's records) have come up with a slick, glitzy, trigger-snappy sound and style that's so machine-like in efficiency and effectiveness it verges on formulaic.

Mutt and Shania are indeed the possessors of a genius that's as narrow and calculating as it is appealing. I'll be surprised if *Come On Over*, Twain's third album and follow-up to her nine million-selling second album, *The Woman in Me*, won't do as well if not better at the cash register as its blockbusting predecessor.

Whatever else it is, or isn't (and I'll get to that), *Come On Over* is also a perfect 16-song promotional piece for Twain's much ballyhooed forthcoming tour. (We got a taste of her much-anticipated live show when she performed on last year's CMA Awards show, and she was pretty spectacular.)



The music itself on *Come On Over* is slick, alluring, even erotically suggestive in a playful sort of way. It's also, for the most part, refreshingly surfacey—devoid of much intent beyond mere entertainment and titillation. Its roots seem more anchored in an inventive amalgam of 70's Carpenter's music (laugh if you want, but I sometimes hear faint intimations of the late Karen Carpenter's lovely voice in Twain's singing) and early 80's disco and pop. There's not a lot here that has much to do with Tammy or Dolly, or even Reba and Patty, for that matter.

For all the above reasons, and also because it's immensely fun to listen to (much the same way that cotton candy is fun to eat), country radio seems to be gobbling up *Come On Over*. As of this writing, my local FM country station is playing “Love Gets Me Every Time,” the first single

from the album, about three times an hour.

But as I say, don't look for much hidden meaning here. What you hear on first or second listen is pretty much what you're going to get. This is hooky, sexy, riff- and beat-oriented drive-time music to the max. For the most part, the medium is the message. The tracks are deftly layered with intriguing harmonies, tape delays, double trackings and other provocative effects like electronically simulated hand claps and space age instrumentation (electric sitars, guitar Talk Boxes, even something called the “cosmic steel”).

Throughout, Twain adds her own little punctuation marks in the form of countless yips, yelps, trills, gasps, sobs, whippers and assorted heavy breathing. The beat, the hook, the sob, the sigh, is everything. *Come On Over* even seems to be mastered for the limited attention span. The 16 tracks virtually segue from one to the next, as if Mutt and Shania, having gotten hold of listeners, don't even want a let 'em get away for a nano-second.

As for Lange's and Twain's song lyrics.... Well, suffice it to say Bob Dylan ain't quaking in his boots. There's hardly a cliché left unturned on songs like “Man! I Feel Like a Woman!” and “Rock This Country!” One of my favorite snippets comes in the opening lines of “Whatever You Do! Don't!”: “Deep in Denialville/Tryin' a' fight the way I feel/I go jello when you smile....”

But as easy as they are to overlook amidst all the production gimmicks and vocal tricks, there are a couple of songs that actually betray a little artistry. “Don't Be Stupid (You Know I Love You)” is a particularly vivid plea from a woman trying to put her insecure man at ease, and it's rife with tantalizing detail: “You're so complicated/You hang over my shoulder/When I read my mail.”

Trite lyrics aside, *Come On Over* is chock-full of hits. There's even an earnest attempt at romantic soulfulness

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in the form of "From This Moment On," a duet with Bryan White that has the high sheen of hair spray. No doubt country radio, those arch-purveyors of glitzy mediocrity, will lick this one right up too.

Uh-oh. Already I can hear the sound of pencils grinding in pencil sharpeners as a million and one (make that nine million and one) Shania Twain fanatics out there set about writing nasty letters to my bosses here at the magazine, letting them know that I'm the Anti-Christ in the guise of a middle-aged country record reviewer.

But hold your horses, all you would-be poison pen pals! I enjoyed *Come On Over* every time I played it—right up till I gift-wrapped it and gave it to a little ten-year-old pal of mine for Christmas.

So really, you should save your spleen for matters more worthy of your indignation. Besides, I think you should take to heart my ten-year-old buddy's verdict on *Come On Over* more than mine, since she's a lot closer to the demographic group that it seems to be aimed for.

She loves it! —BOB ALLEN

The Mavericks

Trampoline
MCA 70018

It's been a good while since the gang from Miami, responsible for some of the best music of this era, have checked in. And this one sure is different. Don't look for boot-scooters or garden-variety honky-tonk. Lead singer Raul Malo wrote or co-wrote all but one of the 13 songs, drawing from various genres, ranging from Latino to rock, from 1920's American pop to gospel, country and swing.

They seem to have recorded it the way all records were once made: live in the studio, a technique rarely used, but one that can still give a record presence and immediacy that no cold, clinical set of overdubs



can match. The band's frequently backstopped by horn sections, background voices and, in places, strings (not fiddles) as occasional solo trumpet drives home a Latin feel appropriate to Malo's Cuban heritage. If the live aspect has a drawback, it's that Malo's voice seems further back in the mix than it should be.

After Malo's semi-Latin rocker, "Dance the Night Away," opens up, they fall into hard B.B. King blues with "Tell Me Why" before turning to a Tejano feel with the rocking "I Should Know," co-written with Al Anderson. Malo, whose strong Roy Orbison influence is no secret, offers it twice. The shaded one's spirit wafts through the ballads, "To Be With You," co-penned with fellow Orbisonite James House, and the Malo-Jaime Hanna "I've Got This Feeling."

"Fool #1," a torchy, loungy Malo-Anderson ballad with strings, vibes and piano surrounding a Malo vocal in the Ray Charles groove, breaks no new ground, but the entire performance is so beautifully executed that it's one of several high points on the record.

The band-written "I Don't Even Know Your Name," the most typically country number here, features the group minus added instruments. The smoldering Jaime Hanna-Ken Alphin rocker, "I Hope You Want Me Too," re-establishes a party groove. That continues with Malo's light but tasty "Melbourne Mambo," an instrumental that could bring a smile to Desi Arnaz. If the album starts to lose ground toward the end, blame "Dolores."

Malo vocalizing with a megaphone, the way 1920's pop stars like Rudy Vallee did, comes off as way too campy to add much. "Save a Prayer" hits the gospel button, though it, too, is disappointingly by-the-numbers. Wisely enough, Malo signs off with a solo acoustic performance of "Dream River," a song he co-wrote with Kostas, its melodic structure conjuring up the Pee Wee King-penned pop standard, "You Belong to Me," at times.

Normally, I find the work of Don Cook, who co-produced this with Malo and produces so many others, to be reeking with formula. His work with The Mavs, however, has always been just the opposite, reflecting creativity, integrity and quality. Maybe this is the real Cook. Whether *Trampoline* has the same effect on the band's audience that previous sets had is anyone's guess. Some people like these excursions through the history of popular music and some don't. Few others I can think of, however, could pull it off with this sort of chutzpah.

—RICH KIENZLE



Chris Knight
Chris Knight
Decca DRND-70007

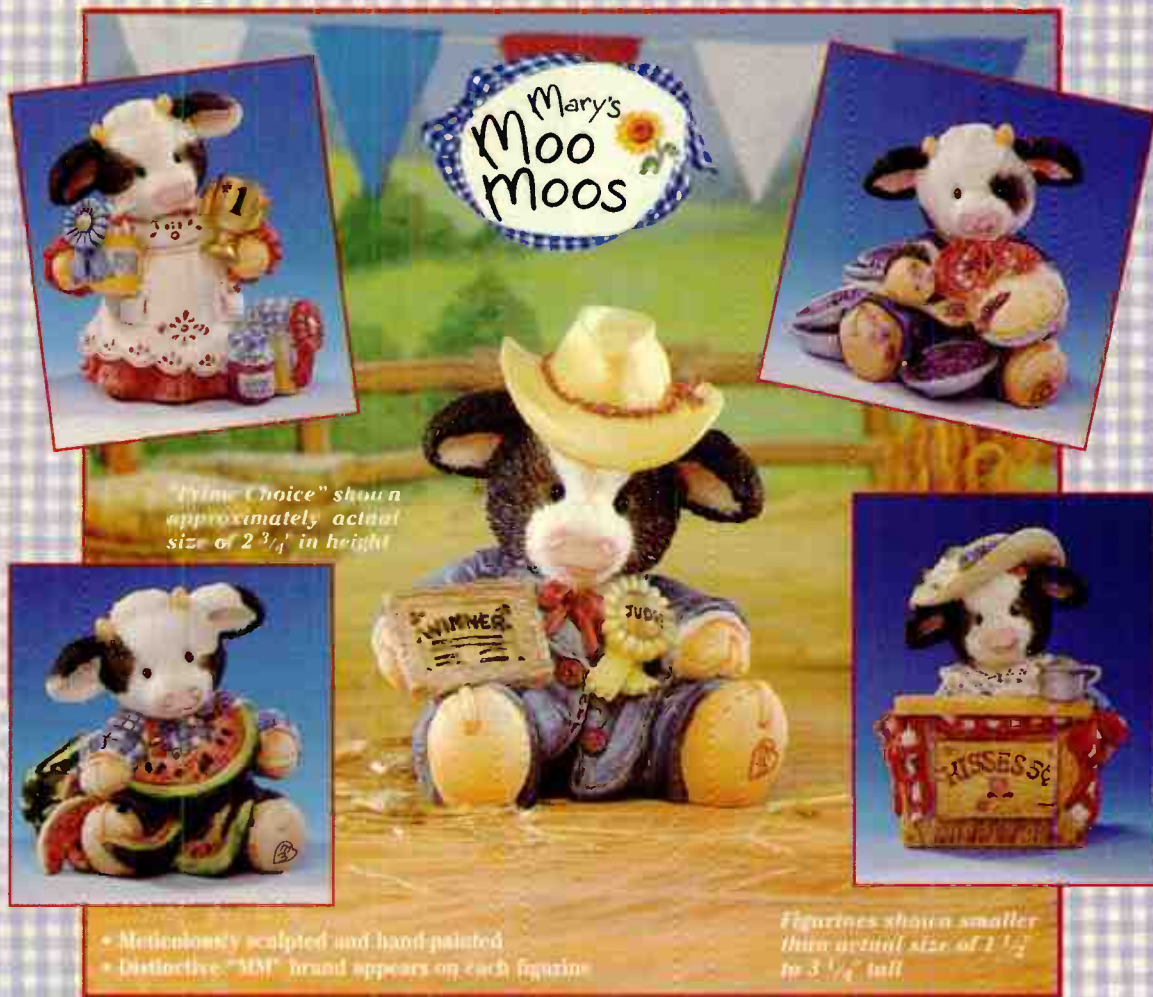
Rumor down on Music Row that at the end of last year was that there was an undercurrent of rebellion building at a couple of labels against the tapioca pop sameness that serves as the mortar between the major building blocks of country record sales such as

Garth, LeAnn, Tim and Alan Jackson. Decca gets kudos for making that rumor fact with this edgy debut.

Firstly, I have to point out the obvious: Chris Knight owes an enormous debt of style and attitude to Steve Earle and no small amount to the darker side of John Prine. He acknowledges these debts, in part, by using key studio musicians here whose backgrounds include recording with Earle, John Mellencamp, Joe Ely, Jackson Brown and Neil Young. But drawing from such a deep well as that of country-rock 'n' roll's premier outspoken bad boy and folk music's most brilliantly original vision and voice doesn't necessarily mean one has to be slavishly imitative. Knight delivers self-penned songs with sufficient grit and story to avoid that trap. His subjects aren't dewy-eyed middle-class coeds or secretaries, they're too complex and challenged to just be "pretty people" dreaming of a safe love.

From the git-go Knight lays out his story, albeit one that often runs parallel to Earle's own. "It Ain't Easy Being Me" introduces us to an artist from the coal fields of Kentucky, who knows he's a screw-up, and while he's not particularly proud of it, he knows he's not going to change. "There ought to be a town somewhere/Named for how I feel/Yeah I could be the mayor down there/And say welcome to Sorryville..." This, to me, connects viscerally to the desperate confessions of restless original honky-tonk heroes, of being from the wrong side of the tracks and still hell bound. There are people about whom nothing is as attractive as their refusal to apologize for being fairly unattractive. Knight may be one of those in real life—I don't know—but he sure enough writes like one and writes about others who are like that to the core.

Dark, brooding, with a feral languidity and appropriately angry, Knight sings of a fel-



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Record Reviews

low who rails against fate that saw his wife run off with a salesman, leaving him with two kids and no helper on his small family farm in "House and 90 Acres": "My roots are anchored solid/I ain't machinery I'm a man/I'll be here in the morning..." even if it kills him. "Summer of '75" is a love song, but has nothing in common with the thin, pasty romantic gruel that props up the radio format between the million-sellers' latest singles.

I'll confess: I wanted to hate this record. How dare someone get inside the sound of such unique artists, I thought. But for all the comparisons with Earle and Prine—who for that matter are still making records and could probably do country radio some good if it'd only let them in—Chris Knight delivers the songs that rank him as also genuine. He deserves a fair hearing. Amateurs imitate; pros absorb influences and make them their own.

—BOB MILLARD

Jim Lauderdale

Whisper
BNA 66996

As a songwriter, Jim Lauderdale is a little bit like Harlan Howard, Buck Owens and Rodney Crowell all rolled into one. He has a rare and brilliant knack for sculpting an everyday turn of phrase or mundane snippet of conversation into a thrilling two-and-a-half to three-minute gem of emotional epiphany. He also has a spectacular flair for leavening the gravity and self-pity of lost-love laments with pinches of droll irony and tongue-in-cheek humor.

You might call it the complexity of simplicity—something that's at the heart of just about all great country music—all the way from Hank Williams to John Michael Montgomery...(just kidding).

Most of you have already heard Lauderdale's craftsmanship via hits he's penned for George Strait ("King of Bro-

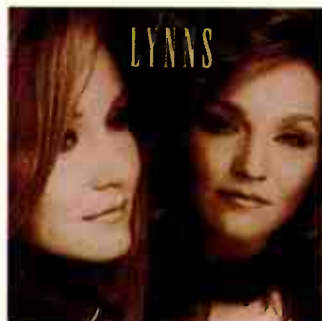


ken Hearts," "Where the Sidewalk Ends"—two of eight Lauderdale originals Strait has recorded), Patty Loveless ("Halfway Down," "You Don't Seem to Miss Me"—the latter a stunning duet with George Jones), Mark Chesnutt ("Gonna Get a Life"), Vince Gill ("Sparkle") and Buddy Miller ("Hole in My Head").

Just about every cut on *Whisper*, Lauderdale's latest album, is of a similar caliber—most all these 13 previously unrecorded originals would be right at home on a vintage album by Strait, Loveless, Jones, Buck Owens or Waylon Jennings. And some of them, no doubt, will end up there.

In contrast to his several previous albums, Lauderdale has intentionally narrowed his palate on *Whisper*, focusing on a more resolutely roots country vibe. He's sharpened the vibe by co-writing with veteran masters like Harlan Howard (they co-penned two of these 13 standout tracks, including the incredibly clever, whimsical "We're Gone" and a fine honky-tonk lament, "Goodbye Song"); Frank Dycus (he and Lauderdale share credits on four songs); and Melba Montgomery (Lauderdale co-wrote "What Do You Say to That" with Montgomery, a 60's George Jones duet partner who was, in her time, every bit the singer Tammy Wynette was in her heyday). Lauderdale also collaborated with John Scott Sherrill and Buddy Miller (the latter cut their co-written "Hole in My Head" on *Poison Love*, his fine 1997 album) on one song each.

Though Lauderdale doesn't have the world class pipes, of,



say, Strait or Jones, he's an able and expressive singer, all the same. On "Without You Here," he turns in a credibly jittery Waylon Jennings-style performance that's underscored with some eerie electric slide guitar passages. "It's Hard to Keep a Secret Anymore" is the wrenching confession of a man who sees a million little danger signals of his lover's waning affection for him, but is powerless to reverse the emotional slide. "Hole in My Head" is a bitter, rollicking love lament made all the more compelling by its off-the-wall lyrics. My favorite, though, is the warm-hearted, delightfully (and I think intentionally) hokey "In Harm's Way," where the pain and surprise of love's deception is likened to the wreck of the Titanic. "Like that old Titanic running full steam ahead/You fogged up my mind with love words you said."

Whisper closes out with a real treat: a Lauderdale-penned bluegrass/gospel outing, "I'll Lead You Home," where he's joined by Ralph Stanley and The Clinch Mountain Boys.

My only minor complaint about *Whisper* is that Lauderdale at times seems a little too intent on keeping it between the hard country lines. Occasionally, when he tries to conjure up intimations of George Jones or Hank Thompson, he tends to push his voice a little beyond its limits. When he does, it's hard to tell whether he's being overly earnest or merely trying to inject a slight element of parody.

Aside from that, *Whisper* is a fine showcase for one of this

generation's finest country writers. A record like this—especially when it's released by a major Nashville label—suggests that maybe country music, at least as we've known and loved it for so long, may yet survive all the travesties that Music Row has visited upon it these past few years.

—BOB ALLEN

The Lynns

The Lynns
Reprise 46754

Much like The Judds' 1984 debut album, *The Lynns* is a similarly timely and delightful debut that could, like The Judds' first record did in its time, give contemporary country music a much-needed and much-deserved kick in the pants.

It's awfully easy to draw at least a few comparisons between the early Judds and Peggy and Patsy Lynn, who happen to be Loretta Lynn's 32-year-old twin daughters. The Lynns are far more of a musical democracy than The Judds, where Wynonna's remarkable voice always dominated things.

In fact, Peggy's and Patsy's voices sound so similar on most of these ten tracks that it's hard to tell where one sister ends and the other begins. Yet their duet sound has a familial ease and assurance very much like The Judds. And their musical charm lies in a similarly intriguing mix of the old and the new.

The Lynns, though, have an earthier vocal approach that's rooted more resolutely in the 60's-style honky tonk that their mother helped popularize, with hints of rockabilly and contemporary balladeering thrown into the mix.

The Lynns call their music "honkabilly," and it's a clever marketing handle, if little else. There are, in fact, quite a few spirited numbers on *The Lynns* that live up to this label. "Woman to Woman" is a brassy Peggy & Patsy original

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that sounds like a 90's spin on their mom's defiant 1966 hit, "You Ain't Woman Enough to Take My Man."

"This Must Be Love" is a Kostas/James House-penned tune with a nifty 60's feel supplied by pounding drums and big steel and reverbed guitar passages that curlicue deliciously around the vocals.

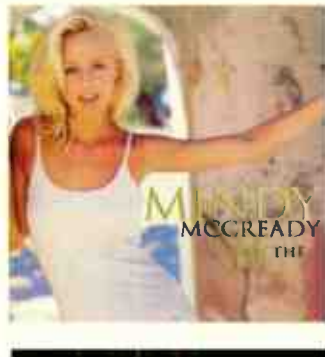
But the most compelling moments are on the more laid-back ballads. "Nights Like These" (another of the eight Lynn sisters' originals herein and the first single from the album) beautifully showcases the sisters' harmonic range. The muscular, rock-steady rhythm track is the signature of producer Don Cook (Brooks & Dunn, The Mavericks, etc.), who's even punched up the sweet ballads with tough, kicking, string-free arrangements with drums, guitar and steel front and center.

Another original, "It Hurts Me," is a similar masterpiece. This simple, broken-heart song has a lilting, almost dream-like 60's feel with subtle intimations of the softer side of Patsy Cline (who happens to be Patsy Lynn's namesake). Cook's great arrangement is reminiscent of some of the evocative tracks he's made with The Mavericks, and it almost perfectly enhances The Lynns' voices.

Like many debut albums, *The Lynns* has its weak spots. Though their original songs are pretty, some of them are marred by moon-in-June lyrics and are little more than convenient vehicles for their pretty harmonies. Now and then, Cook's aggressively percussive arrangements tend to overwhelm the vocals.

I also think that, as Patsy and Peggy find their way around the studio a little more, we'll get a better sampling of their individual voices, which are pretty much submerged in these tight harmonies.

But all in good time. I think. Hopefully, we'll be hearing even bigger and better things from The Lynns in times to come. —BOB ALLEN



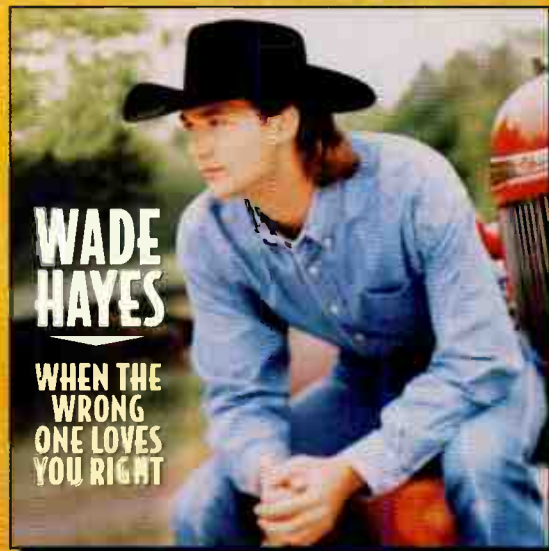
Mindy McCready
If I Don't Stay the Night
BNA 67504

Mindy McCready's new CD has 11 songs and multimedia elements, in a trend that's seeing extra value for those whose home computers are rigged for video and good audio. It also contains a free 50-hour subscription to the America Online Internet service, which is kind of weird, but there you have it. For the rest of us low-tech music fans, there's what's between the grooves, and by that standard it is a mixed blessing.

"What If I Do" has a good pedigree, being written by hitmakers Mark D. Sanders, Ed Hill and the producer of this effort, David Malloy. But it reaches just a little too hard toward a Shania Twain quirky perkiness to suit me. It sets a tone for lightweight pre-sexual angst and assorted other behavior carried the next step by "If I Don't Stay the Night." "Cross Against the Moon" reaches for a brooding, Southern, Bobbie Gentry sultriness and story, but comes off as little more than a breathy evocation of Marilyn Monroe and James Dean, and—of course—the ubiquitous theme of sexual innocence under fire. In "For a Good Time Call," the singer tries to turn a different leaf, but can't seem to give it away. Adolescent.

Continuing the second theme of willing initiate to love, "The Other Side of This Kiss" offers the lyrics "Show me heart/Show me emotions/

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Patty Loveless

Country Music Album



Bryan White

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- Joe Dillie**—*Third Rock From The Sun* (Epic) 489*260
- The Tractors** (Arista) 488*551
- Vince Gill**—*When Love Finds You* (MCA) 486*308
- Tracy Byrd**—*No Ordinary Man* (MCA) 484*758
- "B Seconds"**—Orig. Sndtrk. Reba McEntire, Vince Gill, etc. (MCA Nashville) 475*483

- Patty Loveless**—*Long Stretch Of Lonesome* (Epic) 228*676
- Alan Jackson**—*Who I Am* (Arista) 486*233
- Reba McEntire**—*Read My Mind* (MCA Nashville) 479*717
- Reba McEntire**—*It's Your Call* (MCA) 450*361
- Great Wedding Songs**—Various Artists (Warner Bros.) 477*448
- Jeff Foxworthy**—*You Might Be A Redneck If...* (Warner Bros.) 474*833

- Jason Sellers**—*I'm Your Man* (BNA Records) 225*680
- Delbert McClinton**—*Honky Tonk 'N' Blues* (MCA Nashville) 475*970
- Mavericks**—*What A Crying Shame* (MCA Nashville) 474*403
- Alan Jackson**—*A Lot About Livin' (And A Little 'Bout Love)* (Arista) 447*458
- Collin Raye**—*In This Life* (Epic) 447*268
- Toby Keith**—(Mercury/Nashville) 458*315

- The Kinleys**—*Just Between You And Me* (Epic) 223*271
- Reba McEntire**—*Live* (MCA) 400*739/390*732
- Billy Ray Cyrus**—*Some Gave All* (Mercury/Nashville) 441*451
- Lyle Lovett** (MCA/Curb) ★ 353*755
- Falch Hill**—*Take Me As I Am* (Warner Bros.) 473*728
- John Michael Montgomery**—*Kickin' It Up* (Atlantic) 473*157

- Lorrie Morgan**—*Shakin' Things Up* (BNA Records) 222*877
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- Nanci Griffith**—*The MCA Years* (MCA) ★ 470*971

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- Bob Woodruff**—*Desire Road* (Imprint) 182*121
- John Michael Montgomery**—*Life's A Dance* (Atlantic) 453*746
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- Clay Walker**—*Rumor Has It* (Giant) 186*692
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- George Strait**—*Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind* (MCA) 330*704

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- Kenny Rogers**—*20 Greatest Hits* (Reprise) 444*885
- Hank Williams, Sr.**—*40 Grt. Hits* (Polydor) 423*863/393*868
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- Alison Krauss**—*Now That I've Found You: A Collection* (Rounder) 120*345

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- George Jones**—*Super Hits* (Epic) 362*699
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- Johnny Cash**—*Columbia Records 1958-86* (Columbia) 352*765
- George Strait**—*Ten Strait Hits* (MCA) 432*617
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- John Anderson**—*Grt. Hits* (BNA Records) 169*409
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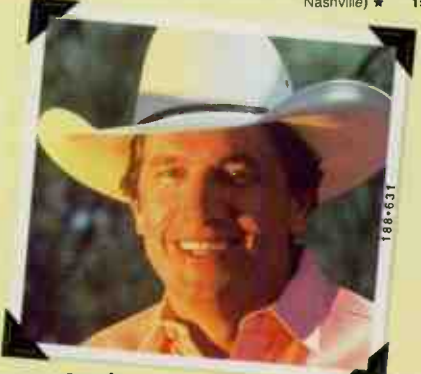
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Record Reviews

Show me parts of you/That I can't see...." (!?) Well, it's catchy, even if you might feel like you're mired in a one-furrow field by this point in the record.

But, then we get to something really good. "You'll Never Know" is a delightfully jangly, pop-style song about keeping her chin up after her fellow dumps her. It's torchy and vulnerable like a Lorrie Morgan classic. It has drive and melody and a message we who have gotten the braces off our teeth can better identify with. The maturity and the many elements of classic country music in "The Fine Art of Holding a Woman" recommend it highly. It's as though McCready went through some sort of mental puberty halfway through this CD, and this at last is the grown-up stuff. She ends with a pretty-enough cover of Gary White's deliciously aching "Long, Long Time"—done much more powerfully and memorably by Linda Ronstadt some years ago, but one suspects McCready's audience doesn't know about that.

So, McCready offers a piece of product that comes wrapped with everything except a side order of fries, but delivers an emotional pastiche that divides rather than bridges the generation lines.

—BOB MILLARD

Wynonna *The Other Side* Curb 53061

One could certainly say Wynonna's road to solo stardom has been fraught with potholes large and small, musical and otherwise. Laurence Leamer's recent book, *Three Chords and the Truth*, chronicled some of those stumbles. Some of them reflect badly on Wy herself; others, however, stemmed from unrealistic expectations many had for her in the wake of The Judds' breakup. I've always liked her husky, gutsy voice,



which could get down and funky if the spirit moved her. That voice is consistent on *The Other Side*, though at times she leans so heavily on that growly vocal edge that it loses some of its effect. Brent Maher's production, using current Nashville A-Teamers, is consistent, if often too slick for its (and her) own good.

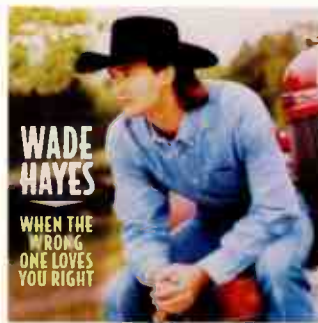
The emphasis here is on rockers that sound infectious, the first couple of times, at least. Many are heavy on Chuck Berry chunka-chunka rhythms, which show up on no less than five songs: "When Love Starts Talkin'," "The Kind of Fool Love Makes," "Love's Funny That Way," "Troubled Heart and a Troubled Mind" and "The Wyld Unknown." Another, "Love Like That," is hot enough to make one ignore the consciously heavy dance rhythm, though it takes a back seat to "Don't You Throw That Mojo on Me." The lyrics aren't much, but it's nice to hear Naomi's cameo appearance as they reprise the type of light-touch rocker they excelled on; co-composer Kenny Wayne Shepard backs them with some stinging lead guitar.

The ballads here are workmanlike and well-executed if less than groundbreaking. "Come Some Rainy Day" and "The Other Side" differ little from the material Trisha Yearwood and other female singers have been recording for years. Clearly, "Why Now" was aimed at the adult pop market, with nary a country overtone to be heard beyond Bruce Bouton's pedal steel. This would be fine if she were trying something differ-

ent. But it's too much of the same thing everyone else is doing. "We Can't Unmake Love," a duet with John Berry, comes off as just another garden-variety stunt. The Judds were at their best when they sounded like they were hanging out in the studio trying whatever came to mind, the band following their lead. That looseness is virtually nonexistent here. All this meticulous funk and bombast, geared to playing it safe, deflates the entire album after a few listens, making it sound like too many others.

Wynonna would be unbeatable if she'd veer off the beaten path and take some risks. That clearly wasn't the plan this time, a fact reflected in the back pages of the booklet with the CD. Among her dedications and thanks to friends and others is one stating, "To Retail & Radio: I pray that you can fit me into your format." That single statement tells it all about why *The Other Side* pulls its punches so completely, a sad commentary on the entire industry at century's end.

—RICH KIENZLE



Wade Hayes *When the Wrong One Loves You Right* Columbia/DKC CK68037

By the time he was 27, Wade Hayes had racked up five Top Ten singles from his first two albums and had established himself as one of the hottest young acts in country music. Now he's 28, and his third album, *When the Wrong*

One Loves You Right, lifts him out of the baby-hat pack and onto another level. He's no longer content to be the new kid in town; he wants to make a place for himself in country music history.

He may just do it, too, if he keeps growing as much as he has between his second and third albums. Hayes has always had a terrific honky-tonk voice, a deep baritone with an Oklahoma drawl that sounds relaxed and personal at any pitch and at any tempo. And he has always had a genuine commitment to traditional country, preferring hardtwang to soft-rock. On his new album, Hayes finally gets a chance to test that voice and that commitment against material with some real emotional heft to it.

There's no better example of this than the album's first single, "The Day That She Left Tulsa (In a Chevy)," the story of a man finding out that his girlfriend is pregnant by someone else. It's a tricky song to sing, because too much anger would contradict the singer's lingering love for the woman and too much sentiment would contradict the singer's painful sense of betrayal. Hayes handles it like an old pro, as if he were 48 rather than 28, giving it a hushed understatement as if he were still stunned and numbed by the news.

Just as impressive in a different way is Hayes' vocal on "How Do You Sleep at Night," which refuses to pull its punches as most modern country does. Here's a post-breakup song with some real sting to it; when the singer asks his ex-lover how she can sleep at night after all her lies and betrayals, Hayes poses the question with a vicious edge in his voice, as if he were singing to draw blood. The minimalist arrangement features Dire-Straits-like guitar and honky-tonk fiddle just as knife-sharp as the vocal.

Those are the two high points of the album, but Hayes sounds great even on the more

WARNING:

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A black and white photograph of a man smiling and looking upwards, with his hands on his hips. He is wearing a large wooden barrel around his waist, which is supported by a thin black pole. The background is a clear sky with some light clouds.

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Record Reviews

conventional material. He co-wrote two raucous barroom numbers, "Are We Having Fun Yet" and "Tore Up From the Floor Up," and producer Don Cook uses his Brooks & Dunn experience to make them dance-floor ready. But it's Hayes' booming baritone that punches out the beat and his newfound confidence that swaggers through the comic lyrics. On Jason Sellers' "This Is My Heart Talking Now," Hayes gives the vocal just enough reluctance to let us know how much this romantic confession is costing him. On the album's final song, he tells his ex-lover's new boyfriend that she was "Mine to Lose," and the vocal is a strange, heady mix of triumph and defeat.

In the current crop of twentysomething country stars, Hayes has the best chance of still being around when he's in his 40's. He already sounds as if he is.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Paul Brandt

Outside the Frame
Reprise 46635

Paul Brandt's 1996 debut album, *Calm Before the Storm*, yielded the Number One hit, "I Do," a cute little ditty doomed to be sung at weddings for years to come. But the number that hinted at the young Canadian's real talent was the album's other Top Five single, "My Heart Has a History," which boasted a classic opening line, "My heart has a history/Of hurtin' those who mean the most to me." Brandt's rich baritone purr put a George Jones-ish spin on this confession of unreliability, co-written with Mark D. Sanders. It was a performance that held out the promise that Brandt might be the real thing—a barroom bard, a honky-tonk hero.

It's a promise that goes largely unfulfilled on Brandt's sophomore release, *Outside the Frame*. He still has that



marvelous voice—dark and thick like Kahlua with cream—just listen to him exhale the title of "Yeah!" from the very bottom of his diaphragm. He's working with the same producer (Josh Leo) and many of the same co-writers (Leo, Rick Bowles, Lynn and Kerry Chater). But Brandt seems to have succumbed to that age-old career problem: You have 24 years to write the songs for your first album but only a few weeks between tours to write the songs for your second.

The first single from *Outside the Frame* is "A Little in Love," co-written by Brandt and Bowles. The bouncy chorus declares that there's "no such thing as a little in love." As catchy as this wordplay is, nothing in the rest of the lyrics or the vocal suggests that it results from a personal experience rather than a coffee-fueled Nashville writing session. Too many songs on the album are built around clever phrases ("Girl, you've started an unstoppable chain reaction"; "I never knew two could become one"; "We'll just start forever over again"; "I picture us frozen in time/...Now everything's changed/Outside the frame") that never quite become personal confessions.

Moreover, most of the album's songs, including this first single, are upbeat numbers that downplay the country-music content and boost the pop-rock flavoring. You can hear some fiddles and steel guitar at the edges of the arrangements, but the mix is dominated by loud snare drums, thudding bass lines and

jangly electric guitars. There's nothing wrong with pop-rock as such, but this play-it-safe, Eaglesque rock (a result of producer Leo's years in L.A.) is altogether too bland and wastes Brandt's honky-tonk baritone.

The slower songs—most notably the title tune and "We Are the One"—are delivered with such over-the-top sentimentality that they violate the honky-tonk rule. That rule says that to create the experience of a tough guy crumbling under a heartbreak you have to put both the crumbling and the toughness into the song. It's a rule the old greats like Lefty Frizzell and Merle Haggard followed, and it's a rule Brandt followed on "My Heart Has a History." One can only hope he starts following it again.

—GEOFFREY HIMES



Neal McCoy
Be Good at It
Atlantic 83057

Mama always told me that you can only make one first impression. I'm afraid it's true in the case of Neal McCoy's latest. In a business where short attention spans and quick-draw car radio button pushers rule, artists generally put their best foot forward and their best tunes up front on a CD. Listening to the predictable, underwhelming, groove-based title track, "If You Can't Be Good, Be Good at It," I had a foreboding. Three songs in, I knew this was going to be a disappointment.

Let's take a few in program

order and see. Chris Farren and Chuck Jones' "I Know You" seems like a pop-happy cull from an old Boy Howdy session that never saw the light of day. It's just generic, first-person love confessional—nothing special, delivered with little feeling. On down a few tracks we hit the spot where the raucous rockers ought to liven a record up, but while the tracks are competent, "Same Boots" and "Back" are second-rate efforts by first-rate writers, delivered with no real sizzle.

Getting on to the meat of the matter, the CD comes stickered with the titles of singles and coming singles, including "Broken Record," "The Shake" and the title track. I've always heard Neal McCoy as a party groover—good at doing catchy ditties with an infectious grin and fun on the front page. "Broken Record" has the requisite groove, bumping bass, wailing harmonica and organ, simple and accessible, but somewhere around the fifth (and nowhere near the last) time he repeats the refrain, "I'm like a broken record," I begin to see the relevance of that phrase to this effort. It just dulls the palate.

And then there's "The Shake." With its retro Roy Head guitar riff, it ought to have the slinky yowl and growl and that feral, wrong side of the tracks sex appeal that Roy had, but puh-lease... "The Shake" hasn't got enough energy to get up from the couch and turn itself off. That, and the fact that the song's just plain stupid, makes it a fit ending to a thoroughly unnecessarily disappointing effort by a guy who has brought home hits before.

Truth be told, some artists have such outstanding voices that they could sing the phone book and sound great, but Neal McCoy isn't one of those. He needed at least a couple of great tunes to float this CD, but all he brought to the table were the Yellow Pages.

—BOB MILLARD

OWEN BRADLEY

1915-1998

The world's been pretty good to me," Owen Bradley reflected in 1994, just before he was about to be honored for his pivotal role in creating the Nashville Sound. This unassuming genius, the producer of Patsy Cline, Conway Twitty and countless other greats, saw many of those Decca recordings become landmarks, which never ceased to amaze him. He later admitted that "I never dreamed that any of these Patsy records or any of the others [would still be popular]."

Though only semi-retired, with heart problems under control, a severe case of flu left him unable to attend old friend Floyd Cramer's January 3 funeral. Hospitalized, his flu worsened, his condition deteriorating until he died of heart failure January 7. He was 82. Appropriately enough, funeral services were held at the Ryman, where Brenda Lee, whose career he nurtured from childhood to adulthood, sang "Peace in the Valley."

Calling Owen Bradley an architect of the Nashville Sound is a gross understatement. Without him, there would be no Nashville music industry as we know it. Veteran A-Team bassist Bob Moore summed him up eloquently a day after the funeral: "The biggest ingredient in the Nashville Sound," he reflected, "was the musicians' love for Owen Bradley."

He was born near Westmoreland, Tennessee, near the Kentucky border, on October 21, 1915, but grew up in Nashville. He heard WSM's first broadcast in 1925 on his crystal radio set and went to the studios to watch neighbor Paul Warmack's old-time string band, The Gully Jumpers, play the *WSM Barn Dance*, the Opry's forerunner. The man responsible for so much classic country began as a pop pianist and trombonist, quitting school at 15 to work with local bands. In the 30's, Bradley joined WSM as a staff musician in their orchestra, where he learned arranging and developed a love of swinging big band music. Despite his growing sophistication, his love for the Opry never wavered, though he later recalled that in those days, "Nashville was not proud of the Opry at all."

After World War II, he became WSM's Musical Director and led his own popular dance band at Nashville area clubs and at private parties. He played his first country recording session in 1946 with singer Zeke Clements at WSM's studios, but in those days, Nashville wasn't close to being a serious recording center. Most local artists traveled to larger cities to record, and took Owen along. Abrupt, authoritarian big-city studio engineers left him uptight—but gave him an idea: "Engineers, musicians and [backup] singers should try to help the guy or gal through whatever they're trying to do. And if you do that, [those singers] won't go to Dallas or New York, they'll come to Nashville," he explained.



Bradley's vision bore fruit when New York-based Decca country producer Paul Cohen hired him as a part-time local assistant in 1947, the year that Castle Studios, Nashville's first decent recording facility, opened. Among the WSM pop musicians he recruited to play country dates was his guitar-playing younger brother, Harold. Owen had his own hit in 1949 with a cover version of "Blues Stay Away from Me" on Decca, and by the early 50's, the Cohen-Bradley team racked up hits on Red Foley, Ernest Tubb, Kitty Wells, Bill Monroe and even a few pop acts. In 1952, the Bradleys opened their own tiny local studio.

Then in 1954, Castle's shutdown left Nashville's flickering candle of a music industry about to burn out. With Paul Cohen planning to record in Dallas, Owen and Harold turned an old house on 16th Avenue South into Bradley Film and Recording

Studios. Not only did it serve as the birthplace of countless country and pop hits, the music businesses that it attracted to the area nearby marked the start of Music Row.

Seeing the setback rock 'n' roll dealt country, Owen and RCA's Chet Atkins vowed to make country records palatable to pop fans without losing the core audience. Owen did it in 1957 with Patsy on "Walkin' After Midnight," with Brenda Lee on "Dynamite" and with Bobby Helms on "My Special Angel." A year later, he replaced Cohen as Decca's Nashville producer, eventually becoming a vice-president. Columbia bought Bradley Studios in 1962, but Owen remained busy with the Decca roster, including Patsy, Bill Anderson, Loretta Lynn and Ernest Tubb. Over the years, he admittedly produced his share of clinkers, but his overall body of work proved a vital point: commercial success and mediocrity need not go hand in hand.

In 1964, Owen turned an old barn near his home east of town into a demo studio for his son, Jerry (1970's head of RCA Nashville, now head of Opryland Music). Known as Bradley's Barn, its unexpected popularity with major labels made it another landmark. Owen struck gold again in the late 60's and early 70's at Decca, turning ex-rockabilly Conway Twitty into a country megastar. He produced all Loretta's greatest work, as well as the successful Loretta-Conway duets.

Inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1974, Bradley retired from Decca (now part of MCA) in 1975, though he kept producing Loretta, Conway and others independently for a time. He rebuilt Bradley's Barn after a 1980 fire, produced the music for the *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Sweet Dreams* films as well as k.d. lang's Patsy-esque 1989 *Shadowland* album. At the time he died, he'd been working in the studio with Mandy Barnett.

A grieving Harold Bradley summed it up simply: "It's the end of an era." It is, indeed.
—RICH KIENZLE

After getting his start broadcasting from a grocery store in West Plains, Missouri, in the late 40's, Porter Wagoner went on to chart more than 80 singles, both alone and with duet partner Dolly Parton, in a career that continues today. He's come a long way since he nervously sat at that West Plains grocery store the day after his first performance, awaiting the arrival of the day's mail so he could see whether he was popular or not! A member of the Grand Ole Opry since 1957, Porter performs there nearly every weekend, does an occasional concert, works with Opryland and even hosts the Opry Backstage show for TNN. We caught up with him recently where he sat still long enough to answer 20 Questions about his career, the Opry, his friends and more.

1 Well, Mr. Wagoner, sir, how are you doing?
Fine, Bob, how are you?

2 Good. Say, it took a couple of weeks to get in touch with you. Are you staying pretty busy these days?
Yes, I'm staying as busy as I want to be. (Laughs.)

3 Then everything's going as planned?
Everything's going real well, yes, it is. I'm enjoying my career now more than I probably ever have in the history of it.

4 It's a long and august history, wouldn't you agree?
Well, it is. It's 41 years this year with the Grand Ole Opry. Last year we did that thing with my 40th year with the Opry. We did a TV special and some things with a bunch of my friends: Dolly, Vince Gill, Joe Diffie, Billy Ray Cyrus and a lot of other stars. They sang my songs and did an hour special for me.

5 For those without cable television hookups, tell our readers what your hosting duties are for The Nashville Network, if you would....
It's the Opry Backstage show.



Porter on stage with guitar legend Chet Atkins.....

20 Questions with PORTER WAGONER

By Bob Millard

Bill Anderson and I share the duties on the Backstage show. I do it a month at a time, then he does it the next month, and so forth. That's preceding the live segment that's on television out front as well.

6 You are still a regular segment host on the Grand Ole Opry, aren't you?
Oh, yeah, absolutely. I host two shows every Saturday and a show every Friday. They'll

go back to two shows on Friday this spring some time.

7 And then you were the Opryland theme park host for the past several years, too. You don't get off-campus much there!

I was the Ambassador to Opryland. Which meant that I was out in the park each day, meeting fans, signing autographs for them, posing for pictures with them, et cetera.

8 I guess that gig is over now that they're tearing Opryland down....

Oh, yeah, they're in the middle of doing that now. They're going to build a huge mall there, and there's gonna be a bass pro shop and a lot of.... It's going to take two years in the making, and it's going to be a wonderful thing once they get it all put together.

9 Are they still going to have live performances somewhere on the grounds? Will you still be associated with it?
Oh, yes. They're going to have three performance areas still back there. And I'm sure I am [going to be associated with it]. I've been associated with the Opry for so many years. I'm not going to go anywhere else looking for work. (Laughs.) But I'm gonna have plenty to do between now and then, working with the Grand Ole Opry and helping them to do some things that needs to be done there.

10 Like what? What sorts of things are being done?
Well, this is going to be a great year for the Grand Ole Opry. They're going to make it the centerpiece for this whole operation. That's a wonderful thing. They're doing a lot of improvements to the entrance to the building, and so forth. It's gonna be a great thing for our industry.

11 Have you heard any news about Grandpa Jones' health, by the way? Is he still in the hospital following his stroke?

Yes, they moved him to a private room, but he's still just really, really bad. There's just not any way, it seems like, that he can recover. I hope he does. God, I love the man, you know, but he's really, really bad.

12 I guess time catches up with all good things—you, me, and Grandpa....

That's very true, but that does happen. That's just the way it is.... That's the price you pay for living, you know.

13 *Do you think the Opry will be the same when your generation leaves it?*

Well, ya know, you have to have change in everything. "Time changes everything," as the song says. I think the Grand Ole Opry has gotten better all through the years. I am very proud that I was a part of what I would call The Golden Age of Country Music. But, it's gotten better down through the years, you know. This is 70-something years that the Grand Ole Opry has been in existence, so it's going to be there, and I feel like it gets better with age. Because the newer stars know the history of the Grand Ole Opry. They admire the people that has kept it together all these years, and they are a part of it, so I don't see why it won't just get bigger and better all the time.

14 *So, change is good? Is that how you see it?*

Well, of course, you miss people like Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, Bill Monroe, and, of course, when Grandpa goes.... But it still goes on. It's kind of like Old Man River, it just keeps rolling along. And that's the way it should be, really.

15 *I hope this is not an untoward question, but now that Ernest Tubb's wife, Olean, has passed away—she died in January, just two weeks before Justin Tubb passed away—do you think they're ever going to get a tombstone on Ernest Tubb's grave?*

Man, I truly hope so. That was the most devastating thing to me that I have encountered in years and years was when I went out there to see his grave, and there was no marker there or anything. I sure hope they do, and I kind of believe they will, surely. I got involved in that back when that happened, and there was just no way to do it when she was alive. He was one of the greatest men in our history and helped more people than almost anyone to get in the business—people like Loretta Lynn, Jack Greene and so forth—and for

him to be there in an unmarked grave just broke my heart when I seen it.

16 *Are you out hitting the road much these days?*

No, I don't work very much. I work maybe eight to ten concerts again, and that's about it. It's tough on the road now to



.....and with longtime duet partner Dolly Parton.

take your show out, and the dates are so scattered. So, I work really just what I want to. I pick and chose, and I work just eight or ten dates a year, and that's just about it.

17 *Is there any sort of annual Porter Wagoner Day back in Missouri that you go to?*

No, but there's a Porter Wagoner Boulevard in my home town of West Plains, Missouri. It's a big main street that goes through town there. They also have a Jan Howard Avenue there, so once in a while I'll get a clipping from somebody back home where they clipped it out of the newspaper and sent it to me that says somebody had an accident there at

the corner of Porter Wagoner and Jan Howard. That's pretty neat.

18 *Speaking of your home town, and your roots and start in the business, can you imagine someone as big as Garth Brooks sitting around a little old radio station waiting*

to see if a bag of mail will come in from his show?

(Laughter.) No, that's pretty difficult, man. But I tell you what, I know Garth real well and have spent time with him, and he's a wonderful man. I think he's a tremendous asset to our industry, and not just because he's a big star, but because he knows where he came from and he loves the business he's in and the fans that come to see his shows... And I was thinking yesterday, you know, of back when I come to the Opry back in 1957. All the superstars were there, all of them. People like Ernest Tubb, Red Foley, Roy Acuff—the stars that, back in that day, was of the same super-

stardom that Garth Brooks is today.

19 *Do you ever miss those days?*

Well, not really, because you move on, you know. It's kind of like when they moved from the Ryman Auditorium to the new Opry House. A lot of the stars were talking about, "Oh, you're breaking our hearts, we're leaving this place down here where all the little ghost figures of our industry has been here," and so forth. And hell, all I remember about the Ryman was that it was a sweat box, man, and no dressing rooms—not enough for anyone. And I, matter of fact, was complaining to the head of National Life [Accident Insurance Company, then-parent of WSM and the Grand Ole Opry] about how hot it was, and we needed air conditioning and stuff. He said, "Ah, this is show business." I said, "No this ain't show business, this is a test of endurance is what this is." I just think the button shoes days of country music was over, and I was ready to get on to a more modern building with state-of-the-art sound and lights, and I felt like it was a great move. You only can stay in history for so long, you know. That's just part of it, I think. I'm very proud that I was part of that age, but I'm glad to see things progress because it has to do that to exist.

20 *And you can't hate air conditioning, right?*

No, that's exactly right, man. Sometimes you'd get kind of dizzy on stage from the fans out there a-usin' hand fans, you know. It looked like a sea of water, almost white-cappin' at times. That's kind of how it was, but I'm very proud that I was in the business during those beautiful, golden days. I came in a lot of mornings off the road, say three or four o'clock in the morning, to be on the Opry that night, and they would already be lined up to get into the Grand Ole Opry that night, you know. That's a beautiful thing, you know.

Everything is falling into place for this first time mom. Motherhood has given her a focus that doesn't let her sweat the small stuff. Out of the spotlight for three years, she's looking forward to the release of her new album and a new tour. She will admit, though, that she hasn't quite conquered stage fright.



Having Faith

See, it's all a matter of normalcy. At least, that's what Faith Hill is telling me. "You know what I used to think?" she says. "I used to think I was too normal to be in this business."

She stresses the word normal, grabbing onto it like a handle.

"I'm just an ordinary, simple person," she says, "Truly. My mom and dad deserve full credit for that."

Before I can say anything, she adds that the second half of Nashville's current most famous duo, Tim McGraw, is the same way.

"Really," she says. For instance, she still can't walk on stage without feeling sick.

"I'm scared for my life the moment before I walk on stage," Faith says. "Believe me, it's an awful feeling! I get sick at my stomach. Sick! I'm freezing cold. It's just like, oh, god..."

This from a woman who began work on her new album when she was eight months pregnant, which hardly strikes me as a barrel of laughs. She's been explaining in some detail that, growing up, she was never the life of the party. Not unfriendly, mind you, but not the first person to jump up and sing.

"I wasn't like that at all," she is saying. "My mom had to actually coax me to sing by offering me a quarter. Hey, at that time, 25 cents was a pretty big deal."

It no longer takes a quarter to coax Faith Hill out on stage. On the contrary, after two double platinum albums, four Number One records, a slew of nominations and awards, two Grammy nominations for her massive hit duet with husband Tim

McGraw, and being selected by *People Magazine* as one of the 50 most beautiful people in the world, 25 cents might seem like, well, small change.

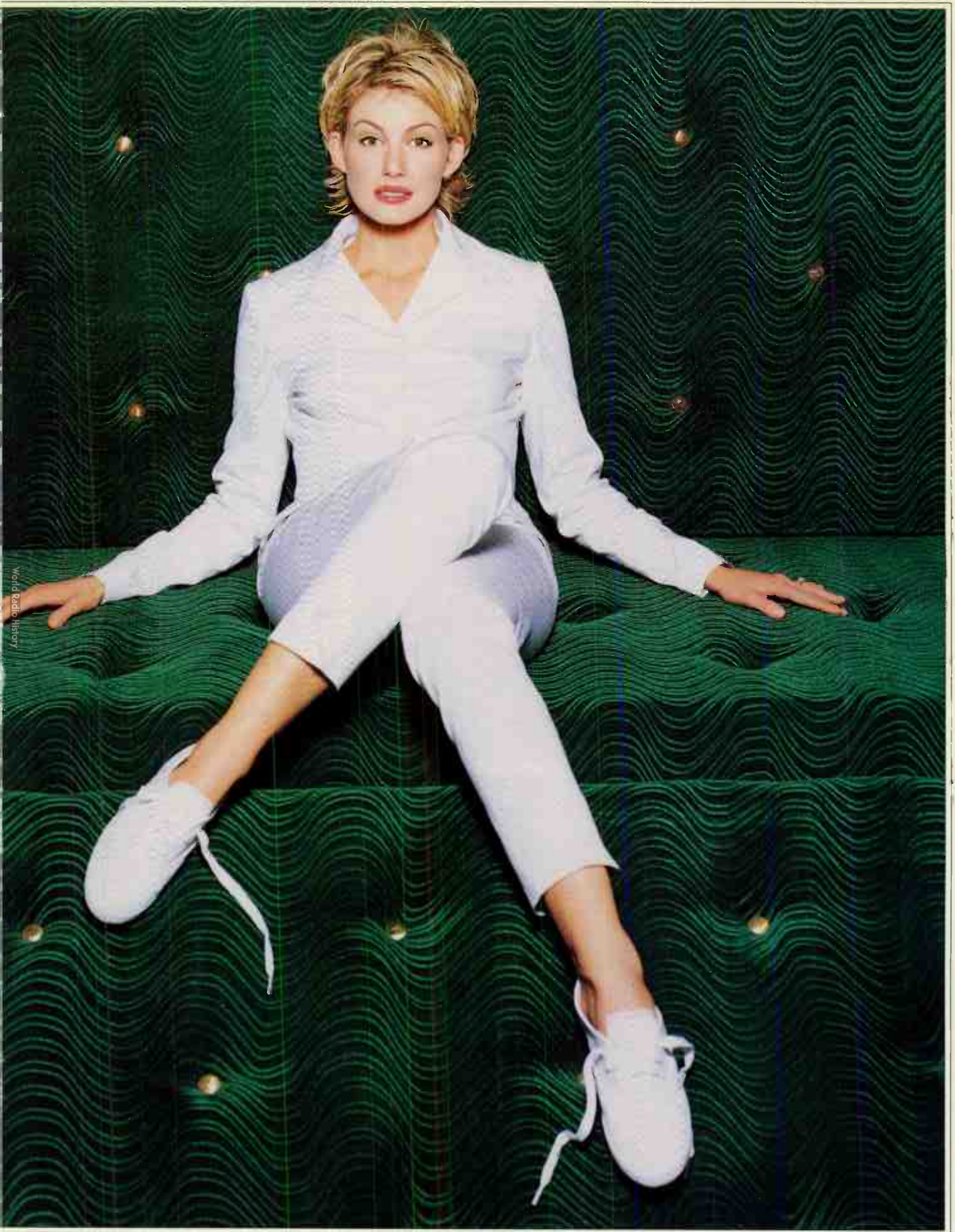
But now, once again, she's thinking about the stage a lot, because that stage is looming bigger and bigger in her life. In 1994 and 1995, she burst on the country music scene, partly through non-stop touring with acts such as Reba McEntire, Alan Jackson, George Strait and Brooks & Dunn. She followed that up with 140 nights the next year, touring with new hubby McGraw and making a ton of money. And then she went away. Actually, she and McGraw decided to produce a second duet, this one named Gracie, born May fifth of last year. With her newest album, *FAITH*, scheduled to ship in April, Faith is ready to step back into the limelight.

"And you know what? It's easier now," she says. "Once you have a child, things just start to click. I think the reason for that is Gracie is the absolute focal point of my life, and Tim's life. And all the other little things, I really don't care about anymore. I don't worry about it so much. Do you know what I mean?"

Actually, I do. Faith and I have spent a lot of time talking about fear; how it manifests itself, and the little tricks we all use to keep that fear from overwhelming us at the worst possible moments. Faith, for instance, likes to be warm before she goes on stage, or begins a photo shoot, or steps in front of the television camera.

"Silly, isn't it?" she says. "But let me give you an analogy—going to the dentist's office. You're al-

by Michael Bane



World Radio History

"I'm the type of person who says, 'Hey, this is the hand I've been dealt; deal with it. Go on. Look ahead.' I came back a lot stronger than I'd been before. But since Gracie, it's been incredible. I'm singing better than I've ever sung."



ready nervous, and if it's really cold in the office, that makes it so much worse."

Before Gracie, though, she felt uncomfortable asking to have the thermostat turned up a few degrees above zero. "I was worried that people might think it was a power thing," Faith confesses. Now that she's Officially Gracie's Mom, asking for a little warmth is no big deal.

"Sounds like such a little thing, doesn't it?" Faith continues. "But there's other stuff as well...is this the right outfit? Should I go buy another one? Should I reorder my songs list? Does the sound system sound all right? Do we need to redo the lighting? All that fanatical, insane process I used to put myself through before I'd walk out on stage, I really don't do that anymore."

Of course, part of the reason she doesn't do all that stuff is common to new mothers everywhere—"I don't have time!"

"You know," she says, laughing, "Tim and I made this agree-

ment. I said, 'Honey, I'm going to learn to put on my makeup as quick as you can feed her cereal. When you finish the cereal, I'll take her and you can go jump in the shower.' We've got this down to a science, really."

To tell you the truth, I've always been a little vague about Faith Hill. I liked some of the music—"Wild One," the "It's Your Love" duet, even the cover of Janis Joplin's "Piece of My Heart"—but I never had much of a sense of who this person was. The interviews I'd read seemed to break into two camps—stories about her music, and stories about the fact that she is drop-dead gorgeous. What I wasn't prepared for was a Dolly Parton-esque sense of humor and a sort of animated wackiness that had her pantomiming handing off Gracie to harried hubby McGraw while Faith raced between bathroom and kitchen.

"When it gets to the point that I don't have enough hands, I hand her off," she explains. "Or he hands her to me. Tim cooks,

you know. My mom says, 'I don't know where you found him, but you did good.' He even cooks for my mom and dad when they come, and that takes balls, 'cause my mom is a great cook."

She can also downshift quickly to serious, about how to instill the basic core values that she received growing up in the tiny southern Mississippi town of Star (and McGraw in Louisiana).

"We want her to have what our parents taught us," she says.

More than that even, she and McGraw are working on the logistics of two traveling musicians taking care of a baby on the road.

"I took off last year for a lot of reasons, not just for her," Faith says. "Then I got pregnant, and it was wonderful. I had always said that I wanted to take off when I had my first child. But when I could get away from the record, we'd go visit Tim on the road. Gracie did so well! We're very lucky. It would be a lot different if she didn't do well on the road. It would change everything."

Interestingly enough, the pregnancy and the arrival of Gracie seemed to clear up the last of Faith's lingering voice problems. When she came on the scene in 1994, she, in her own words, "hit hard." By her own admission a chronic talker, Faith performed a grueling schedule and talked all day to everyone who would listen.

"I just didn't get it," she says. "I thought there was no way that all that talking could hurt me. Heck, I've talked all my life, and it's never affected me. But the stress of traveling and singing constantly, I had this blood vessel in my throat that just burst."

Husband and wife, CMA award winners, Faith Hill and Tim McGraw share the honors for "It's Your Love." Now a working mother, Faith is learning to balance career and family. Daughter Gracie goes on the road with mom and dad and even gets involved in the recording process.



MARIA A. MCREILIG



It wasn't necessarily that serious, but for a professional singer, the words "throat surgery" are terrifying to hear.

"I just had to think about getting better, and I tried not to worry about it," Faith says. "I'm the type of person who says, 'Hey, this is the hand I've been dealt; deal with it. Go on. Look ahead.' I came back a lot stronger than I'd been before. But since Gracie, it's been incredible. I'm singing better than I've ever sung. Of course, the time off helped."

Hormones, Faith says, that's the secret of how Gracie changed her voice.

"I remember when I was in the middle of making the record, I called up Amy Grant, and I said, 'Amy, this is really frustrating. My voice is different,'" Faith says. Grant told her not to pressure herself so much and let the hormones run their course. "She said my hormones had gone ballistic, which, of course, they had. My vocal chords are fairly sensitive. Tim, though, is a horse—he can stay up for five days, do interviews and sing every night and nothing affects him! I'm not made that way."

In fact, Faith insists, she doesn't feel any pressure at all from the upcoming record release and tour.

"I don't know, maybe I should feel bad that I don't feel any pressure," she laughs. "Oh no! No pressure! But I just don't. I feel like I've got a long way to go. There's a lot that I want to do. But this album—and I've made this quote before—it was hard, but it was fun. When I turned it in, I told my manager, 'You know, I went through Egypt to get to Cheyenne, but I finally got there.' There was no other way I could make this album. The process was about discovering new places in myself, and that is hard, hard work."

This is the obligatory section on the new album, which is, in fact, good. Before I went into the interview, the record company executive who set it up, an old friend of mine, pleaded, "Michael, try to talk about the music. Just try." When I tell this to Faith, she just starts laughing. "I don't want to talk about that," she says. "Let's talk about something else." In any case *FAITH* is an eclectic mix of songwriters, from Beth Nielsen Chapman and partners to Bekka Bramlett and Billy Burnette to Gretchen Peters and Sheryl Crow. Not surprisingly, there's a duet with McGraw ("He's fun to sing with.") and some really interesting production twists. All in all, *FAITH* is clearly a successful effort to expand her range—the title not so much her name as an explanation of the act of making the record.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do," she says. "All I know is I wanted to make a great record. I wanted to bring to the record what I do in my live shows, which is why the album is



tinged with a lot of gospel and R&B; it's livelier than anything I've ever put on record...But, hey, it was hell. But the great things always are, aren't they?"

Using two producers and every good song they could lay their hands on—not to mention a birth and a new baby—there were times when Faith despaired that the album simply wasn't going to work. Then things finally started coming together.

"It sort of congealed, like a salad that's been in the refrigerator for a long time," she says, hands-down winning the Analogy of the Year Award. "It just happened...a beautiful salad; this wonderful fruit. And I'm so proud of it; I could not have done a better record, and I can't wait to play it live."

She'll have that opportunity, when she goes on the road with George Strait and husband Tim.

Even the long hours on the bus don't daunt her.

"I mean, you've got to have your space, but I love Tim," she

“I was thinking about this interview before I came in here. I’m so out of practice that I’ve got cobwebs in my head. Then I just stopped thinking about it. I figured I’d speak from the heart, and if it came out sounding silly, so be it.”



says simply. “He’s my best friend, and there’s nobody I’d rather spend time with. I don’t want to be with anybody else. I don’t desire to be away from him. Like I told my mom, I could be with this man for 60 years and never be without him for a day.”

We stop talking while she shows me baby pictures and compare birthdays—Gracie, me and Tammy Wynette were all born on May fifth, Cinco de Mayo. Of course, this virtually guarantees greatness for Gracie.

“That’s what Tammy Wynette said, too,” Faith says.

Now, let’s take kissing, which is discussed in great length on the new album.

“I hate cynical people who say their first kisses are nothing special,” Faith says. “My first kiss with Tim was perfect, exactly as it should be. I love kissing. I love kissing my daughter, especially on the back of her neck and her little chunky arms

and legs, you know? And she’ll grow up loving it as well. She’ll be much, much older before she starts kissing, of course...”

Did Faith realize, I say, that the age of puberty drops every year?

“Then we’re going to pretend that we’re still in the 60’s,” she says sternly.

“I was thinking about this interview,” she continues, “before I came in here. I’m so out of practice that I’ve got cobwebs in my head. Then I just stopped thinking about it. I figured I’d speak from the heart, and if it came out sounding silly, so be it.”

It has been, she says, a surprising five years. Forget the two best-selling albums—she also sang at the 1996 Olympic Games to an audience of 3.5 billion people worldwide, sang with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C., for a special Fourth of July Celebration, participated in two album projects to benefit the Pediatric AIDS Foundation and launched her own Family Literacy Project—her father, one of 14 children, never learned to read.

“Sometimes I feel old when I see all the new acts that have come out in the last couple of years,” she says. “They’re so young! I could be some of them’s mom...Okay, I’m exaggerating just a bit. It doesn’t seem like three years since I did my last album. It sounds long when I say it, but it doesn’t seem like that long to me.”

It’s not, I say, as if you disappeared into the woods...

“No, but you know, it’s okay to disappear for a while,” she says. “It depends on what you’ve done; how you’re viewed. I think it’s healthy. I like to reinvent myself—I get bored real quick, you know what I mean? When you evolve into whatever person you’re going to be, each time in your life, you change. You go through changes. You might say, ‘Hey, I don’t like the way I looked last year; that really sucks.’ Or, ‘I want to change my show,’ or keep it the same. It’s all about evolution, and in order to do that, you can’t always be in front of the public all the time. I’m 30 years old now. I’ve gone through a lot of changes in the last five years, and I’ve done it publicly. And sometimes it’s hard to do that, because people scrutinize every little thing.”

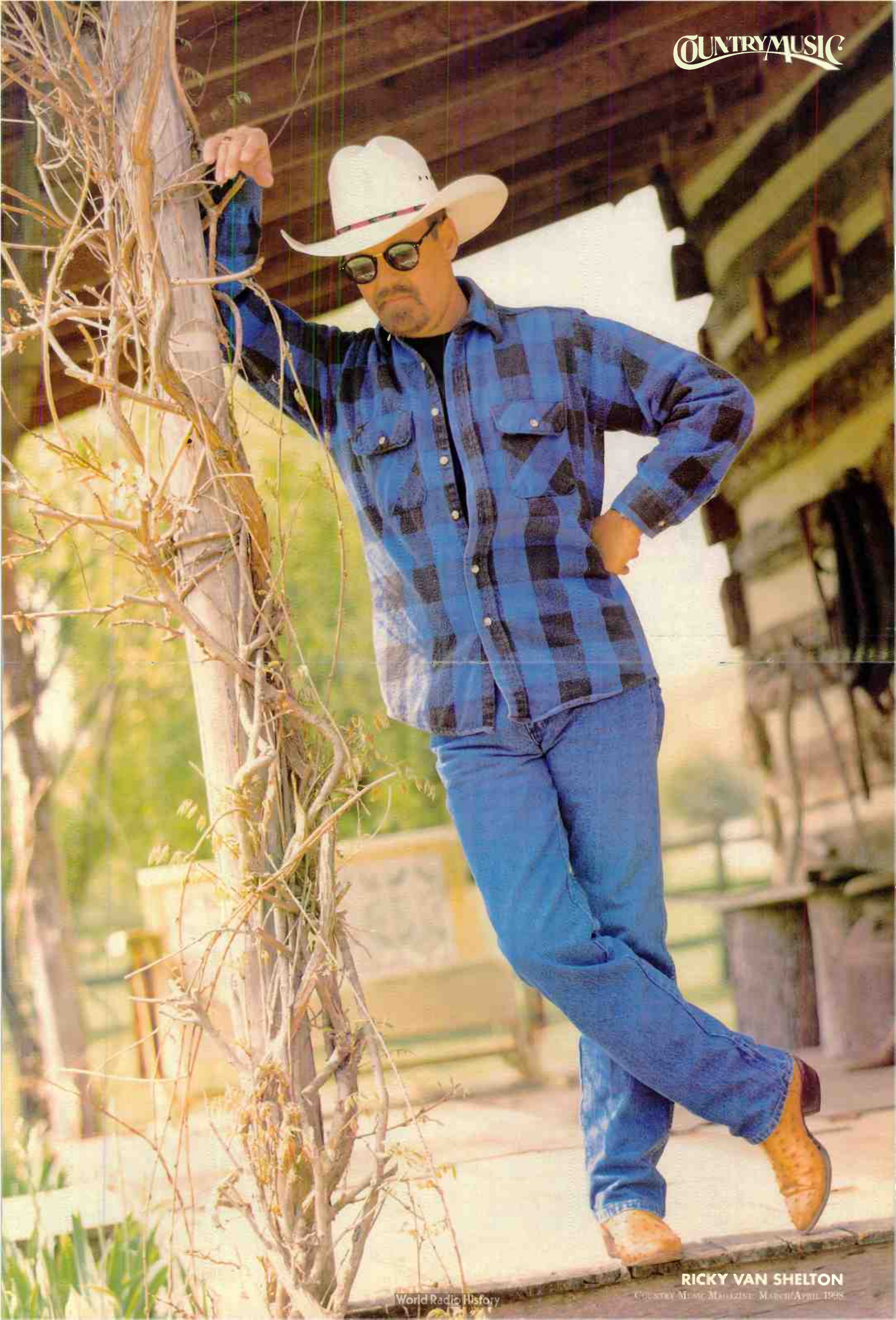
She shakes her newly shorn blond hair.

“Just because I’m a curious, intelligent person doesn’t, on the other hand, mean that I don’t want traditions in my life,” she says. “I’m just...normal.”

Then she apologizes. “I didn’t mean to stand up on my box there.”

She picks up a picture of Gracie and smiles. “You know,” she says, “the first time Gracie slept all through the night was on a tour bus. Isn’t that cool?” ■





PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

RICKY VAN SHELTON

Update

Personal Data

Full Name: Ricky Van Shelton
Birthdate: January 12, 1952
Birthplace: Grit, Virginia
Residence: Nashville, Tennessee
Family: Wife, Bettye; father, Jenks; mother, Eloise; sisters, Judy and Cacky; brothers, Ronnie and Don
Musical Influences: Hank Williams, George Jones, Conway Twitty, Merle Haggard, Elvis and The Beatles

Vital Statistics

Height: 5'10"
Weight: 160
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Green

Recording Career

Current Record Label: RVS Records, P.O. Box 120548, Nashville, Tennessee 37212-0548.

Albums	Release Date
<i>Wild-Eyed Dream</i>	1987**
<i>Loving Proof</i>	1988**
<i>RVS Sings Christmas</i>	1989*
<i>RVS III</i>	1990**
<i>Backroads</i>	1991**
<i>Don't Overlook Salvation</i>	1992**
<i>Greatest Hits Plus</i>	1992*
<i>A Bridge I Didn't Burn</i>	1993*
<i>Love and Honor</i>	1994
<i>making plans</i>	1997

Note: all albums except *making plans* released on Columbia Records
*Gold album (500,000 sales)
**Platinum album (1,000,000)

Number One Singles

"Somebody Lied"
"Life Turned Her That Way"
"Don't We All Have the Right"
"I'll Leave This World Loving You"
"From a Jack to a King"



"Living Proof"
"Statue of a Fool"
"I've Cried My Last Tear for You"
"Rockin' Years" (with Dolly Parton)
"I Am a Simple Man"
"Keep It Between the Lines"
"Backroads"

Award Highlights

1988: Country Music Association (CMA) Horizon Award; Academy of Country Music (ACM) Top New Male Vocalist; TNN Viewers Choice Awards—Favorite Newcomer; *Music City News* Awards Star of Tomorrow
1989: CMA Male Vocalist of the Year; TNN Viewer's Choice Awards—Favorite Male Vocalist, Favorite Single ("I'll Leave This World Loving You"), Favorite Video ("I'll Leave This World Loving You"); *Music City News* Awards—Male

Artist of the Year, Album of the Year (*Loving Proof*), Single of the Year ("I'll Leave This World Loving You"), Video of the Year ("I'll Leave This World Loving You")
1990: TNN/*Music City News* Awards—Entertainer of the Year, Male Artist of the Year
1991: TNN/*Music City News* Awards—Entertainer of the Year, Male Artist of the Year
1992: TNN/*Music City News* Country Awards—Vocal Collaboration of the Year ("Rockin' Years" with Dolly Parton), Video of the Year ("Rockin' Years" with Dolly Parton)

Current Highlights

making plans, Shelton's current album, was released without the support of a major record label. Shelton says, "I wanted the freedom of choosing my own music, my own singles, choosing my own album cover.

"It's not just about making money," Shelton says, "though everybody wants to make money, of course. I wanted the freedom to be creative, to make the kind of music that I wanted to sing and to give my fans what they wanted from me. I wanted things to be simpler. And, I wanted to be in charge."

Shelton says he received some of the inspiration to put out his own album from his successful series of children's books. *Tales from a Duck Named Quacker—The Story Begins, Quacker Meets Mrs. Moo and Quacker Meets Canadian Goose* have sold more than 200,000 copies. Shelton and his wife, Bettye, published the books themselves.

Contacts

Fan Club: RVS Fan Club, P.O. Box 120548, Nashville, Tennessee 37212
RVS Hot Line Number: 615-451-1975
Website: www.rickyvanshelton.com

ADVERTISEMENT

Whenever My Ex-Husband Dates This One Skinny Blonde, I Have A Secret Trick I Play On Him

By Sharon Louise Brodie, R.N., M.S.N.

I began writing this at a very low point in my life.

First, my husband left me like a thief in the night. I had been at nurses' training classes until 11:30 P.M. When I returned home, there was a note on the kitchen counter saying he was sorry but "... the fire has died." How original!

Anyway, he took most of my personal belongings, including my furniture, my share of our savings account — even the sheets off our bed.

And, no matter what his note said, I know the real reason he left. It was because I was overweight. Very overweight. I was 5'7" and weighed 210 pounds at the time. You'd think a nurse could do something about her weight. But I couldn't.

I spent \$399.95 on a home gym. I tried acupuncture. I tried hypnosis. I tried sixteen different diets. And failed at all of them.

Let me tell you something. In my humble opinion diets *don't work!* Period. I tried almost every popular diet you could think of. The problem wasn't losing the weight. It was keeping it off once you lost it.

I just couldn't go through life starving myself. Or taking dangerous pills. Or drinking those chalky-tasting "shakes" every day.

I became nervous. Irritable. And hungry. Always hungry. So any little thing triggered my anger. I was a bear. Or another "B" word.

Finally I'd binge. It was always the same. I'd buy a box of chocolate-filled donuts — usually a dozen. The real good kind. Then I'd drive around in my car with the donuts next to me on the front seat, eating and listening to Rocket 105.

It was my mother who finally talked me into getting real help. She made an appointment for me with our family doctor.

He took my history, listened to my complaints about diets and then recommended a program that was completely different from anything I'd ever seen before.

This wasn't a "diet." It was totally different. I started the program on May 17th. Within the first four days, I only lost three pounds. So I was disappointed. But during the three weeks that followed, my weight began to drop. Regularly. Within the next 196 days, I went from 202 to 129 pounds. This may not seem like a lot. But, to me, it was a miracle. This was the first time in my life I'd ever been able to lose weight — and keep it off!

Here, at last, was a program I could *live* with. Why? Because I was allowed to eat. Three delicious meals. Plus several snacks. Every day. Seven days a week.

So I wasn't hungry. I wasn't irritable. I wasn't bingeing on donuts.

But, I was *losing weight!*

I know what you're wondering. How can a person eat so much and still lose weight?

The secret is not in the *amount* of food you eat. It's in the *prescribed combination* of specific foods you eat during each 24-hour period. Nutritionally dense portions of special fiber, unrefined carbohydrates and certain proteins that generate a calorie-burning process which continues all day long.

But the heart of the program is what researchers call The Thermic Effect. In laymen's terms it means that the Clinic-30 Program *extends* your metabolism so calories are burned more consistently. Not just in unhealthy "spurts" like many diets. That's why it allows you to lose weight without feeling hungry. Without feeling irritable. Without feeling bored with all those "shakes" and bland meals.

The Clinic-30 Program is marvelously different!

You'll enjoy meat, chicken, fish, vegetables, potatoes, pasta, soups, baked goods, sauces — plus great-tasting snacks. Lots of snacks.

You'll also enjoy the variety.

There are literally hundreds of selections and combinations to choose from. Some are gourmet meals. Others just soup and sandwiches.

Here are some other features —

- There are no special foods to buy.
- There are no pills. No powders. No artificial food. No drugs. No strange or "herbal" foods.
- You don't count calories. You don't keep diaries. Simply stick with the program. It's easy-to-follow. Everything is explained on a day-by-day basis.

Why haven't you heard about the Clinic-30 Program on TV? Or in newspapers?

The original program, developed by Dr. J.T. Cooper, M.D., was given to senior medical school students, interns and doctors who were taking in-service training in family practice. So it's doctor-tested. But until it was published by Green Tree Press, Inc., it was *only available* to doctors. No one else. And it's still *only available* directly through the doctor's publisher, Green Tree Press.

Here are a few comments from people who purchased the Doctors' Clinic-30 Program ...

Kitty R. wrote to say she lost 56 pounds and went from a size 18 to a size 10 dress.

"The Clinic-30 Program works! I'm an example. What I like best is that I can eat six times a day and lose weight! I recommended it to a couple of friends and they started losing weight, too!"

Anne G., High Point, NC loves wearing a size 10!

"I lost 25 lbs. in two months. I talk about it so much that others in my workplace have bought their own programs."

And then there's me. Whenever I see my ex-husband, Mark, and his girlfriend, I have this secret trick I play on him. I know the restaurant where the two of them go with several other couples. I love to go there with a date — I have plenty now — stroll past his table and softly whisper, "Hello, Mark."

I know through the "grapevine" that they all keep asking him about me ... Am I still single? ... Does he still care about me? ... Are we seeing each other again? And, each time he has to explain ... I love it.

We'll be happy to send you the program to examine for 31 days. Show it to your doctor. Try it. There's *no obligation*. In fact, your check won't be cashed for 31 days. You may even postdate it 31 days in advance if you wish.

If you're not absolutely delighted with the Clinic-30 Program, simply return it and we'll promptly return your *original uncashed check*. No conditions. No hassle. Our customer service number is (814) 833-6353.

Or keep it longer. Try it for six months. Even then, if you're not fully satisfied, you'll receive a complete refund. Promptly. And without question. This is the fairest way we know to prove to you how well the program works.

To order, just send your name, address and postdated check for \$12.95 (plus \$3.00 shipping/handling) to The Clinic-30 Program, c/o Green Tree Press, Inc., Dept. 241, 3603 West 12th Street, Erie, PA 16505.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please do not allow yourself to become too thin. It's very important to consult your physician before commencing any weight-loss program. Because everyone's results will vary. Every one is unique. Please show your doctor this program. The message on this page is taken from — and directly reflects — the contents of the Clinic-30 Program.

We would appreciate your comments. Please write and let us know how you're doing.

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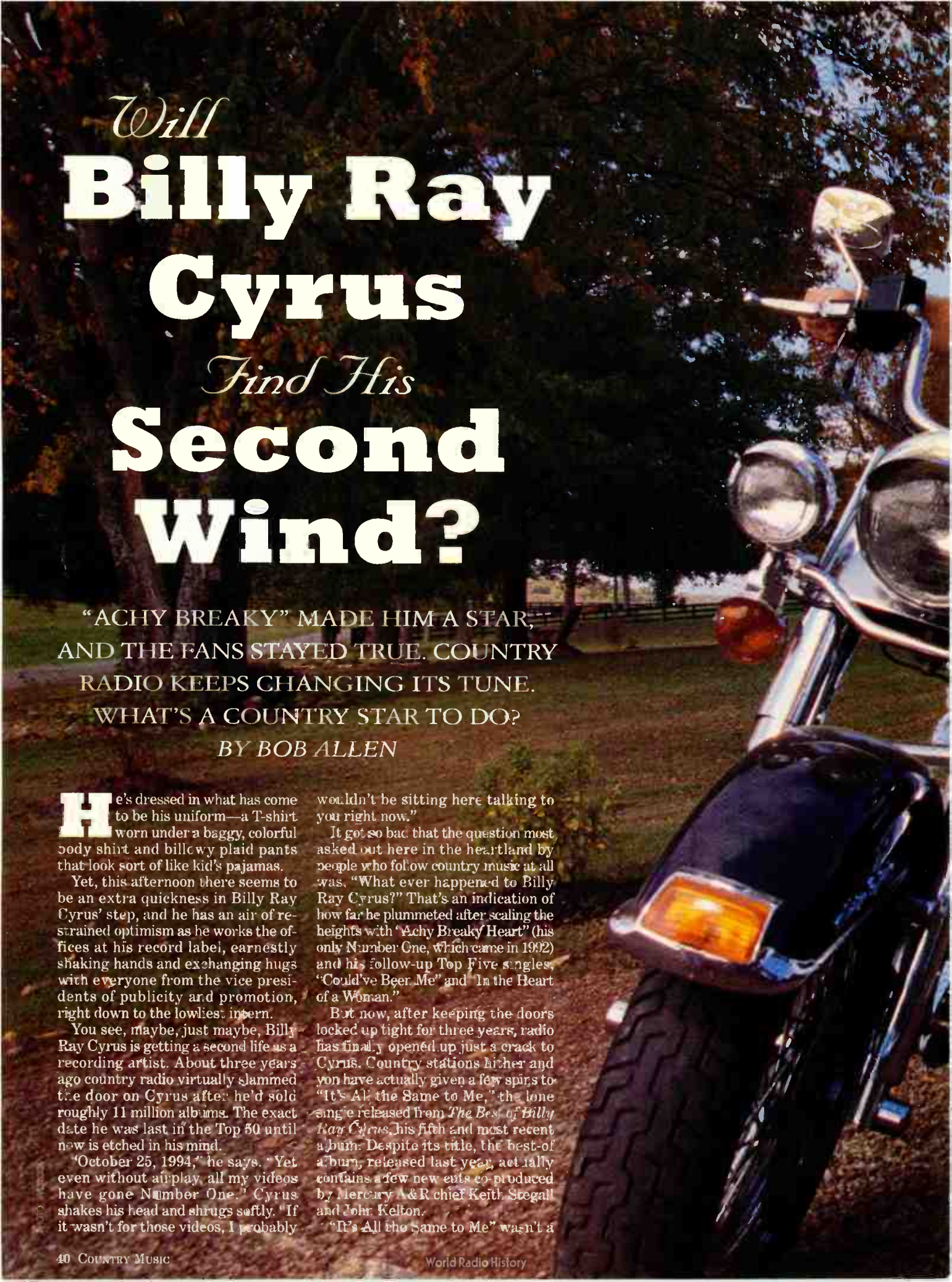
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Will
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Cyrus
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“ACHY BREAKY” MADE HIM A STAR,
AND THE FANS STAYED TRUE. COUNTRY
RADIO KEEPS CHANGING ITS TUNE.
WHAT’S A COUNTRY STAR TO DO?

BY BOB ALLEN

He’s dressed in what has come to be his uniform—a T-shirt worn under a baggy, colorful body shirt and billowy plaid pants that look sort of like kid’s pajamas.

Yet, this afternoon there seems to be an extra quickness in Billy Ray Cyrus’ step, and he has an air of restrained optimism as he works the offices at his record label, earnestly shaking hands and exchanging hugs with everyone from the vice presidents of publicity and promotion, right down to the lowliest intern.

You see, maybe, just maybe, Billy Ray Cyrus is getting a second life as a recording artist. About three years ago country radio virtually slammed the door on Cyrus after he’d sold roughly 11 million albums. The exact date he was last in the Top 50 until now is etched in his mind.

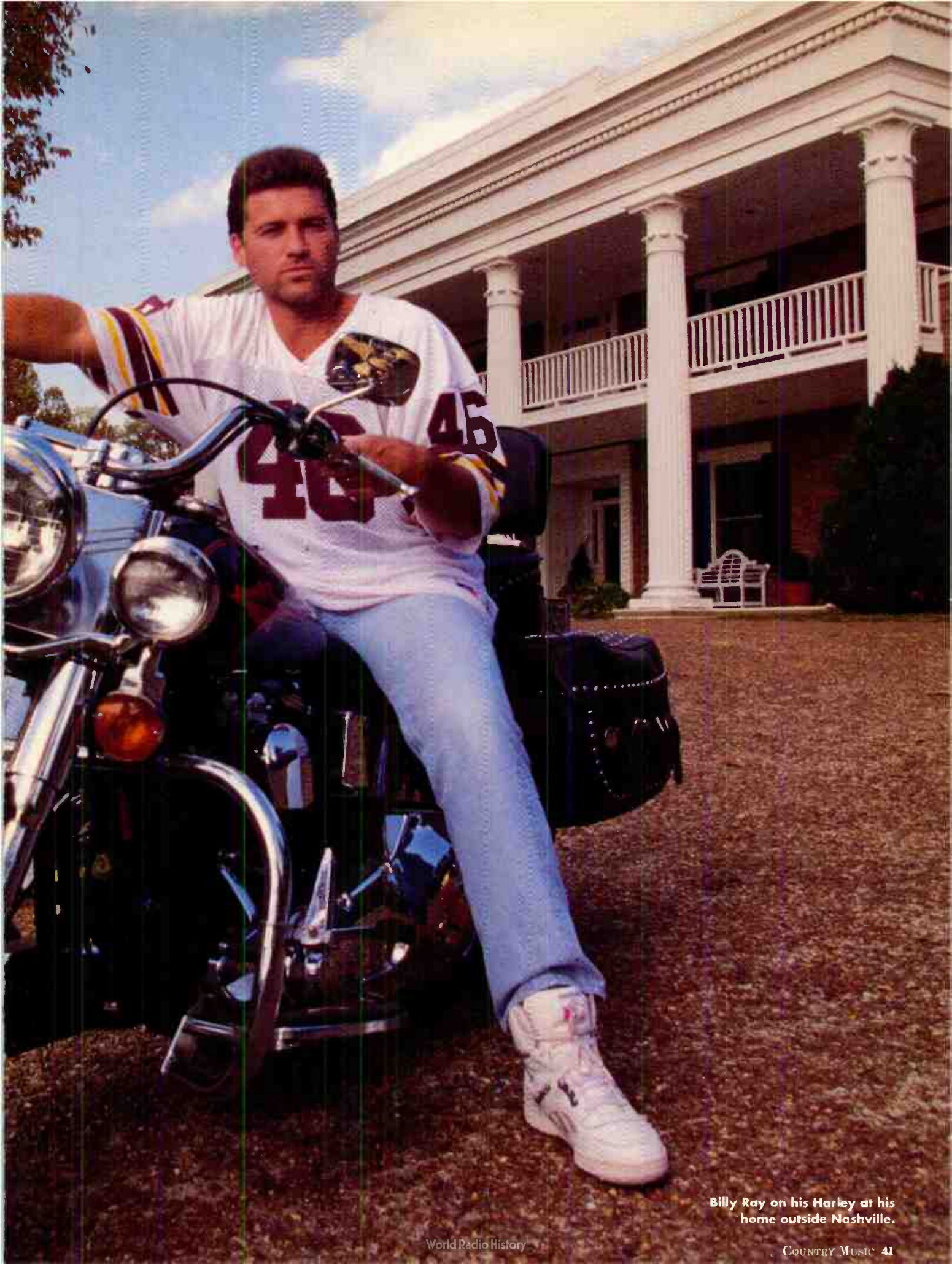
“October 25, 1994,” he says. “Yet even without airplay, all my videos have gone Number One.” Cyrus shakes his head and shrugs softly. “If it wasn’t for those videos, I probably

wouldn’t be sitting here talking to you right now.”

It got so bad that the question most asked out here in the heartland by people who follow country music at all was, “What ever happened to Billy Ray Cyrus?” That’s an indication of how far he plummeted after scaling the heights with “Achy Breaky Heart” (his only Number One, which came in 1992) and his follow-up Top Five singles, “Could’ve Been Me” and “In the Heart of a Woman.”

But now, after keeping the doors locked up tight for three years, radio has finally opened up just a crack to Cyrus. Country stations hither and yon have actually given a few spins to “It’s All the Same to Me,” the lone single released from *The Best of Billy Ray Cyrus*, his fifth and most recent album. Despite its title, the best-of album, released last year, actually contains a few new cuts co-produced by Mercury A&R chief Keith Stegall and John Kelton.

“It’s All the Same to Me” wasn’t a



Billy Ray on his Harley at his home outside Nashville.

chartbuster by any means, but it got all the way to Number 15—Cyrus' best chart showing since January 1994, when his single, "Words by Heart," broke into the Top 20.

"Whew!" Cyrus rolls his eyes superstitiously as he earnestly shakes my hand and settles into a chair in an empty conference room to discuss his potential career renaissance. "Maybe we better not talk about this—it could be over by the time your story comes out. I'm tryin' not to get my hopes up...especially after we released records like "Storm in the Heartland," "One Last Thrill" and "Trail of Tears" that I thought really had something to say, but nobody played 'em.

"That kinda hurt," he adds softly, scratching his chin. "It hurt a lot. But, hey, that's the laws of life. Maybe that's the price I had to pay for having everything right up front, with 'Achy Breaky'. I think maybe that 'Achy Breaky Heart' was just so, everywhere, right out of the box, that I was just, just oversaturated...."

These days, when he looks back to that initial breakthrough of line-dance engendered superstardom that he enjoyed in the early 90's, it already seems like a blur: like memories of a landscape seen from a fast-moving train.

"Yeah, daggone it, that's my only regret," he frets. "That everything went so fast, that I really missed a lot of it. Merle Haggard said it best when he said the funnest part about the music business is climbin' the mountain. When you get to the top of the mountain, you're just so busy dodgin' bullets and bein' pulled in so many directions that it ain't fun anymore."

But then, after that initial rush was over and radio dropped its iron curtain, a funny thing happened. Cyrus quietly hunkered down and began making the kind of music that's since given many of his former skeptics suitable ammunition for taking him seriously as a musician. His homegrown 1996 album, *Trail of Tears* (recorded in his guitar player's log cabin studio out in rural Kingston Springs, Tennessee), was a start. It forced even some of his harshest critics to revise their opinions.

Meanwhile, it seemed like the entire backdrop of country music was also beginning to subtly shift in Cyrus' favor: Country radio gradually descended to its present state of lowest common denominatorship, where it presumes that mature listeners (if they have any left) will swallow "heart" songs and honky-tonk ballads from potential "Teen Country" poster boys barely old enough to shave or tote a Social Security card. Meanwhile, an early 90's symbol of "heaviosity" like Garth Brooks (whose initial acclaim made Cyrus seem a mere novelty act by comparison) is beginning to look more and more like just a well-meaning, modestly talented guy of limited imagination who happened to get lucky.

Meanwhile, Billy Ray, now the 36-year-old father of three, gradually has begun to look—and sound—more and more like the real deal. The feedback is obvious from his recent reviews.

"Daggone, it sure does feel good right now," Cyrus grins as he acknowledges this image rehabilitation. "It does feel like there's a real good momentum, a real good vibe.

"We've been rebuildin' a lot of bridges here lately, too," he adds, with the look of a man who's been busy apologizing without being quite sure what he did wrong. "There's a lot of bridges that have been burned...misconceptions about me, or maybe someone was told that I was gonna be at a certain place that I was never aware of myself that I was supposed to be at.... I've been doing a lot of repairing, of damage that was done during the storm of my life, ya know. Maybe if it works out, if I end up gettin' another hit on the radio...." He shrugs, and seems to try and rein in his own enthusiasm. "I just know I'm proud to death of the music I'm making now," he adds. "Proud as can be."

A real big bridge was recently rebuilt, or at least crossed, when Cyrus, after countless nominations in the annual Nashville Net-

work/*Music City News* awards, finally came away with an actual award. He got last year's Single of the Year trophy for the title tune of his *Trail of Tears* album, even though the single never got past Number 69 in the *Billboard* charts.

"It's because of my fans," Cyrus insists with an affectionate toss of his head. "It's because of them that I've been able to weather all this. They are really a loving, caring bunch of people. They've kept coming to my shows through it all. Every charitable event or benefit auction we're doin', they will show up. They've supported the Billy Ray Cyrus charities up in Kentucky. They've not only stuck by me, they've also helped me help a lot of people in their lives. I love 'em, I really do."

This afternoon a few of Cyrus' more avid devotees have staked out the parking lot, hoping for a mere glimpse, or maybe even a handshake and a hello, from their hero. Cyrus gets up, walks over to the window and points down at a late-model van in the parking lot that's covered with pictures of him.

"Look! See that?" he says with a wide grin. "That's Polly. That's the lyrics to 'Trail of Tears' on the back of her wheel right there." He shakes his head again, seemingly re-energized by this enthusiastic gathering of the faithful. "It's somethin' else...."

Whatever the outcome of his most recent assault on country radio's breastworks, Cyrus is, for a change, clearly having fun these days. His excitement is evident as reps from his record label's various departments poke their heads in the door to talk game plans and strategy on some new videos and a flurry of other upcoming projects.

"We purposely didn't make a video of 'It's All the Same to Me' so no one can say it's an exploitation of my face or anything whatsoever," he points out. "It's strictly about the song and the music."

One project that Cyrus is particularly on fire to get to work on is one that's been near and dear to his heart for years: a movie about Magdalen Pitts, the little one-year-old girl who originally inspired him to write "Enough Is Enough." Magdalen was murdered in Eastern Kentucky years ago near where Cyrus grew up. He's visited her grave many times.

Though obviously he never knew the little girl (she died more than 70 years ago), she's never far from his mind. He's spoken of her often in interviews, and he vowed long ago to tell her story to the world. Now that he has kids of his own, Magdalen's tragedy has even more poignancy.

"It happened back in 1926," he explains. "Her father was convicted [of her murder], along with her nanny, who was kinda like her father's girlfriend. I just started reading a lot of old newspapers, a lot of things about that. And I realized I used to play in the house where it happened. But I had no idea at the time. I always knew, ya know, that there was a special feeling there. But I didn't find out until I was much older what actually happened there. That's kind of how the story ended up coming full circle in my life.

"I've written a rough draft of a movie script about her life, and how her life affected my life, and how I vowed as a 19-year-old kid that someday I'd tell her story," he adds. "Now I'm 36, and now I've got a chance to tell it. I've sent Peter Fonda some stuff on it. He loves the story, and he's wantin' to work with me. I'm a huge fan of his."

Also on Cyrus' 1997 itinerary was an extensive national tour and his first European tour, where he was greeted by sellout crowds and rave reviews—even from critics who turned out expecting not to like him. He even made a barnstorming visit to Brazil. Before he left, he talked about the tour:

"There are these two brothers down there who are Brazil's largest country music act—I won't attempt to pronounce their name," he points out, referring to the Brazilian duo, Chitaozinho



Billy Ray with his wife Leticia.

& Xororo. "They had a Number One pop and country hit with 'She's Not Crying Anymore,' which I co-wrote for my first album, *Some Gave All*. They're a Mercury/Polygram act like I am, so they just took my instrumental track and cut their vocals to make it into a duet in English and Portuguese.

"Now they've done the same thing with 'Achy Breaky', and it was a really huge hit, as well," he adds—obviously pumped up about this new South American connection. "CMT [Country Music Television] and the Country Music Association and everybody is really pushin' for me to go do this, because it could help open up one of the world's largest markets. It should help sell a lot of records."

He wasn't far off. Billy Ray played some 5,000-seat stadium shows with the Brazilians. CMT promoted the tour heavily and filmed one of the shows, and BRC's record sales down there jumped from about 2,000 on the *Best Of* album to about 40,000.

Even before the tours, Cyrus is clearly on a roll again—at least in his own mind. Granted, he may never regain the heights he scaled with "Achy Breaky Heart," and he'll probably never sell another 11 million albums. Yet, within the scope of his more modest and more manageable present career trajectory, he's clearly having a real good time. "Sometimes it's still like a fairy tale," he admits. "Shoot! Especially when you consider that, back in '91, I was livin' in my car! I've believed in this dream for well over a decade and pursued it with everything I could... 'Some Gave All' was a way of life for me.

"So here lately I've really been stoppin' and smelling the roses a lot and enjoyin' a lot of things about life and where I am right now."

Before he became focused on music with an almost evangelical zeal, Cyrus was an accomplished amateur baseball catcher with boyhood dreams of being another Johnny Bench. It turns out his baseball dreams also got a little bit of a second life in the last year. This past spring, he had an opportunity to suit up and take spring training with The Nashville Sounds, a minor league farm team of the Chicago White Sox. He acquitted himself so convincingly that there were plans afoot, at least until his touring schedule went haywire again, to make him an honorary member of the Sounds and occasionally put him to work as a bullpen catcher:

"I went from 194 to 186 pounds when I started training," he laughs. "But, shoot, I still got a long way to go! It really clarified for me how outta shape I am, and how old I am! I mean, it's unbelievable, the difference in quickness in swingin' a bat and all your reflexes and stuff, between bein' 19 and bein' 35. But I've always made up for what I lacked in talent with extra hustle."

The real capper of his baseball "comeback" came at last year's annual Fan Fair celebrity softball game. Pitching legend Nolan Ryan showed up, and Cyrus talked him into hurling him a few fastballs from the mound.

"Yeah, I caught Nolan Ryan!" Cyrus gushes with a look of amazement. "He was pitchin' with a baseball, too, not a softball. And even though he said he hadn't pitched for a year, he was chuckin' 'em! That was the pinnacle! How can you top that?"

As Cyrus enlarges upon this story, he drops the name of another newfound friend, George Jones. Jones recently invited Cyrus, his wife Tish and the youngest of Cyrus' brood of three kids and two stepkids out to his farm so the kids could visit with the famous purple TV dinosaur, Barney, in Jones' barn. Another incredulous grin from the "Achy Breaky Man":

"I thought, man, this cannot be: George Jones callin' me up,

tellin' me he's got Barney in his barn! I went out there, and George was in the barn, rasslin' around with Barney!" He laughs. "I just wouldn't trade that day for anything."

Later the same day he'd caught Nolan Ryan, Cyrus crossed paths with Jones again in the parking lot of the Opry House. Their encounter tells you a lot about this guy—about his innate generosity, and his unwillingness to take friendship lightly.

"George and I were talkin', and I told him, 'See this ball right here? This is the ball Nolan Ryan pitched to me today.' I handed it to him, and he put it in his pocket. Then he grinned and handed it back. I said, 'No, George, I want you to have that ball.' He said, 'No, you and Nolan Ryan passed with that ball!' I said, 'That's what makes it so special. I know you've got more gifts and have everything in the world, but this is something I cherish and love. That's why I wanta give it to you.' George said, 'Will you sign it for me?' And I did."



In the meantime Cyrus has been back in the studio with Keith Stegall, finishing up his next album, due in June. Recently, when a couple of advance cuts were played at a Mercury staff meeting, something unprecedented happened. The entire staff burst into spontaneous applause.

"You've gotta realize that Keith [Steggall, who also produces Alan Jackson, John Anderson, Terri Clark and a host of other stars] is the first producer BRC has worked with who really has influence over him," says a label insider. "Keith's really making him sing—he's not letting him get away with that growling thing he did on so many of his other records. I think this new record is going to put to rest once and for all the notion that Billy Ray can't sing."

Time and commitments are beginning to press in on my conversation with Cyrus. Another VP pokes her head into the conference room to remind Cyrus that it's time for a sit-down with Luke Lewis, Mercury/Nashville's label chief, to discuss a few details surrounding the release of the new album. When I apologize for running overtime, Cyrus does something that doesn't happen often in these situations. He humbly thanks me for coming and says with utter earnestness, "Hey, my pleasure! Got anything else on yer mind you wanta ask?"

How can you help but like this guy? He grins that boyish, toothy grin again, and looks unabashedly at peace with life, and with himself. "I'm at a stage where it does me no good to dwell on the past, good or bad," he insists. "I can't rest on any laurels or sit and stew about anything bad. The only thing that I have is the present and the future—that's about the only thing any of us have. That's why every day now I just try to smell the roses and see something good, because every day this still all seems like a dream come true." ■

Not your typical young country star, this former football player and offshore oil worker has a different take on his newfound success.

Trace Adkins

Hits the Big Time

By Bob Allen

When Trace Adkins shows up at the Sunset Grill, a yuppified Nashville lunch spot favored by the music biz elite, there's no problem picking him out amongst the businessmen and the waiters in white jackets.

Adkins is a raw-boned, windswept six-foot-six and looks even taller—he seems to tower about two feet over everybody else in the restaurant. He's wearing a T-shirt and blue jeans, and a long blond ponytail streams halfway down his back. His handshake nearly rearranges my knuckles, and his voice is so deep and sonorous that a few days later when I'm transcribing our lunchtime interview, I actually check the batteries in my machine to make sure the tape's not dragging.

At age 35—a decade or more older than some of the Resistol-wearing cherubs currently running amok in today's kiddie-country scene—Adkins, a former college football player and offshore oil worker, also possesses a refreshingly good-natured candor that the record company-hired “media coaches” apparently haven't beaten out of him yet.

After we've finished lunch and volley for the check, I come to my senses and tactfully suggest we track down the gold-card-toting publicist who's accompanied Adkins to the interview and let Capitol Records, Adkins' label, pick up the tab. But Adkins, without hesitation, scoops up the bill, mumbles something about “recoupment clauses” in his recording contract and hails the waiter. “It don't matter,” says the Academy of Country Music's 1997 Top New Male Vocalist award winner as he sweeps the room with a jaundiced eye and a nonchalant grin. “One way or another I'll end up payin' for it anyway.”

If Adkins seems a bit casual about his newfound success, or somewhat free of the usual starry-eyed insecurity that consumes many novice recording artists like the measles when they get a foot up on that precarious bottom rung, well, maybe it's just that he's been around a little longer.

“I've always been a fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants kinda guy and still am,” says the Louisiana-born singer who spent a half-decade on the Southwestern club circuit, another half-decade working on

offshore oil rigs and another three years playing in a little rural Tennessee beer joint before fame finally came calling in the form of recent hit records like “This Ain't No Thinkin' Thing” (his first Number One single), and “Every Light in the House Is On” (a Top Five hit—also from his platinum-certified 1996 debut album, *Dreamin' Out Loud*).

“What I mean is, I've always worked hard for a livin' most of my life, not knowin' from month to month whether I'll be able to pay my bills or not,” adds the singer whose second Capitol album, *Big Time* (1997), has already been certified Gold and resulted in another round of hits like “The Rest of Mine” and the current “Lonely Won't Leave Me.” “I came into this town with nothin',” he pauses and glances matter-of-factly around the sun-drenched Sunset Boulevard-style eatery again. “And if I leave it with nothin',” he shrugs matter-of-factly, “...oh, well.”

His philosophy makes it doubtful that all the fancy glitter and sparkles that the music business sprinkles down on its chosen few in the form of industry awards, catered Number One parties, platinum record celebrations and other butt-kissing perks and platitudes (which—as Adkins already has learned—the artist usually ends up footing the bill for, one way or another) will stick to Adkins' shoulders.

Not that he isn't tickled pink and even a little humbled by everything that's happened to him in recent months—he clearly is. Yet when he cites someone like Don Williams as a musical role model (“I love his quiet demeanor; there's nothin' fancy-schmantzy about his show, you just come to hear the man sing”), it seems to make perfect sense.

Like Williams, Adkins seems to have considerable indifference toward the glamour and b.s. aspects of the music business. He seems to have a steady, laid-back, guy-next-door sense of himself that's not about to be trumped up or distorted by the smoke and mirrors of the Music Row hypemeisters.

Even so, there have already been some unforgettable moments in the year since his first single release hit the charts—the kind of giddy experiences that could easily sway the most level of heads.

Like getting to sing the National Anthem at a Dallas Cowboys game. (Coach Barry Switzer took



one look at Adkins and declared, "You're too big to sing. Why don't you go suit up.")

Or—even better—getting to visit Austin, Minnesota, "the Spam Capital of the World"—far better in my book than a Dallas Cowboys game! (Being a big fan of canned meat, Adkins visited the Hormel plant and got free T-shirts and other goodies.)

Or—yet another great moment—getting to appear on the TV comedy show, *Politically Incorrect*. "That show's great, man!" he laughs. "I went to them and asked if I could be on. The poor publicists at my label are shakin' in their boots, because they know I am politically incorrect, and I'm not gonna pretend to be anything else. In this business, that's a dangerous thing."

And certainly we can't leave out perhaps the best moment of all: when he fell to his knees and proposed to his current wife, former Music Row publicist, Rhonda Forlaw, on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. He and Forlaw were married in a gala Nashville ceremony last May and are expecting their first child.

It's no wonder, given his no-frills devotion to the blue collar, shoot-from-the-hip ethic, that Adkins is fond of drawing parallels between his years spent laboring as a derrickman in the fierce wind and blistering sun on the offshore rigs and his latest gig as a neophyte country star.

Maybe he no longer winds up at the end of the day cut and bleeding and splattered with mud, oil and various chemical substances. But even so, "I still just get up in the morning and do my job from day to day the best I can. I just figure that if I just keep doin' that, the future will take care of itself, if it's meant to be."

Yet Adkins' casual approach and strong sense of the inevitable is not to be confused with a lack of aggressiveness or determination. Super-manager Ken Kragan may have popularized the phrase, "Life Is a Contact Sport," but Adkins has lived it. And he has scars and even a misshapen finger to prove it.

First, there was his stint as a defensive end at Louisiana Tech University, where he majored in petroleum technology and even briefly—no kidding!—took voice lessons with an opera coach—which, he confesses, he wished he'd stuck with longer. But football, of course, was his main event. But even though he bulked and buffed himself up to 260 pounds, he was still, by his own account, a little too small. "I'd of loved to have gone to 'the show' and played big-time ball," he admits. "I took some serious beatings, a lot of abuse. I wanted to keep playin', but after two knee operations the surgeon told me, 'I fixed it this time, but I don't know if I can fix it next time.' So I dragged my battered old body off the field while I could still walk away."

With his gridiron prospects gone, Adkins lost interest in higher education and dropped out of college—something else he says he now regrets. He spent the next eight years or so working on and off in the Gulf of Mexico on offshore oil derricks as a derrickman and a pipefitter.

As Adkins tells it, life on the rigs, 90 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico, in 200 feet of water, for weeks at a time, wasn't much more serene. His little finger still has an abnormal curvature from the time he almost dismembered it with a six-inch buck knife while trying to open a can of pipe dope. (He had the

doctor sew it back at an angle so he could still bend it around the neck of a guitar.) Turns out the sliced-up finger was just one of many thrills and spills.

"There was often a lot of blood spilled to get that oil," he says with a tone of nostalgia. "It used to get pretty wild out there on those derricks in the high wind. You'd stay bruised up, banged up and cut up, and it would either be bitter cold or real hot and nasty. We worked with chemicals out there—zinc bromide, calcium chloride. If you spilled 'em on your boots, it would change 'em from size 14 to size four overnight—just shrivel 'em up like little elf's shoes.

"But the nastier and more dangerous it got out there, the better I liked it," he adds with a hard-bitten grin. "Roughneckin' is like a contact sport. I loved it."

You're not being presumptuous if you're starting to get the idea that Adkins—at least in his wild and crazy youth—has a big ol' reckless streak. Besides the finger amputation, he's also survived two near-fatal car accidents, a little less serious mishap on a bulldozer, even a shooting. In 1994, his first wife accidentally shot him with a .38 caliber pistol during a domestic dispute. The slug passed through his lung and both ventricles of his heart, and even his doctors couldn't quite figure out why it didn't kill him.

Yet, even during his wildest and darkest times, music was always a tempering force in Adkins' life. And through the years, that seldom changed.

He recalls that when he was growing up in the northwest Louisiana towns of Springhill and Sarepta, near the Arkansas border, the oil business was about all there was. That and music. His granddaddy sang bass in church, and his uncle, J.W., a train engineer, recorded several gospel albums as "The Singing Engineer." His mother and all her sisters also sang in the choir. By age ten Trace (born Tracey Darrell Adkins in Sarepta, on January 13, 1962) was already warbling and plunking away on his first guitar, which his parents bought him.

"I was in an elementary school play once, and that was the first time I had to sing a song in public," he laughs. "It made me so nervous, I never sang again till I got in a gospel quartet at 14."

Adkins, known now for his distinctly mellow baritone, sang bass in The New Commitment Quartet for several years. The quartet made two albums in the late 70's and early 80's and played "just about every church within a hundred miles of home.

"Those records are pretty terrible," he adds with a grimace, failing to mention that he won the 1980 Gospel Vocalist of the Year award from a local music association called Ark-La-Tex. "I sure do dread people gettin' ahold of 'em and listening to 'em now!"

A few years later, at Louisiana Tech, Adkins would often regale the football team with his rendition of vintage Hank Williams Jr. songs. "I wore out *Whiskey Bent & Hell Bound*. I got to where I could play every song on it."

Later, during long stretches offshore on the rigs, he'd sit around the pilot house during idle hours and similarly entertain the other roughnecks. In fact, it was a buddy from the oil rig who introduced him to members of a Lafayette, Louisiana, band that needed a lead singer. He joined the band, and for the next few years hit the road, touring—"everywhere from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Jackson, Mississippi, and all over Texas"—under the name of Bayou. In 1985 the band even made the finals in the annual Wild Turkey Battle of the Bands competition.

"But after about four or five years, 320 nights a year, I just got burned out and frustrated with the whole thing," Adkins remembers. "I got down on myself, lost my self-confidence and just began to think I'd never get past that [club] level. So I went back to work offshore, which was the only other thing I knew how to do."

Three years went by. Adkins by now was married and had a couple of kids. (They've since divorced. His two daughters, ages nine and 13, visit him often in Nashville, and are naturally getting quite a charge out of his recent entry into the "Big Time.")

Then one day he got a call out of the blue from an old friend in the music business named John Milam, whom he hadn't heard from in several years.

"Are you still singing?" Milam inquired.

"Naw, I don't even sing in the shower, man. I'm done with it," Adkins assured him.

His friend seemed taken aback by this. "God gave you that talent, and He wants you to use it," he told Adkins. "One day you're gonna look in the mirror and ask yourself, 'I wonder what would have happened if...'"

Long afterward this conversation would stick in Adkins' head. "The more I thought about it, it got to where that notion scared me more than the idea of sellin' my house and quittin' my job and moving to Nashville. So in 1992 I finally just loaded up and came on. I was married at the time, and my wife got a job transfer up here, which made it not quite so nerve-wracking. Still," he adds with a jittery laugh, "it was pretty...pretty exciting."

Adkins settled in east of Nashville, out near Mt. Juliet, Tennessee. He got a job with the DuPont Corporation as a pipefitter, then later went to work building barns for a company out in Williamson County that offered more flexible hours.

"Fortunately, Greg Locke, my boss on that job, loves country music and loved what I was tryin' to do. He's a really good guy, and he was really excited for me. He'd let me have a day off when I needed one," Adkins recalls.

Relying once again on his old friend John Milam's advice, Adkins chose not to become just another wannabe haunting the open-mike nights at clubs like The Bluebird Cafe or The Stockyard—places where familiarity, instead of getting you a recording contract, can often lead to mere indifference on the part of the industry.

Instead, he scouted out Tillie's and Lucy's, a neighborhood pub on Lebanon Road, about three miles from his house and several light years from Music Row. "I didn't want people in the industry to know who I was until I had something going," he explains. "Out in Mt. Juliet you either had to live out that way or really make a concerted effort to come see me. I ended up playing Tillie's and Lucy's long enough to know all the regulars, their first and last names, and what was wrong with their trucks and what their kids were all doin'."

In the meantime, Adkins did make the rounds of the Music Row labels. He got turned down by just about everyone, including Jimmy Bowen, the previous head of Capitol (then called Liberty), the company to which he's now signed. Decca Records gave him a development deal that ended up leading nowhere.

Then one day he went to the Nashville airport to pick up Arista Records publicist Rhonda Forlaw, who was then his girlfriend. She was coming in on the same flight as Scott Hendricks, the new president and CEO of Capitol/Nashville, whom she'd known for years. While they were all standing around the luggage turnstile waiting for their bags, Forlaw introduced her boyfriend to Hendricks. Hendricks was immediately intrigued. "I wondered if Trace could sing, because he has such a unique [speaking] voice," Hendricks later told *Billboard*.

All it took for Hendricks to find out was a trip out to Tillie's and Lucy's one night. Before Adkins was even off the stage after his first set, Hendricks offered him a deal—he was Hendricks' first signing as Capitol's new label chief. Within a few months the two of them were hard at work on *Dreamin' Out Loud*. Naturally, when Adkins had his first Number One single, "This Ain't No Thinkin' Thing," from the debut album, they had a party at Tillie's and Lucy's to celebrate.

Even a hard-to-surprise and even harder-to-impress ol' country boy like Adkins has to admit that he's "still in a state of shock" over everything that's happened to him in the past year or so.

"I did this show down in San Antonio a little while back, and we'd finished our sound check, and the band that was opening for us came out and did their sound check, and they played one of my songs," he recalls with a slightly stunned look. "It just about made me cry, because I remember so well what it was like all those years, being the local opening act. I just had to go up and tell 'em how much I appreciated that." ■

Editor's Note: Trace and Rhonda's daughter, Mackenzie Lynn Adkins, debuted January 27, 1998.

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DARYLE SINGLETARY

Movin' On Up

■ by Bob Allen ■

Yawning, scratching and drawling his way through a late morning interview, Daryle Singletary is, by turns, sheepish, intentionally and unintentionally hilarious, and about as Georgia-down-home as a big ol' plate of fried catfish and turnip greens.

As Singletary tells a tale on himself about calling his pal and musical mentor, Randy Travis, for some advice about buying a horse ("Randy knows about ever'thin' there is to know 'bout quarterhorses"), he grimaces comically and shakes his head. Success, at least the taste of it he's had thus far, has made him a little bit like a kid in a candy store.

"I'm a big quarterhorse fan myself," notes the 27-year-old South Georgia-born singer, whose rich and pure country baritone—heard in recent years on hits like "Amen Kind of Love" and the current single, "The Note," the lead-off hit from *Ain't It the Truth*, his third and latest album—is highly reminiscent of not just Travis, but other latter-day masters like John Anderson and the late Keith Whitley, whom he also cites as a major influence.

"I used to raise quarterhorses back home," elaborates Singletary, who was recently praised by *Billboard* as "one of the best voices of the new traditional country singers." "But when I moved to Nashville in 1990—October 14, 1990, to be exact—I sold everything I had, horse-wise. Then I just woke up one mornin' here recently and wanted somethin' to ride.

"See, that's the way I am—I might wake up one day and want a certain kinda automobile," says the singer, who first scored big in the charts in 1995 with the back-to-back Top Five singles: "Let Her Lie" and "Too Much Fun."

"Then I might go get that automobile, then turn around and sell it the next day." He blinks and scratches his head again. "I swear, I'm bad about that."

As of this writing, Singletary still hasn't gotten the horse—which is maybe for the best. It could have been a rerun of the day, not long

ago, when he set out to buy a Labrador retriever.

"I'm very—whudda ya call it?—impulsive," he snaps his fingers. "I'd always owned a dog when I was growin' up, and I had a Lab back home who was real old, and I couldn't bring him up here with me. So I went out one day and bought one dog, then I saw another dog I liked and bought that dog, and then saw two more I liked and bought them two dogs, too! I ended up with four dogs, and by then my wife, Kerry, was about ready to get rid of me. Then one of them dogs had puppies, and I ended up with eight of 'em!"

Even though he sounds like he's in trial heats for the George Jones school of runaway consumerism (buy it, sell it or give it away, then buy two more and repeat

the process), Singletary isn't really in an income bracket yet that enables him to easily absorb such extravagances—though he may soon be headed there. While his first two albums on the Giant label—*Daryle Singletary* (1995) and *All Because of You* (1996)—garnered a few Top Five hits while earning noteworthy critical praise, *Ain't It the Truth* seems about to take him to a new level altogether. Country radio jumped all over "The Note," the lead-off single, even before its official release date.

Billboard minced no words in its admiration of Singletary's performance on "The Note" (previously recorded but never a hit for Conway Twitty, Tammy Wynette and Doug Supernaw), which boldly casts Singletary in a weepy, middle George Jones/early Randy Travis hard country niche: "Singletary only has to get a few lines into the first verse for the listener to realize this young traditionalist can go toe to toe with such master stylists as Merle Haggard and George Jones."

When Singletary recounts such tales, then speaks glowingly of his 1995 marriage to Kerry—also an aspiring singer whom he met around the time he was recording his debut album—it's clear that the life he finds himself leading these days has been the stuff of his dreams.

"Now that I know him real well, I've

He's impulsive and talented. And, with a little help from some big names, Daryle Singletary is carving out his future.



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told Randy Travis many times about how I used to foller his bus down home, just wantin' to meet him and tell him how great I thought he was. I wasn't infatuated with him or tryin' to bother him or anything. I just thought he was a great singer, and I wanted to tell him that."

Singletary ponders this a moment with a faraway look in his eyes, then adds, "But I never thought I'd ever really get the opportunity to actually tell Randy that. Much less have him be my friend and co-produce my first album.

"For years, though, I was just like a student of singers like Randy—all the great country singers," he adds. "George Jones, Lefty Frizzell, Randy, Keith Whitley....I'm a connoisseur of great country singers. I've studied 'em all and how they phrased, and I just put all their influences together, just tryin' to come up with something of my own that was just a little different. I think I've finally hit on it with *Ain't It the Truth*."

Born in 1971, near Cairo, Georgia (hometown of Jackie Robinson), Singletary grew up and did all the 4-H/F.F.A. things in school and opted for extra music activities in place of physical education. He also learned to repair hay balers and peanut combines. (Peanuts, not cotton, are king in south Georgia.) He sang with his family as a youngster in a homegrown family gospel group called, appropriately enough, The Singletarys, and he would often drive 50 miles just for the chance to sing one song in a talent contest. "But I had no idea I had any kind of a voice or anything back then," he insists.

"Ya know," he laughs softly, "it's kinda like people make fun of your grandmother for sayin' things like, 'Son, you oughta go to Nashville.' But it's the truth. That's what I heard—heard it everywhere. And a lot of people back home told me they'd help me out if I ever needed it, ya know, if I ever got that far. Probably way back in the back of their heads they were thinkin', 'Oh, I'm just tellin' him that to make him feel better.' But it worked," he laughs. "It kinda blew up on some people. They didn't actually think I'd do it!"

But at least one person, an older friend named Alan Baggett, whom Singletary had been playing music with since he was a kid, wasn't just blowing smoke at him.

"When I was ten or 12, I used to go over to Alan's house and play guitars and sing country music. Later, he went to work in the music business up in Nashville. He drove Tanya Tucker's bus for a while. Then he drove a T-shirt truck and sold T-shirts for Randy and [Travis' wife/manager] Lib Hatcher. Now he's Tammy Wynette's bus driver. One summer when I was still in high school, I came up to Fan Fair and saw Alan and told him I

was 'bout ready to move to Nashville. He just said, 'Well, whenever you do, I'll help ya any way I can.'"

As it turned out, it took a while. After graduating from high school, Singletary got a job with a local Ford Tractor dealership and found it hard to leave home...at least until that old impulsive streak seized hold of him again.

"I was in training to be a tractor salesman, and I was datin' this girl I'd been datin' for five or six years," he recalls. "I was makin' good money for a young kid. I was livin' at home, had no bills or truck payments or nothin'. So I was livin' it up. I was content, just puttin' money in the

"Ya know, it's kinda like people make fun of your grandmother for sayin' things like, 'Son, you oughta go to Nashville.' But it's the truth. That's what I heard—heard it everywhere."

bank and doin' good. But all of a sudden one day, before I'd even sold my first tractor, I just decided to quit and move up here and try this music business.

"Really, though, I was just a kid, so I didn't have that much to give up—shoot!" he laughs. "What am I talkin' 'bout? I'm still a kid!"

"But when I went and told the guy I was workin' for that I was quittin' and movin' to Nashville, he told me I'd be back in six weeks. He'd never, even today, admit he said that, but he did, and I'll never forget it."

This proved to be one instance where Singletary, who hitched his first ride up to Music City with Baggett in Tanya Tucker's tour bus, clearly got the last laugh. "The tractor dealership later went outta business," he jokes. "My boss got what he said I was gonna get. Ha! Guess they couldn't handle it when I left!"

Still, Singletary says there were times during his first couple of years where he damned near did prove his ex-boss right. "I went two years without knowin' anybody in the inner circles of Music Row that you have to get inside of to get anything done," he recalls. "I just got out there and beat the streets and did the open-mike nights at the clubs. Often, I'd go into a club and put my name on a list and maybe sit there from nine o'clock at night until two o'clock in the morning just to get to play one song.

"I got a lotta doors slammed in my face, and there were a lot of rough times in terms of frustration and depression. I got to the point more than once where I didn't wanta be here anymore, and if it had been up to me, I probably would have went home," he confesses with a shrug.

"But my parents wouldn't let me."

He flashes a relieved smile and adds, "That was until my future wife came along and straightened me out."

Singletary's first real ray of hope came when he landed a regular spot at the Broken Spoke, a Nashville nightclub that was also a stepping stone for both Tracy Lawrence and Tim McGraw. Some members of Randy Travis' road crew often frequented the Spoke when they were in off the road. They started talking Singletary up with Lib Hatcher, who finally agreed to listen to a tape.

Hatcher was sufficiently impressed with what she heard to take Singletary under her wing in 1992 and try to get him a record deal. But not much else happened for another year or two. Then producer James Stroud, recently installed as president of Giant Records and avidly in search of new label signees, happened to hear Singletary on a demo. His curiosity was aroused, and he ventured out to the Broken Spoke for Singletary's live

show. A contract with Giant soon followed, and Stroud ended up co-producing Singletary's debut album, along with Randy Travis and David Malloy.

As thrilled as he was by all this, Singletary also found it somewhat intimidating to be taking studio direction from the great Randy Travis. "That was the first thing Randy had ever produced, and he was quite tough," Singletary points out. "Randy is a perfectionist. Now, I like things right...I like 'em to be genuine. He wanted to overdub, one word at a time, and it was kinda tough. Him bein' such a huge success and legend, who was I to argue? So, yeah, it was a little nerve-rackin' to start with. But it was fun."

Singletary is clearly proud of that first album. Yet, looking back, he already considers it something of a beginner's effort. He insists there's a lot more of his own fingerprints on *All Because of You*, which is dedicated to Kerry, whom he calls "a sweet lady...my saving grace." He naturally has even better things to say about *Ain't It the Truth*, which sounds like a breakthrough album, by any measure. He simply refers to it as the record that has finally enabled him to "be the country singer I moved to town to be....There's a certain thing that goes on in 'The Note,'" he adds. "[A] scratchy, gravelly tone to my voice. [The producers] accepted that as part of what makes me *me*, and they really captured that sound on tape.

"This album's also got the whole attitude of how I feel now," he adds with another big sunny South Georgia grin. "I'm very happy, and I've just been havin' a real big time.

"I'm in love, and I wanta tell everybody about it." ■

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FLOYD CRAMER

1933-1997

Had Floyd Cramer recorded nothing more than his hit instrumental, "Last Date," he would be a giant for the unique bent-note or "pedal piano" style he perfected and popularized. That, however, was only a part of the picture. Think of the piano introduction to Patsy Cline's "Crazy," the understated licks at the opening of Jim Reeves' "He'll Have to Go" or the bright eighth notes on Roy Orbison's "Only the Lonely." Recall if you will the brooding, spooky piano passage on Elvis' "Heartbreak Hotel." All reflected the eloquence of a master accompanist/soloist whose bell-like tone and flair for understatement allowed him to reflect the deepest emotions with a few brilliantly-placed notes. Few musicians did more to help define the Nashville Sound.

As one of Nashville's legendary studio A-Team, Cramer played a vital role in creating many country and pop hits from the 50's into the 70's. He was one of only three of that elite group, Chet Atkins and Boots Randolph being the others, who became stars themselves. When he died December 31, 1997, at home in Madison, Tennessee, after many months battling cancer, Nashville lost a true original. He's survived by wife Mary, two daughters and four grandchildren. The January 3 services were attended by nearly 240. He was interred in Madison.

Born in Samti, Louisiana, in 1933, Floyd Cramer Jr. grew up in Huttig, Arkansas, where his parents gave him a piano at age five. Largely self-taught, he joined Shreveport's *Louisiana Hayride* house band in 1951, backing *Hayride* stars Hank Williams, Webb Pierce, Jim Reeves, Faron Young and the young Elvis Presley. He recorded his first singles for Abbott Records, and when *Hayride* stars started recording in Nashville. Cramer came along. Atkins, RCA's new Nashville producer, urged him to relocate, which he did in 1955.

Cramer quickly became *the* session pianist in town, and by 1958, he was an RCA artist with a hit single: "Flip, Flop and Bop." Like his fellow studio players, he often had to improvise new sounds on the spot. To get the percussive piano on Boots Randolph's "Yakety Sax," Cramer jammed towels against the piano's strings. On Jimmy Dean's 1961 hit, "Big Bad John," producer Don Law had Cramer hammer a mike boom's soft metal counterweight for the clanging effect on the

record. Appearing at a 1994 concert teaming Cramer with the local symphony orchestra in Roanoke, Virginia, Dean recalled being "the only artist in the world Floyd Cramer's played hammer for."

As for Cramer's "grace note" or "slurred note" style, which he later compared to Mother Maybelle Carter's guitar style, the idea came to him by chance. In his autobiography, Chet Atkins recalled being impressed with the composer Don Robertson's piano playing on the demo of his song, "Please Help Me, I'm Falling." As he sang the lyrics, Robertson

played grace notes, giving the piano pedal-steel-like phrasing. With Hank Locklin set to record the song the next day, Chet gave Cramer the tape, directing him to learn the style overnight. He did, and Locklin scored his biggest hit ever. Even that alone didn't totally define Cramer's music. He often left a day of playing on country sessions to play jazz at Nashville's Carousel Club.

Sensing the grace-note style had greater appeal, in 1961 Atkins suggested Cramer write an instrumental. The result was the sweetly melancholy "Last Date," a huge pop and country hit that quickly became an instrumental classic. With added lyrics, it was a Number Five hit for Skeeter Davis in 1961, Number One for Conway Twitty in 1972 and Number One again for Emmylou Harris in 1983. Cramer's own hit instrumentals included 1961's "On the Rebound"

and, in 1962, "San Antonio Rose" and "Lovesick Blues." His dozens of RCA LP's encompassed all styles.

His close friend, A-Team guitarist Harold Bradley. Owen Bradley's younger brother, played with Cramer on countless sessions and backed him on concert dates in recent years. "He was a family man," Bradley reflects. "The only thing he liked better than playin' the piano was playin' husband and papa." Musically, Bradley says, "The older he got, the better he played. He had a very good ear, a knack for playing commercial. He had a wonderfully soft touch. He could draw a tone out of the piano. He played it, caressed it, and when he did that, it created an emotion, and especially when he added in the little grace note that made his style. He was very versatile. When he played a classical number, he played it beautifully. Everyone was always kinda stunned. Nobody will ever do it like he did it."

—RICH KIENZLE



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THE FRANKLIN MINT

TOP 25



Albums

1. LeAnn Rimes *You Light Up My Life—
Inspirational Songs*
2. Shania Twain *Come On Over*
3. Garth Brooks *Sevens*
4. Brooks & Dunn *The Greatest Hits Collection*
5. Tim McGraw *Everywhere*
6. Trisha Yearwood *(Songbook) A Collection of Hits*
7. Sammy Kershaw *Labor of Love*
8. Martina McBride *Evolution*
9. LeAnn Rimes *Blue*
10. John Michael Montgomery *Greatest Hits*
11. Deana Carter *Did I Shave My Legs for This?*
12. Collin Raye *The Best of Collin Raye—
Direct Hits*
13. George Strait *Carrying Your Love with Me*
14. Alan Jackson *Everything I Love*
15. Lila McCann *Lila*
16. Trace Adkins *Big Time*
17. Bryan White *The Right Place*
18. Wynonna *The Other Side*
19. LeAnn Rimes *Unchained Melody/
The Early Years*
20. John Denver *A Celebration of Life*
21. Michael Peterson *Michael Peterson*
22. Clay Walker *Rumor Has It*
23. Clint Black *Nothin' But the Taillights*
24. The Kinleys *Just Between You and Me*
25. Toby Keith *Dream Walkin'*

Singles

1. Tim McGraw *Just to See You Smile*
2. Sammy Kershaw *Love of My Life*
3. Lila McCann *I Wanna Fall in Love*
4. Diamond Rio *Imagine That*
5. Brooks & Dunn *He's Got You*
6. Shania Twain *Don't Be Stupid (You Know
I Love You)*
7. Anita Cochran/Steve Wariner *What If I Said*
8. LeAnn Rimes *On the Side of Angels*
9. Lee Ann Womack *You've Got to Talk to Me*
10. George Strait *Round About Way*
11. Collin Raye *Little Red Rodeo*
12. John Michael Montgomery *Angel in My Eyes*
13. Kenny Chesney *A Chance*
14. Garth Brooks *She's Gonna Make It*
15. Lorrie Morgan *One of Those Nights Tonight*
16. Martina McBride *A Broken Wing*
17. Bryan White *One Small Miracle*
18. Wynonna *Come Some Rainy Day*
19. Clint Black *Nothin' But the Taillights*
20. Alan Jackson *Between the Devil and Me*
21. Wade Hayes *The Day That She Left Tulsa
(In a Chevy)*
22. Dixie Chicks *I Can Love You Better*
23. Travis Tritt *Still in Love with You*
24. Neal McCoy *If You Can't Be Good*
25. David Kersh *If I Never Stop Lovin' You*



Meet the Queen of Country

DELTA DAWN

by Cindy Shafer

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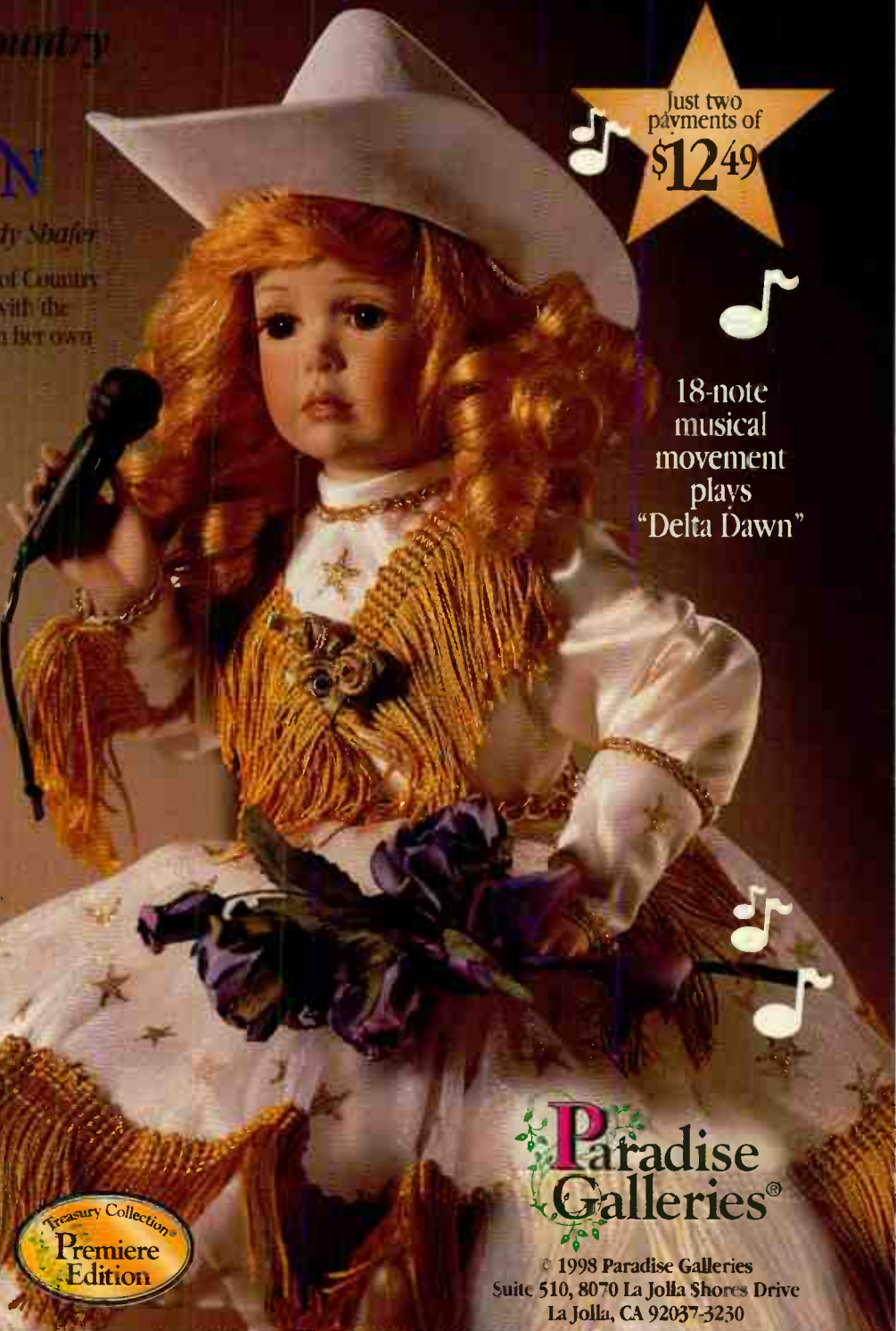
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Letters

Real Country Mark

It was so cool to see my Jasper, Texas, neighbor, Mark Chesnutt, on the cover of your January/February 1998 issue. I also liked the interview by Bob Millard. Mark is one of the few artists who continues to write and perform "real" country music. I hope that he will be asked to play on some of the upcoming awards shows soon. I was privileged to get to meet him again when he played in Nacogdoches recently, and, as always, his show was 100 percent pure country.

Kari N. Celestine
Diboll, Texas

Shania and Loons

Well, I've found *another* artist whose music radio refuses to play! My absolute favorite album of 1997 is John Fogerty's *Blue Moon Swamp*. You'll find as much country-flavored music here as with most of what's played on country radio.

I also enjoyed the article on Shania Twain in the November/December 1997 issue. It was interesting to hear her opinions on her music. And I was surprised to find out that we share a common interest—loons. They're the main reason I go camping. The common loon is Minnesota's state bird.

Roxanne Johnston
Hibbing, Minnesota

Shania Twain Her Favorite

I am a new subscriber to CMM, and you sent me the best possible introduction to your *Country Music Magazine*, the November/December issue.

Shania Twain is my favorite music personality. I love the cover picture and the article with pictures. There is nothing wrong with showing a belly button. When I was young and had the figure for it, there was a period back in the late 30's or early 40's when it was the fashion. Shania Twain is just a very beautiful young woman with assets others would die for, and, like women have done since Adam and Eve, shows just enough to drive men crazy, because imagination does the rest.

Anyone who has seen "God Bless the Child" has seen the real Shania Twain.

Betty Kemp
Olathe, Kansas

Alabama

Thank you for your article by Bob Allen, "Alabama: Portrait of a Band in Mid-Life" in the January/February issue. I was five years old in 1980 when these



"Bama Boys" recorded "My Home's in Alabama." I have that recording, plus all of the 20. I will wait for compact disc number 21 to come before the year 2000. Keep up the excellent music, Randy, Jeff, Teddy and Mark, for you have one loyal fan that's been here since your first recording session. Your lyrics and music are "Love in the First Degree" for me. This girl will always be "Dancin' on the Boulevard" to this fabulous mega-band. We know them best by the state-of-their-music, Alabama. The artists of two decades (well, almost!) of "musical artistry."

Dana Provencher
Austin, Texas

Loveless Looks Lovely

Thank you so much for making Patty Loveless your January/February issue centerfold. I admire that beautiful woman and her music tremendously. She deserves all the praise and positive media coverage possible. Please include more features on the glorious Patty Loveless and other female artists in future issues.

Sheila Pack
Shawnee, Oklahoma

Loveless a Work of Art

Keep up the good work. The Patty Loveless centerfold was fine art! Can you please tell me what has become of Becky Hobbs, The Beckaroo! We were in her fan club and then, suddenly, no news!

Ralph Mastroberte
Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey

Vince's Songs Inspiring

I read Hazel Smith's heartwarming condolences to Vince Gill in the November/December issue. She couldn't have written a truer account of Vince and his touching song, "Go Rest High on That Mountain." I know how Vince hurt losing a father and a brother. Most of us during our life have lost dear ones.

Vince has a special place in his heart for people who face tragedies, like his song, "Pretty Little Adrianna," which he wrote for the young girl who was shot in Nashville. Also his song, "Worlds Apart," had so much meaning to it for all the peoples of this world who should learn to respect each other no matter what color their skin is and where they come from. Perhaps some of us have learned from these songs to become a better person.

Audrey Jansen
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Rimes Found Wanting

I just want to thank you for including the review of LeAnn Rimes' newest album in your January/February issue. It is about time someone stopped kissing up to her and tells it like it is. There are a lot of other talented newcomers out there—male and female—who deserve a lot more air time on the radios and space in the magazines, James Bonamy, Paul Brandt and Anita Cochran mainly. They are what country is all about, not just in their songs, but in their souls. They stick to their country roots in every way, especially in what counts—and that's heart. LeAnn doesn't have that.

Salena D. Richardson
Maroa, Illinois

Love That LeAnn

We realize that your special Record Reviews writers have their own personal opinions on country music stars and songs, but, according to Rich Kienzle (January/February issue), if you are going to produce an album or record that is "patriotic," "good," "decent," "down home" and "plain good," you are wasting your time! I say "balderdash"! I am referring to the "awful, terrible, unkind" words he used to portray LeAnn Rimes' new album and good decent songs. He knows, and thousands upon thousands, if not millions of LeAnn Rimes fans know, that she and her good daddy are going along together, just great, and just fan-

tastic. We in America need more songs of that type and more singers "willing" and "able" to belt them out! I say, let me write the next LeAnn Rimes review. I qualify, as much as Mr. Rich Kienzle, especially in this category!

Phil and Suzy Thomas
Crisfield, Maryland

Another Volunteer

Shame on you. Hiring deaf people to do your record reviews. Bob Millard (November/December issue) is deaf, right? It seems to me that would be the only explanation why he would use words and terms like "mish-mash," "cheesy" and "rotten" in a review of Lorrie Morgan's *Shakin' Things Up*. Bobby boy really missed the mark on this one.

Tell you what, there is nothing wrong with my ears. Send me Lorrie's next release and I will review it for you. That way your reviewer will be hearing what everyone else is hearing, another great album, from country music's best female artist.

Connie G. Frye
Cameron, West Virginia

Steve Earle

Just read your review of Steve Earle's *El Corazon* in the January/February issue, and a question arose. You used the following statements: "As much as I admire Steve Earle, I'm sure glad I don't live where he lives"/"No doubt he's one of our best and most honest writers"/"He's been back on the beam with a vengeance"/"The older but wiser Steve Earle"/"It's real and it's painfully honest." My question: "But did you like the CD?"

Terry Kline
Bowling Green, Ohio

Wants Waylon

Received my copy of the January/February issue of *Country Music* yesterday. I always look forward to it as you publish so much news. But there's just nothing new on my all-time favorite. The one and only Waylon Jennings. I always search for news of him. Just hoping there is something about his progress in his illness. No one has printed any news about his progress at all.

As I've been a fan of his for so many years, that's why I subscribed to *Country Music* in the first place back in 1974. There was a story about him. Have never missed a copy since and don't expect to either. But unless it's because he wants it that way, please print a story of his progress. Keep up the good work,

Lotus Roberts
Harrison, Arkansas
Waylon and others in Final Note.—Ed.

Health to Hazel and More

Just received my January/February issue. Love the magazine. Don't always agree, but who does? Good luck and

health, Hazel! I totally agree with one of the letters in that issue about George Strait and Garth Brooks. First time I saw a Garth show, or part, on TV, I couldn't believe all the antics he goes through. I knew he'd get Entertainer of the Year after he did that free concert in NYC. Somehow, all the stuff he says just doesn't ring true with me. He tries to be too humble, etc.

I've been a George Strait fan ever since he started. There are a number I like, but he's the only one I buy his new album every time. You just have to see one of his shows. It's too bad we get to see so little of him.

Wish Tim McGraw would dump that awful hat! My daughter and I were surprised when we saw a picture of him without it—he was actually nice looking. I think he and Faith knew how to play on folks' emotions with their video, "It's Your Love." Sorry, but it is bland!

Kay Weidner
Fairfield, Iowa

For more Faith, see cover story.—Ed.

Australian Fan Heard From

It was as though I'd found a gold nugget when I found *Country Music Magazine* at my local store for the first time this week. To have Tanya Tucker on the cover and the great article about her was an added bonus. Tanya has always been my favorite because no matter what she sings, it's as though she's singing about me and my experiences in life—her voice haunts me.

We're finally starting to hear some more American country music here in Australia. Trisha Yearwood is doing a great job to promote it here, and we've had Dwight Yoakam, Garth Brooks, and I believe Reba will be here next year. Can't wait for Tanya to visit us down under. It's almost impossible to get the latest CD's, but we manage to see quite a lot through CMT. Needless to say, I'll be looking for *Country Music Magazine* from now on.

Judy Hollier
North Gosford, NSW, Australia

Iris DeMent

I enjoy your magazine. The articles are entertaining, informative and just good reading! The pictures are also of good quality. How about an article on Iris DeMent—the last of the dying breed of the traditional, real, true Country Artist/Singer/Songwriter. Sounds of true country music and the vocals to match.

Kenny Newton-John
Ina, Illinois

For Iris, please stay tuned.—Ed.

Indie Artists and RVS

I'm a recent subscriber to your magazine. I've seen a few copies before, and that's why I subscribed to it. So far, so good. My reason for writing is, I would like to know



CHEVROLET presents the COUNTRY MUSIC QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the March/April 1998 issue.

1. Faith Hill is married to which fellow country music star?
2. Up until recently, when was the last time one of Billy Ray Cyrus' singles reached the Top 50?
3. What was Trace Adkins' job in the Gulf of Mexico?
4. Daryle Singletary's most recent hit single has previously been recorded by Tammy Wynette, Doug Supernaw and others. Name it.
5. What is the name of Ricky Van Shelton's latest album?
6. What brand of truck does veteran stuntman Fred Cly rely on?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. Harlan Howard
2. 25
3. Kim Richey's most recent album is *Bitter Sweet*
4. Patrick Carr
5. 10
6. Chevy's Vortec engine is designed to go 100,000 miles before its first tune-up.

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why, in most instances, independent artists are treated like second-class citizens? Case in point, I'm a huge fan of Ricky Van Shelton. I've been a country music fan for a lot of years, and Ricky Van with that smooth baritone voice is my all-time favorite. Recently he just released a new album, *making plans*, and it's some of his best work. His single off the album, "She Needs Me," could be and should be a hit.

Radio stations seem reluctant to play independents; I've never heard it or other independents played here when I do get a chance to listen. When radio and magazines will cover only the major labels, the fans, who also buy the magazines and turn on their radios, are the real losers. Personally, I hope he sells a million copies, because that means he'll do more. Good luck, Ricky, you're the best.

Steve Chace

Townsend, Massachusetts

For *making plans*, see November/December issue. For *RVS*, see centerfold.—Ed.

25th Anniversary Wishes

Having grown up in Florida in the 40's and 50's, I was exposed to country music early in life. I later moved to New York and kind of put country on the back burner, because in the late 50's it was not "cool" to be country. Several years ago, I made some changes in my life, and one of the changes was to return to "country music."

In 1996, I went to my first country concert, and of course my favorite artist was featured...none other than Vince Gill. Living in New York for over 30 years, I had seen some great entertainment, but Vince and his band's performance was the tops. My sister-in-law (a non-country fan) attended the concert with me, and she gave it rave reviews.

I am now moving from New York to a state further south, where country is cool. My daughters make fun of me, and they can not understand my musical taste in this area. My words to them are, "You have to have lived it, and it has to be in your bones," so since I have lived it, and "country is in my bones," best wishes on your 25th year, and I hope to be together the next 25 years.

Marilyn Roberts
Elmhurst, New York

Best of the Best Over Time

No one could love country music more than I do. I love to listen to music as I get ready for work, clean house, cook, wash dishes, drive my car, and grade papers (I'm a teacher). When I'm home alone, I even go to sleep at night listening to music. Over the past 25 years, country music has built up a good reputation and a sense of respect and pride. However, in the last five years, country music has gone sadly downhill. The majority of the music on radio and CMT today is *not* country. I

can't believe some of it is even played under the category of country music. It all sounds the same; same tempo, same tune, same rhythm—bland!

When my husband and I married 26 years ago, he loved George Jones—and I couldn't stand him. Now I love to hear George Jones—he sounds so country compared to all that blah stuff passed off as country. If it were not for tapes, I don't know what I would do. Radio and CMT have a chosen few that they play over and over: I seldom listen to them because they will not play good country and older country artists that have dedicated their lives to country music. They won't play what listeners want even if we request it.

I'm glad your magazine is not like that. It thrills me when I see Marty Stuart, Dolly Parton, or George and Tammy on the cover of your magazine. I despise the terms new country and young country. New and young are not always better. Keep up the good work with your magazine!

Donna Calhoun
Hindman, Kentucky

A Special Memory

In honor of your 25th Anniversary, you asked for a special country music memory—well, I've had many. I've been a country music DJ for over 13 years. From meeting Willie on his bus at the Bloomsburg Fair to interviewing Garth at the Lycoming County Fair in July 1990 to Fan Fair in 1989 and meeting Bill Monroe, it's hard to pick one memory. Recently my husband had my aunt sew a special birthday present for me. On a shirt she sewed a fiddle, banjo and guitar, and stitched the names of some of the people I've interviewed: Ronnie Robbins, Garth and Willie. She missed my favorite band of all time—Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

Thank you, *Country Music Magazine*, for making me realize and remember how much country music is a part of my life! Happy 25th—here's to 25 more!

Cathy Scott, WKXP
Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

Dad and Daughter Memory

Having reached my early 30's and my taste in music had changed, I began watching TNN regularly, and in 1995 began watching CMT. My daughter and I were watching CMT, and a new artist, Rick Trevino, came on with a song titled "Bobbie Ann Mason." The song was a hit with my eight-year-old child. That summer, it was announced in the newspaper that Rick Trevino would be doing a concert at the Antelope Valley Fairgrounds during our Fair time. I quickly bought two tickets and got trackside seats. On August 30, 1995, I took my daughter to see the Rick Trevino concert, and she had a great time, especially when Rick sang "Bobbie Ann Mason." The concert helped the bond between this father and daughter.

ter, and although my child no longer lives with me, the concert and the country music will be a memory we both have shared and will remember for a long time.

James P. McDonald
Lancaster, California

More Randy Travis, Please

I've now attended 166 of Randy's concerts with my guide dog and still think Randy is the best. When do you anticipate another major article on him in your publication?

Linda Webb and Guide Dog, Tokyo
Carrollton, Texas

Stay tuned.—Ed.

Record Reviews Are Tops

I've read CMM for years, and I subscribe to several country music publications. The record reviews in CMM are the only ones I actually read. The reviews in other magazines are always predictably favorable—always. Either they only review the ones they like, or they just don't want to say anything negative. At least CMM says something different: They're honest, and it's just their opinion, as everyone has one. They also have enough insight into each artist to judge their work on its own merits and not compared with other artists (i.e. "the album is better/not better than their previous work/shows improvement," etc.).

On the criticism Hazel gets for oohing and ahhhing the stars—she's just enthusiastic. Hey, if I had that job and got to hobnob with the stars, and was on a first-name basis with Vince Gill and others, I'd be enthusiastic, too!

I may get tired of Garth's mug on the covers of magazine, but I will never tire of Vince Gill—his music or his mug. I don't know why I don't like Garth so much anymore. I used to like him a lot, his music is very country, he is polite to everybody. I can't put my finger on why, unless it's just that he has over-promoted himself. It's like he is "in my face." His ad for his album is all over the radio, magazines, even TV. He also stages a lot of hype-building gimmicks. His need to be bigger than life is turning me off, and I'm not alone in this. Keep up the good work.

Patti Lundie
Laguna Hills, California

Waitin' for Watson

I have been a subscriber to CMM for many years, and enjoy it immensely. But lately, every time I receive my copy, it's the same old thing, Reba, Garth or George. Now, don't get me wrong, I like them just as much as the next person, but it's a little much.

Why can't you give recognition to some of the older artists? Actually just one—Gene Watson. Now I realize that he's over 40 and recording for Step One Records (a small label), but doesn't the

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voice speak for itself? It's awful that artists such as Gene, Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Johnny Bush, etc., cannot get airplay on the radio, but maybe you could help by having something written in the magazine every now and then. You could start with a record review on Gene's new album, *A Way to Survive*. If you haven't heard it, maybe I could write it for you. Buy a copy and listen, I can guarantee it is the same great voice today as it was in the 70's with "Farewell Party," the saddest, greatest song I have ever heard.

Patsy Alex
Sheridan, Texas

For Watson, please stay tuned.—Ed.

Lookin' at Lila McCann

I really have never been a big fan of country music, the music. I usually listen to rap. But one day I was flipping through the channels, and I happened to catch a glimpse of a stunningly beautiful woman on CMT. At first I thought it was LeAnn Rimes, so I turned back.... It turned out to be a girl who looks like a teenager, at least I hope she is, around 16 or 15, 'cause I am 16. Her name is Lila McCann. I was wondering if she has an address I can write to so that I can tell her how much I love her music. I was also wondering if you know how old she is.

Joshua Roberts
Shelbyville, Kentucky

Write to Lila c/o Walker Management,
11409 Berwick St., Los Angeles, CA
90049. She's 16. And have fun.—Ed.

Sweeps Winner

Winner of our October/November 1997 \$1000 Renewal Sweepstakes is Dorothy Jackson of Homestead, Florida.

Send Letters to the Editor to Country Music Magazine, One Turkey Hill Road South, Westport, CT 06880. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters. We reserve the right to edit for space and style.

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WEIGHT-LOSS: Investigation of a Discovery

A Portland Physician Reveals How He Helped a Desperate Woman to Lose 47 Pounds in 9 1/2 Weeks Without Dieting, and . . .

... how 3,193 other people melt away a total of more than 90,000 pounds (more than 40 tons) with the same incredible discovery revealed below.

Dr. Robert K. Kester, M.D.
(Portland, Maine)



Few discoveries have received as much attention as this one. It was broadcast on all major TV networks. Plus hundreds of articles have been published in all leading newspapers and magazines, like the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Newsweek, Time, and Life... to name a few.

It doesn't happen every day that someone makes such an astounding breakthrough. Researchers who had made this discovery spent several years of their life developing and perfecting it. They then tested it for 6 months on 3,193 people. And not the easy ones:

- people from families in which excess weight was a problem;

- people who had already tried a total of 66 diets and methods of different kinds to lose weight!

Plus, these researchers asked them to do 2 things before starting:

(1) *Not* go on any diet and eat as usual

(2) Do *no* more exercise than they had been doing before

Naturally, there was absolutely no medication to take. The results? They exceeded everything these researchers could imagine...

- More than 98% of these people lost weight. They lost a total of more than 90,000 pounds! That's more than 40 tons!! And the most astonishing follows:

- One woman lost 38 pounds



BEFORE

When that picture was taken, I thought I would be overweight for the rest of my life... I had tried everything to lose weight, but nothing seemed to work. Then, I discovered Dr. Kester's discovery...

the first month.

- The others easily lost up to 20, 30, 50, 75 and even more than 100 pounds.

- Some even lost too much weight and had to stop. That's the main inconvenience of this discovery.

And you? Do you want to lose weight? Really lose weight. Naturally. Easily. Quickly. With no diet and no particular effort. Eating everything you like, without ever feeling hungry... Then read the testimonial of Angela Allister below. As she herself says: "I thought I was a hopeless case." Today she's the happiest woman on earth. The following describes exactly how she lost weight so easily with this discovery. And how she went from being "Miss Fatty" to "Miss Fabulous" in only 9 1/2 weeks.

Exclusive: extracts from the testimonial of Angela Allister, Florida

One thing is sure, I didn't get so fat by eating carrot salads. I love cooking and I like to stuff

myself. And like many women I gain weight easily. Too easily.

I weighed 150 lbs when I was 24. That was certainly too much, but I wasn't worried.

Then, one day, I lost my job. I wasn't too worried at first. In fact, I was pretty happy just to stay at home. But I eventually began to get "cabin fever".

had before. And gained weight. Within a month, I weighed the same as I had before starting to diet.

I tried every kind of diet there was during this period. And they all failed.

I began to take hunger suppressants. But that was the worst of all. I was nervous and irritable. I couldn't sleep. So I stopped taking these "drugs".

Otherwise, it would have been a catastrophe.

I think I tried every kind of weight-loss product there was. In the best of circumstances I would lose 5 lbs. Then regain 6.

All these trials taught me a lot... about what doesn't work for losing weight.

I was desperate. I was ready to accept it. Accept bearing my extra weight for the rest of my life. But fate decided otherwise.

I'd lost all hope — then a "miracle" occurred

«In some cases patients lost too much weight and had to go off the program»

Michael G., Science Editor, *Good Morning America* — December 13th — 4.7 million viewers

That's when I really began to eat. Everyone could see me getting fat.

With all the fat I had to lug around with me, the slightest effort would exhaust me and leave me breathless.

The effect all this had on my morale was even worse. People called me "Fatty" or "Big Blondie." Everyone laughed. Except me.

I felt really bad. I couldn't get into my clothes. I didn't know how to dress myself anymore.

My love life was almost nonexistent.

Then, one day, things completely fell apart

My boyfriend wrote me a "Dear Angela..." letter... and dumped me.

If you only knew what I suffered from my excess weight.

You have to look at yourself in a mirror, as I did, without recognizing yourself and being ashamed of the way you appear, to understand.

I told myself that if I wanted to lose weight, I'd have to start eating less. I tried low calorie diet menus.

Two months later, I had lost 18 pounds.

So I started eating as I



AFTER

"I never would have imagined I could lose my 47 excess pounds so easily, and so fast. Now, I've found a great job, I've been posing regularly as a model, and best of all, I met a very nice man. My love life has never been so beautiful. Dr. Kester's discovery really let me discover a new life."

Like some 5 million other viewers, I tune into *Good Morning America* every day on TV. One Monday, a program feature caught my attention: a doctor had just demonstrated the effectiveness of a new scientific weight-loss discovery.

This new discovery had nothing to do with dieting. It was three small weight-loss devices.

When you use these devices only three times as indicated, it works directly on the hypothalamus.

I admit, none of this was very clear in my mind. But I did recall this discovery lets you lose weight automatically.

This discovery was even more incredible because it didn't involve any diet. Tests conducted proved it resulted in weight loss with no effort, and eating all you like.

Yes. My new life began that morning...

I couldn't believe it at first. It seemed too nice and simple to be true. Even more so because there was no medicine to take, no strenuous exercise to do, nothing to give up of any kind. I who thought I had tried everything.

COPYRIGHT ©1998. IMPR-RTANT NOTICE: IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE, READ THIS. THIS WEIGHT-LOSS PLAN IS NOT DESIGNED TO DIAGNOSE OR ANALYZE ANY ILLNESS OR TREATMENT OF ANY KIND. NOR TO PROPOSE ANY METHOD OR TREATMENT OTHER THAN THAT WHICH YOU MAY CURRENTLY BE TAKING. YOU MUST FOLLOW DR. KESTER'S EXISTING DEVICES AS INDICATED TO OBTAIN THE BEST POSSIBLE RESULTS. ANGELA ALLISTER'S AND CANDY S'S TESTIMONIALS ARE ATYPICAL. OF COURSE THE RESULTS VARY FROM ONE INDIVIDUAL TO ANOTHER, DEPENDING ON EXCESS WEIGHT AND OTHER FACTORS. THE MORE OVERWEIGHT A PERSON IS, THE FASTER SHE OR HE SHOULD LOSE WEIGHT. YOU ARE ADVISED TO SEE YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE BEGINNING THIS OR ANY WEIGHT-LOSS PLAN. DOCTORS RECOMMEND THAT PEOPLE REDUCE THEIR CONSUMPTION OF LIPIDS AND INCREASE THEIR ACTIVITY LEVEL. ANYONE IN GOOD HEALTH CAN FOLLOW THIS PROGRAM. HOWEVER, PREGNANT WOMEN, CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY, THOSE SUFFERING FROM THE HEALTH PROBLEMS LISTED, BUT NOT LIMITED TO: PATIENTS UNDER A DOCTOR'S CARE FOR A SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEM, OR TAKING MEDICATION PRESCRIBED BY A DOCTOR FOR A SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEM, PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM ASTHMA, FROM DIABETES, FROM HEART OR THYROID PROBLEMS, FROM HYPOTENSION, AND PEOPLE WITH ANY PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS SHOULD NOT FOLLOW THIS WEIGHT-LOSS PLAN — NOR ANY OTHER WEIGHT-LOSS PROGRAM — WITHOUT, AT LEAST, THE AUTHORIZATION AND/OR SUPERVISION OF THEIR PHYSICIAN. THIS ADVERTISEMENT IS NOT, IN ANY WAY, INTENDED AS A MEDICAL ADVICE FOR WHICH YOU SHOULD ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR PHYSICIAN. THIS ADVERTISEMENT IS VOID WHERE PROHIBITED BY LAW AND THE RESALE OR REPACKAGING OF THIS WEIGHT-LOSS PLAN WITHOUT PROPER LICENSE COULD BE A VIOLATION OF BOTH FEDERAL AND STATE LAW. *ANGELA ALLISTER IS A PEN NAME.

please, turn over ->

was deeply skeptical. But when I realized the physician who had made this discovery was a renowned specialist in the successful treatment of a countless number of obese persons, I said to myself: "I should try it. After all, you never know!"

That was when I made an even more amazing discovery . . .

I was at my hair parlor reading the papers when I saw an article about these researchers' discovery in the New York Post.

The article said they had tested these devices over a 6-month period on some 3,193 patients. Most had problems of excess weight almost as severe as mine. Some were even really desperate cases. Patients participating in the study had already tried 66 different methods for losing weight without success.

What surprised me the most were the results

I couldn't believe so many men and women had succeeded in losing 20, 30, 45, 50, 75, and as much as 100 pounds, effortlessly, without medication, and continuing to eat everything they liked. These researchers had succeeded in making them lose a total of more than 90,000 lbs! That is more than 40 tons!!

Some of these people even lost too much weight, and they were told to stop using these devices.

If I hadn't seen these facts on television and read about them in the paper with my own eyes, I doubt I would have believed them. I told myself: "This is truly amazing. And the results have been proven". A telephone number was given. I called...>

IMPORTANT

If you want to lose at least 10 pounds and are interested in a risk-free trial of the *EasyTrim Devices*, we give you the address, and the phone number, of the distributor in the USA further on. Just mail them your full name and address, or call them, for a risk-free home trial of the *EasyTrim Devices*.

Each device acts NATURALLY and directly on the hypothalamus in a different way. By using the 3 devices at the indicated times, I was told I would obtain the *quickest and most effective results possible*, effortlessly.

In any case, I could take a risk-free trial, I didn't hesitate for a second

I ordered the *EasyTrim Devices*. The mailman brought me a small package containing my *EasyTrim Devices*. Each device was tiny. No larger than a pen.

Before starting, I showed this discovery to my personal doctor. He was immediately impressed by it and strongly urged me to give it a go, particularly since it was

100% natural.

On January 1st, I began using the *EasyTrim Devices*, as indicated

I was afraid to weigh myself. I finally stepped onto the scale 48 hours later. I couldn't believe my eyes. The needle showed I had lost 4 lbs.!

Over the next few days, my weight continued to disappear as if by magic.

At the end of three weeks, everyone mentioned my clothing was looking baggy on me. My dresses were too big.

Then I steadily continued to lose 4 lbs. per week.

After 9 1/2 weeks, I had lost 7 inches from my waist, 8 off my hips, 5 off my breast and 4 off my thighs.

In a little more than 2 months, I lost 47 lbs. I couldn't believe it!

For me, it was a real miracle

This was the first time in my life I had managed to lose all my excess weight.

As you can see, I'm slim now. I've achieved the goal I set. My friends, my family, and my neighbors haven't gotten over their shock at my losing so much weight so easily, and so quickly. When I think of their reactions, today, I know how much importance people place on physical appearance.

Not only have I gotten slim, but my body has been completely remodeled. And my new weight has remained stable.

After having tried everything else, the *EasyTrim Devices* was the only process that really let me lose weight. To the best of my knowledge, everyone I know who tried the *EasyTrim Devices* lost weight. Today, they are slim. This includes a doctor I know who had been fat for years, and who had 50 excess pounds to lose. He said this was a real "miracle" for him.

I want to close by saying how difficult it is to express...

... how well you discover a new life when you are slim.

People became more interested in me. I finally found work I liked. I often model.

What a pleasure it is to feel good in my clothes. I have completely redone my wardrobe. I rediscovered the joy of being able to be flirtatious again, to look good, go out. To discover there are indeed other pleasures and joys in life than just food.

I am not the same anymore. I feel good about myself. Yes, it's really different to be slim. Life is so different. People look at me in a different way. They feel differently about me. They love me differently...

I feel so much at peace. And so happy to be able to enjoy life to the fullest.

Angela Allister
Angela Allister

Important research notice for a new study planned by Dr. Robert Kester, M.D.

WEIGHT-LOSS: Dr. Kester Is Seeking More People Who Wish to Take a Risk-Free Home Trial of the *EasyTrim Devices* . . .

ATTENTION: Only those with AT LEAST 10 pounds excess weight may participate in this new research project.

The testimonial of Angela Allister that you have just read may surprise you. However, it is really no surprise at all. This discovery has already made 3,193 people easily lose a total of more than 90,000 pounds.

Now Dr. Kester wishes to extend a new study with people all over the country. That is why he has given distribution rights for the *EasyTrim Devices* to WideWell Inc. They are only available through the address appearing below.

What are your real reasons for losing weight?

Just think about this for a moment. Think about all the good and all the joys you will discover once you lose your excess weight.

Do you really want to lose weight as well? Easily achieve long-lasting results? And rediscover your beautiful body? Do you want to help Dr. Kester pursue his research study and be part of his next set of successes? Yes...

Here is how to take your risk-free home trial of Dr. Kester's *EasyTrim Devices*

You must need to lose a minimum of 10 pounds. If that is so, answer today.

☐ If you have between 10 and 20 pounds to lose, Dr. Kester recommends you order a set of 3 *EasyTrim Devices*.

☐ If you have between 20 and 30 pounds to lose Dr. Kester recommends you order 2 sets of 3 devices.

☐ If you have between 30 and 40 pounds to lose Dr. Kester recommends you order 3 sets.

☐ If you have between 40 and 50 pounds to lose Dr. Kester recommends you order 4 sets.

☐ And if you have more than 50 pounds to lose, Dr. Kester recommends you order 5 sets.

Risk-free home trial

Results are 100%

guaranteed. If for any reason you are not completely satisfied, just return your devices to receive an immediate full refund. This trial will then have cost you



Dr. Kester is a board-certified physician and surgeon. He is presently the Director of several specialized Medical Weight-

Meet Dr. Robert R. Kester...

...the physician who - after he himself lost 53 pounds with the *EasyTrim Devices* - stakes his entire medical reputation on the incredible effectiveness of the *EasyTrim Devices*, the most recent and fastest growing weight-loss innovation in America.

Loss Clinics in which hundreds of overweight people attend each month, losing and maintaining their weight-loss with Dr. Kester's *EasyTrim Devices*. All those familiar with his successful research career respect Dr. Kester's meticulousness and integrity. His ongoing studies are bringing a new and revolutionary solution in the weight-loss field.

nothing.

How much does it cost to lose weight with Dr. Kester's *EasyTrim Devices*?

Thanks to a special agreement between Dr. Kester, the manufacturer, and the distributor, now you can receive a set of 3 *Dr. Kester EasyTrim Devices* for only \$39 by ordering directly from the distributor (at the address indicated below).

Remember, you only pay for *Dr. Kester's EasyTrim Devices* if you are 100% delighted with your results. And you are the judge.

+ FREE

Dr. Kester has just developed a fourth device similar to the 3 *EasyTrim Devices*: the *MAX EasyTrim Device*. When used with the 3 *EasyTrim Devices*, the *MAX EasyTrim Device* maximizes the results and will help you to lose weight even more quickly.

Dr. Kester has authorized that a *MAX EasyTrim Device* be included in your order for free (a value of \$19). But there is one condition: you must absolutely respond to this offer within 48 hours.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

How to order: The free trade agreement between the United States and Canada has recently come into effect. In addition, as you probably know, for several months now, the exchange rate between the American dollar and the Canadian dollar has been VERY FAVORABLE for Americans. So we have looked into it and found a way for you to benefit from this situation. Here's how:

Dr. Kester's <i>EasyTrim Devices</i>	Prices in Canada (in Canadian dollars)*	Prices for American residents**
☐ 1 set of 3 devices	\$52.43	Only US \$39
☐ 2 sets of 3 devices	\$104.86	Only US \$69
☐ 3 sets of 3 devices	\$157.29	Only US \$99
☐ 4 sets of 3 devices	\$209.72	Only US \$129
☐ 5 sets of 3 devices	\$262.15	Only US \$149

*including sales tax. **NO sales tax to add

Add a \$4 for first-class shipping and special handling, no matter how many sets you wish to receive.

By ordering your sets of 3 *Dr. Kester's EasyTrim Devices* directly from Canada and paying, as usual, in US dollars, YOU can take advantage of this exceptional exchange rate and save (see the comparative chart below). Furthermore, you have no tax to pay.

To turn these benefits to good use - with the assurance of the same written guarantee of a complete refund if you're not 100% satisfied - just send your name and complete address today (IN CAPITALS) with your usual method of payment (check or money order) to the distributor: WideWell, (Dept. ET7107), 2 Laird Drive, #1785, Station R, Toronto, Ontario M4G 4A3, CANADA.

IMPORTANT: Affix 52c in stamps on your envelope (or 2 stamps of 32c if you don't have exactly 52c in stamps).

IMPORTANT: Don't forget to indicate how many sets of *EasyTrim Devices* you want to receive (see the chart below) and make your check or money order out to: WideWell Inc.

If you prefer paying on receipt (C.O.D.), it will cost you \$7 more for extra C.O.D. charges and insurance. (Sorry, but no C.O.D.'s at P.O. Box numbers).

For the fastest possible service, you can order your *Dr. Kester's EasyTrim Devices* by simply dialing toll-free 1-888-257-6677 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Have your credit card handy, Visa or Mastercard, (or you can order C.O.D.).

Act right away. That way you won't forget and regret having missed this unique offer which may never again be repeated.

Warning:

Studies have demonstrated that some people tend to abuse *Dr. Kester's EasyTrim Devices* and lose too much weight. Make sure you stop using *Dr. Kester's EasyTrim Devices* once you have achieved your ideal weight.

EDITOR'S CHOICE



NEW! PATSY CLINE, LIVE AT THE CIMARRON BALLROOM

Here's a true piece of country music history: a newly-discovered recording of the legendary Patsy Cline, live in concert at the Cimarron Ballroom in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A must for any Patsy Cline fan, this release is a real rarity, as it's the only known full-length live Patsy concert in existence.

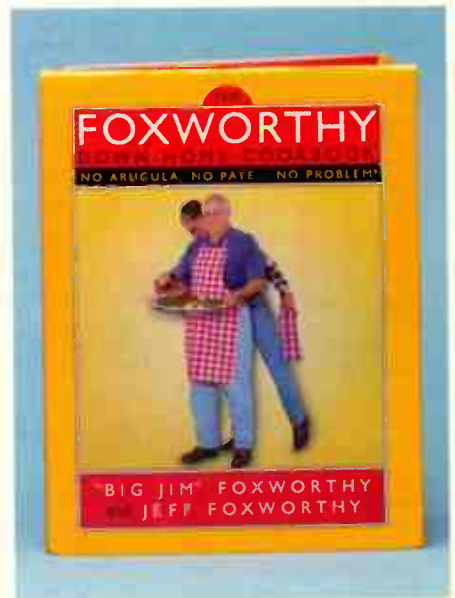
When this show was recorded, on July 29, 1961, it was Patsy's first performance since being released from the hospital after a near-fatal car wreck. She's at her best here, clearly glad to be back on stage, and enjoying the success of her "I Fall to Pieces" single—which had just gone to Number One the week before. Patsy gives the audience her all, and they greet her with an

enthusiastic response. A terrific backing band—Leon McAuliffe & His Cimarron Boys—further adds to this show's charms.

There are 14 songs included here, Patsy's own big hits, plus several standards. The recording also includes Patsy's endearing between-song dialogue, which lets her personality shine through, and helps provide a more intimate portrait of this beloved artist who died tragically just under two years after this concert was recorded.

Songs here are: "Come On In," "A Poor Man's Roses," "Bill Bailey, Won't You Come Home," "I Fall to Pieces," "Lovesick Blues," "Shake, Rattle and Roll," "There He Goes," "San Antonio Rose," "Stupid Cupid," "I Fall to Pieces," "If I Could See the World Through the Eyes of a Child," "Walking After Midnight," "Foolin' Round" and "When My Dreamboat Comes Home."

The CD booklet includes a complete transcript of the show, notes by Patsy expert Paul Kingsbury, a reproduction of the Cimarron Ballroom's advertising poster for the show and several rare photographs. *Patsy Cline Live at The Cimarron Ballroom* is available on cassette or CD. Item #MCA 11579. Cassette price \$12.98. CD price \$17.98. Be sure to specify format!



NEW! THE FOXWORTHY DOWN-HOME COOKBOOK

Here's an item that's both practical and funny: Comedian, actor, country music fan and genuine redneck Jeff Foxworthy returns to Georgia from Hollywood and teams up with his dad, Jim, for a family-style cookbook. "Big Jim" Foxworthy is an avid cook and recipe and cookbook collector, and his creations here are sure to be a big hit with your family, too. Add to that Jeff's "insights" and humorous notes about the Foxworthy clan, and you've got the recipe for a good time, whether in the kitchen or out!

The Foxworthy Down-Home Cookbook, subtitled *No Arugula, No Paté...No Problem*, contains more than 150 tried-and-true recipes garnered from both the Foxworthy family and Big Jim's own personal collection. Chapters include Cajun cooking, Foxworthy family specialties, breakfast, "fancy" cooking, cooking game, desserts, finger foods/snacks, grilling, and, of course, real Southern cooking, with a special emphasis on the traditional. There's also an entire chapter devoted to Big Jim's how-to tips, like how to properly grill chicken, and how to build a fire in a smoker. Among the stand-out recipes here are Beef Wellington, Big Jim Style Barbeque Sauce, Paw Paw's Pecan Pie, Aunt Sara's Fried Chicken, Fried Green Tomatoes, Jambalaya, Crawfish Étouffée, Black Eyed Peas, Audrey's Catfish Stew, Carole's Green Bean Casserole, Sandra's Old-Fashioned Hot Milk Cake, Hush Puppies, Country Biscuits, South Carolina Style Barbeque Chicken and much more. *The Foxworthy Down-Home Cookbook* is hardcover, 182 pages. Item #B8Y, \$20.00.

Spotlight Product!

AVAILABLE AGAIN: THE OFFICIAL RYMAN AUDITORIUM MUSIC BOX

Back in stock is this popular, collectible music box depicting country music's greatest landmark—the beloved Ryman Auditorium, former home of the Grand Ole Opry. This highly detailed, carefully painted ceramic gem stands 5" tall and plays the country music classic, "The Tennessee Waltz." We sold another version of this music box back in 1986. It was amazingly popular! And so is this new one, which we think is just as good—if not better—than the old version. Check out the intricate detail work on the Ryman—the individual windows, the roof—not to mention the "carved stone" and raised details on the base. A gorgeous piece! The Official Ryman Auditorium Collectible Music Box makes a great gift for yourself or any country music fan. It's also a fine addition to any music box collection. Ask for Item #G1X, \$14.95.



RARE VIDEO! LEROY VAN DYKE IN WHAT AM I BID?

In 1957, Leroy Van Dyke was dubbed "The World's Most Famous Auctioneer" after the Top Ten success of his classic single, "The Auctioneer." Ten years later, Van Dyke had the starring role in the film *What Am I Bid?*, which also starred Tex Ritter and Faron Young, along with Al Hirt, Johnny Sea and Leroy's cousin, real-life auctioneer Ray Sims—the man who inspired "The Auctioneer." The movie relates the story of a character named Pat Hubbard, who returns home from the Navy and wants to be an auctioneer instead of following in the footsteps of his country music singer father. In addition to the action, there's plenty of music in this entertaining film.

After the movie's 1967 theatrical release,



it faded into obscurity, never reissued or released on video cassette. Leroy didn't even have a copy of his own, and for years he and his wife Gladys searched for the movie and its owner. Finally, in 1997, Gladys found the master print and secured the rights to the film. Now, for the first time ever, *What Am I Bid?* is available on VHS videotape. Don't miss this entertaining family film. 92 minutes. Item #V8U, \$24.95.



NEW! THE LORRIE MORGAN BIOGRAPHY: FOREVER YOURS, FAITHFULLY—MY LOVE STORY

Though it's been said of others, it certainly holds true that Lorrie Morgan's life could have been lifted straight from a country song: she's been through it all—triumph and tragedy, passion and desperation, pleasure and pain. But no matter what life's thrown at her, Lorrie has managed to survive and, indeed, thrive. Here's the touching story of her remarkable career and her turbulent, all-consuming love for her late husband, Keith Whitley.

You'll read all about Lorrie's childhood—find out what it was like growing up the daughter of the late Opry star, George Morgan, and singing on the Opry's hallowed stage as a teenager. She also chronicles the beginnings of her own country music career, and speaks passionately about meeting and falling in love with Keith. With amazing insight, Lorrie opens up her heart and recounts their courtship and marriage, Keith's dark descent into alcohol abuse, his tragic death in 1989, and Lorrie's extraordinary triumph over the immeasurable grief his death caused—all while she had two children to care for, and her own career was just beginning to take off.

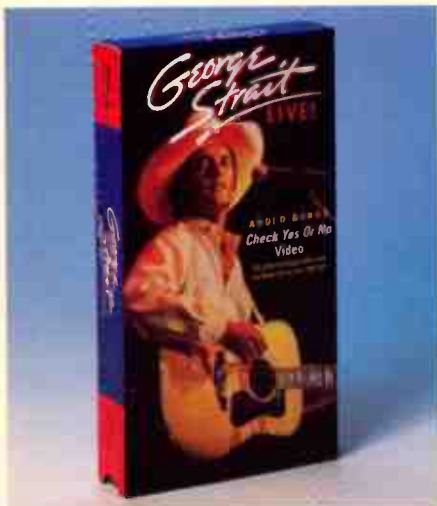
Lorrie Morgan has written a painfully honest memoir about rising above and moving on. *Forever Yours, Faithfully* simply resonates with honest emotion and showcases the true power of the human spirit. Written with noted author George Vecsey. Hardcover, 301 pages, plus 8 pages of photographs. Item #B8U, \$25.95.

You may also want to check out the Audio Book version of this novel. Read by Lorrie herself, this three-hour adaptation of *Forever Yours, Faithfully* comes on two audio cassette tapes and includes Lorrie's duet with Keith Whitley, "'Til a Tear Becomes a Rose." The Audio Book is Item #B9S, \$18.00.



BACK IN STOCK! MY LIFE WITH TRAVIS TRITT AND MY BILLY RAY CYRUS STORY

Here are two of our best-selling books, at almost one-third off original prices! *My Billy Ray Cyrus Story* is written by Kari Reeves, daughter of Opry star Del Reeves, who chronicles her four-year relationship with Cyrus. In between her touching depictions of love and heartbreak, you'll read all about Billy Ray's desire to succeed and his rapid rise to country stardom. *Keep the Memories, Bury the Love: My Life with Travis Tritt* was penned by former wife Karen Tritt Ryon. Married right out of high school, the pair found themselves drifting apart just as Travis' music career began to take off. Here Karen chronicles their time together; the good and the bad, and learns a lot about herself in the process. Don't miss these intimate, detailed accounts of life with two top stars—written by the women who loved them! *My Billy Ray Cyrus Story*, Item #B9C, now just \$8.95! *Keep the Memories, Bury the Love: My Life with Travis Tritt*, Item #B5V, now just \$8.95!



**UPDATED AND BACK IN PRINT!!
GEORGE STRAIT LIVE VIDEO**

For several years now, this extremely popular VHS home video has been out of print and unavailable. Finally, George's record label has made *George Strait Live!* available again—and updated it. Join George and his top-notch Ace in the Hole Band as they perform live before a sold-out crowd at the Dallas Reunion Arena on New Year's Eve, 1986. The concert features 16 Strait classics, including his very first single, "Unwound." Also here are hits like: "The Fireman," "Deep Water," "The Cowboy Rides Away," "Hot Burning Flames," "Does Ft. Worth Ever Cross Your Mind," "Dance Time in Texas," "You're Something Special to Me," "A Six Pack to Go," "Nobody in His Right Mind Would've Left Her," "Amarillo by Morning," "All My Ex's Live in Texas," "Rhythm of the Road," "Any Old Time," "You Look So Good in Love" and "Marina Del Rey." In addition to the original concert, this new version of *George Strait Live!* includes the video clip for George's recent Number One hit, "Check Yes or No."

George Strait is one of the most popular country music entertainers of all time. His concerts always sell out, he's won countless awards and racked up dozens of hits. Now here's *your* chance to see a George Strait concert, any time you want to—in your own living room. What country fan could resist that? *George Strait Live!* is a VHS tape, Item #V5K, and costs just \$19.95.



TOP SELLERS! COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE LOGO T-SHIRTS AND "I LOVE COUNTRY MUSIC" T-SHIRTS

Any time is the perfect time to wear the widely-recognized *Country Music Magazine* logo on a heavy-duty, made to last T-shirt. The *Country Music* logo T-shirt is 100% cotton and Made in the USA by Champion. Available in navy blue or red, both featuring a classic white logo. Or, you can choose the "I Love Country Music" T-shirt. This navy blue shirt features a guitar and banjo with red and white lettering. It, too, is a high-quality, 100% cotton garment...and it's Made in the USA. For the *Country Music Logo T-Shirt* in navy blue, ask for Item #G2P. For red, ask for Item #G2Q. The "I Love Country Music" T-Shirt is Item #G2O. Order adult sizes M, L, XL or XXL. Each shirt is \$14.95.



THE OFFICIAL 1998 ELVIS PRESLEY WALL CALENDAR

Don't miss the new edition of this popular item. An official product of Elvis Presley Enterprises, the 12 high-quality color and black-and-white photographs included in this deluxe wall calendar are guaranteed to delight and amaze. Each picture measures a big 12"x12", and the entire calendar opens up to 12"x24". Among the 12 vintage photos of a young Elvis are many that have rarely been seen before. Plus, each month includes important facts about The King's life. Item #G6F-98, \$10.95.

We also have a few remaining copies of past issues of this calendar (mostly 1997, but a few 1996, too). Here's your last chance to score one of these top-quality collectibles at a great price! To get a back issue of the Official Elvis Presley Wall Calendar, order the money-saving Combination Package. You get one 1998 calendar, plus a back issue, for just \$14.95! You get a rare collectible for just \$4.00—that's more than 60% off regular prices! (Our choice on back issue.) For the Combination Package, use Item #G6F-CP.

Best-Sellers...Big Discounts...Up to 66% Off!

Nashville Warehouse still has limited quantities available of some of our most popular products from the past several years. Here's your chance to pick up some of the most exciting books, videos and more at low, *Close-Out Prices!* Order something for yourself—or any country music fan in your life! There's something here for everyone. Order now, as these products are in limited supply...and once they're gone, they're gone.



HANK WILLIAMS BIOGRAPHY

We still have a few remaining copies of the classic Hank Williams biography, *Your Cheatin' Heart*, by Chet Flippo. Don't miss the book about which Waylon Jennings said, "I'm sure Hank would be glad you done it this way." First released in 1981, this deluxe softcover edition is 250 pages, plus 16 pages of photographs. A moving look at one of country music's most important figures. **Item #B9F, Was \$8.95—Now \$5.95!**

OFFICIAL COUNTRY MUSIC FOUNDATION CALENDAR

Don't miss your chance to pick up this unique country music collectible—The Official 1997 Country Music Foundation Calendar. While the year may be over, the calendar is still chock-full of great photographs of your favorite stars, plus trivia items, historical facts, and more. Among the stars featured here are George Strait, Patty Loveless, Tim McGraw, Dwight Yoakam and Garth Brooks. A great bargain! **Item #G1B, Was \$9.95—Now \$3.95!**

ERNEST TUBB BIOGRAPHY

Here is the definitive biography on Ernest Tubb, the appropriately titled *Ernest Tubb: The Texas Troubadour*. In this excellent, 455-page book, noted author and Tubb expert Ronnie Pugh accurately and intimately traces the life of the country legend—both professionally and person-

ally. Includes a discography and more than 30 pages of illustrations. **Item #B7E, Was \$29.95—Now \$19.95!**

ROY ORBISON BIOGRAPHY

Here's the fascinating story of the late Roy Orbison—rock 'n' roll pioneer, country legend. Read all about his early life, his rise to fame, and his triumphs and tragedies. This hardcover book is an expertly told biography of one of the most interesting figures in music history. 284 pages, plus 16 pages of photos. **B7J, Was \$18.95—Now \$8.95!**

SPECIAL BONUS!
Buy three or more
Close-Out items from
this page, and receive a
FREE country cassette!
Use Code #M3F for
your free cassette.

DELUXE COUNTRY MUSIC T-SHIRTS

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.

Just a few remain in each color in the sizes specified below. Get them while you can, at more than 50% off! A great deal on a great shirt. By the way, the mediums fit well on teens! **Purple, Large—Item #G7A-L. Purple, Medium—Item #G7A-M. Turquoise, Medium—Item #G7C-M. Were \$21.95 each—Now just \$9.95 EACH!**

MANDRELL FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM

Sisters Barbara, Irlene and Louise Mandrell, along with the rest of the Mandrell clan, are featured in this gorgeous volume, written by Louise with Ace Collins. In 192 pages, you'll get to know this close-knit, talented family, through personal photos and interesting anecdotes. Discography information is also included in *The Mandrell Family Album*. A vintage collectible from 1983 that you won't find anywhere else, made even more poignant by Barbara's recent retirement from the music industry! **Item #B1E, Was \$14.95—Now \$5.95!**

LORRIE MORGAN T-SHIRT

Here's a best-selling item we thought was sold out, but we found a few remaining pieces in our warehouse—and in the most popular size, yet! It's a concert-quality, well-made and durable, black T-shirt, with a gorgeous image of Lorrie Morgan on the front. An essential item for any Lorrie fan. Get 'em while you can! **Item #G4S-XL, Was \$15.95—Now \$10.95!**

NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE EDITOR'S CHOICE ORDER FORM

030498-1

MAIL TO: Nashville Warehouse, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, TN 37229

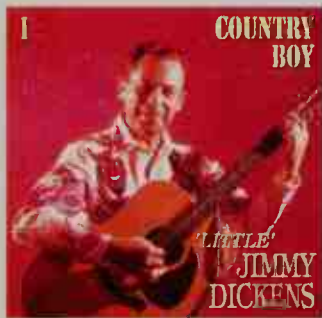
For Customer Service Inquiries, Call 615-360-6888

NAME	ITEM #	QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION/COLOR/SIZE	ITEM PRICE	TOTAL
ADDRESS					
CITY					
STATE	ZIP				
ENCLOSED IS A CHECK OR MONEY ORDER FOR \$ PAYABLE TO NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE OR CHARGE MY: <input type="checkbox"/> MASTERCARD <input type="checkbox"/> VISA <input type="checkbox"/> DISCOVER					
ACCOUNT #	FREE BONUS: You Get An "Inside Country Music" Video With Your Order! (V5R)				
EXP. DATE:					
SIGNATURE	Add \$3.00 postage and handling for first item and \$.95 for each additional item.				
<p>This Offer Expires On 6/30/98! ALLOW 6 TO 8 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">TN residents add 8.25% Sales Tax/Canadian orders add \$3.00 extra. Amount due \$</p>					

Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Little Jimmy Dickens: It's surprising that Bear Family hasn't done anything with the music of Jimmy Dickens before now. The Opry legend, known for raucous novelties and flawless ballads, recorded a huge body of material for Columbia between 1949 and 1966. Though Razor and Tie released a single-CD hits set in 1997, the depth of Dickens' work on Columbia long ago made him a candidate for a definitive reissue. The 105-song, four-CD boxed set,



Country Boy (BCD 15848), covers the first phase of Dickens' Columbia career, from his first session in 1949 through January 1957. A second boxed set, the forthcoming *Out Behind the Barn*, will cover the remaining nine years of Columbia recordings, through 1966.

These first eight years, of course, made Dickens a star and gave him the hits that defined his novelty side, including "Take an Old Cold 'Tater (And Wait)," "Country Boy," "A-Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed," "Hillbilly Fever" and "Out Behind the Barn." During this period he recorded a number of other songs which still remain associated with him, among them novelties like "Rockin' With Red," "Out of Business," "Waitress, Waitress" and "Salty Boogie" (the latter still popular with rockabilly revival bands). It was also during this period that he proved his mettle within the industry as a ballad singer. His memorable performances of "We Could" and

"Take Me As I Am (Or Let Me Go)" are only the well-known ones.

His Appalachian roots also made him able to handle serious recitations like "Be Careful of Stones That You Throw." Dickens' unvarnished voice and passion, in a class with the singing of his idol and benefactor Roy Acuff, remained a constant whether the songs were comic or deadly serious.

Also included on the set are all eight songs from his ultra-rare, 10-inch Columbia EP, *The Old Country Church*, and four ultra-hot instrumentals from 1956 recorded by his band, The Country Boys, long considered one of the best bands in Nashville. These instrumentals feature Buddy Emmons on steel and the twin guitar team of Spider Wilson and Howard Rhoton. Guitar freaks can hear a lot more phenomenal playing behind Dickens from original Country Boys guitarists Grady Martin, Jabbo Arrington and Floyd Robinson, and steel players Bud Isaacs and Walter Haynes.

The 60-page booklet features much outstanding memorabilia, rare photographs and an outstanding layout. The research by annotator Eddie Stubbs, Grand Ole Opry announcer and fiddler, is exhaustive and highly informative, though the presentation, from the standpoint of writing, organization and objectivity, leaves a great deal to be desired. Sharper editing could have fixed most of these problems. In the end, however, the music more than carries this set, most of it still sounding fresh and gutsy.

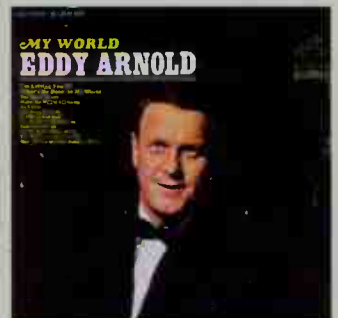
Tex Williams: Tex Williams and The Western Caravan will always be best known for the novelty talking blues number, "Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! (That Cigarette)," which gave Capitol Records its first million-seller in 1947. That talking blues concept

gave Tex several more big hits in the late 1940's, but also typecast him so he couldn't get beyond the stereotype of novelty singer. Actually, The Caravan, many of whom worked with Tex in the Spade Cooley band until they broke away in 1946, carried on the Cooley sophistication. The Caravan's complex arrangements, tight fiddle ensembles, Spike Featherstone's harp playing (classical harp, not harmonica), Ossie Godson's vibraphone and other outstanding soloists, including guitarist Johnny Weis and steel guitarist extraordinaire Earl "Joaquin" Murphey, all reflected the profound difference between California and Opry-style music. Though Tex and The Caravan made some outstanding Capitol transcriptions, they were best appreciated live. *Tex Williams On the Air 1947-1949* (Country Routes RFD CD 17), a British import, gathers 26 tracks originally broadcast over Armed Forces Radio from the Palace Barn and the legendary Riverside Rancho, reproduced here with surprisingly good sound.

Not surprisingly, the band's repertoire veered consciously away from the talking songs at dance jobs. Tex did a few, but did far more actual singing, as did Caravan bass player Deuce Spriggens, who was making his own records at the time. Williams shows his vocal skills on "The Covered Wagon Rolled Right Along," "San Antonio Rose" and "Please Don't Leave Me Anymore." Smokey Rogers, Caravan guitarist and vocalist (who later wrote and recorded "Gone," the Ferlin Husky hit), can be heard on "Spanish Fandango," a Rogers original that Bob Willis recorded.

The tightly arranged fiddles stand out throughout, but particularly on "Spanish Two Step." Murphey, still considered one of the greatest of all

Western swing steel players for both his chord work and dazzling single-string soloing, is all over the record, particularly outstanding on "Texas Playboy Rag," "I Found a New Baby," "Steel Guitar Rag" and the Cooley favorite, "Three Way Boogie." Anyone thinking Bob Willis had the only real approach to swing needs to hear this band. The packaging is adequate, though Lou Curtiss' notes are obtuse. Not only does he incorrectly date the material as "mid to late 40's" (it's the latter), he doesn't recognize that the instrumental that's titled both "Riverside Stomp" and "Palace Stomp" is the same melody, and is actually their version of the Benny Goodman favorite, "Shivers." Blame Country Routes for fouling up track sequencing. They didn't note that track nine is the "A.F.R.S. *Melody Roundup* Theme," throwing off the entire sequence by one song.



Eddy Arnold: Eddy Arnold's real hitmaking days began in 1946 and never really ended, though he went through plenty of musical changes in the late 50's and early 60's. Over 20 years after he made his first records for Bluebird in 1944, Arnold, assisted by Chet Atkins, took a total plunge into the Nashville Sound, complete with full-blown orchestrations. The album that marked the change was his 1965 LP, *My World* (DZS 146), recently remastered and reissued by Digital Compact Classics with the

original cover, liner notes and graphics.

The album included two of his biggest hits: "What's He Doin' in My World" and "Make the World Go Away." The 12-track album took him into the adult pop market every bit as strongly as it did into the country field. Everything else was in the same easy listening mold, with arrangements by Bill Walker. He covered two Brenda Lee hits: "Too Many Rivers" and "As Usual," along with "The Days Gone By," "If You Were Mine, Mary," "I'm Walking Behind You," "It Comes and Goes," "Mary Claire Melvina Rebecca Jane," "I'm Letting You Go," "Taking Chances" and "You Still Got a Hold on Me."

Hank Thompson: Flyright Records, part of Interstate Music, the British company that owns Country Routes, has just reissued a set of 16 songs from a series of 1952 transcribed radio shows by Hank Thompson and The Brazos Valley Boys, recorded for the federal government's Office of Price Stabilization. This material, *Radio Broadcasts 1952* (Flyright CD 948), had been previously released on LP some years back. Hank, for the most part, avoided singing his own hits, for these 16 songs encompass his cover versions of pop, rhythm and blues and country material from the period.

At the time, Hank had an excellent line-up of Brazos Valley Boys, led by guitarist Billy Gray. Also in the group at the time was little-known steel guitarist Dusty Stewart. This is a rare chance to hear Stewart, as he didn't stay with The Brazos Valley Boys long enough to do any of Hank's Capitol sessions but is heard here on nine tracks. Curly Chalker plays steel on the other seven. The band also featured pianist Gil Baca and fiddlers Johnnie Manson and Jimmy Belken (replaced on some tracks by Amos Hedrick). The country material here largely avoids even Western or honky-tonk fare, not surprising given Hank's deep love for traditional Appalachian country since boyhood.

He sings Wayne Raney's "Square Dab from the Country," Tennessee Ernie's "Shot Gun Boogie," Floyd Tillman's "I Gotta Have My Baby Back," the Leon Payne standard "Lost Highway" and the R&B favorite, "Sixty Minute Man." For those who already have Thompson's Capitol hits or missed the LP release of this material, the collection provides an interesting contrast to the usual fare.

Roy Orbison: With singers like James House and The Mavericks' Raul Malo serving as keepers of the Orbison vocal flame, and with nearly all his essential material available, any rarities are welcome. Orbison Records, owned by his widow, Barbara, recently reissued a 14-track album of material recorded in Holland and Paris in 1965, the period when "Oh, Pretty Woman" was such a huge hit. *Combo Concert 1965—Holland* (HCC 1965D) was recorded during a European tour. Nine songs were recorded for a TV special shot in Laren, Holland, and the remaining five recorded two days earlier at a concert at the Olympia, a well-known Paris theater.

He carried with him a first-rate American band featuring guitarist Billy Sanford. Also along was keyboardist Bill Dees, who co-wrote "Pretty Woman" and "It's Over" with Orbison. With excellent sound quality, on the Holland show he leisurely moved through "Only the Lonely," a riveting version of "Running Scared,"

a soaring, majestic performance of "Crying" along with "It's Over," "Pretty Woman" and "Goodnight." The versions of "Dream Baby," "What'd I Say" and "Mean Woman Blues" are tough and muscular. The Paris selections duplicate "Crying," "Dream



Baby," "Pretty Woman" and "Mean Woman Blues," with the inclusion of a hypnotic version of "Blue Bayou."

Swinging West: Crazy Kat is yet another division of Interstate, and their *Swinging West: 1940's Western Swing from Southern California* (KKCD 15) brings together 27 rare 78 r.p.m. recordings from the mid-to-late 1940's, virtually nothing here ever released on CD before. Some songs are better than others, but songs like Red Murrell's "Get That Chip Off Your Shoulder" and Jimmy Walker's "Hide Your Face" hold up well. So do two Red Rowe numbers, "Pretty Little Mona" and "Shaggy Dog Blues," from the same rare recording—both excellent. Most music from this area is heavy on electric standard and steel guitar, so not sur-

prisingly a few instrumentals are included, most notably Tommy Sargent's "Steel Guitar Boogie" and "Sargent's Stomp," recorded with Jack Rivers' band. There's also Leodie Jackson's "Steelin' the Blues" (not the Jerry Byrd number) and Porky Freeman's original 1943 instrumental, "Porky's Boogie Woogie on the Strings," the first real country boogie hit, albeit a local one around L.A.

A few weird numbers usually make it onto such collections. This time, it's an exaggerated hillbilly version of the pop song, "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," by Rody Erickson and His Dude Ranch Boys, which sounds inspired by the Red Ingle hit, "Tim-Tay-Shun." It doesn't make much sense including Paul Howard's Arkansas Cotton Pickers' "I've Been Lonesome Since You Went Away," a rare recording from the original Liberty label, on this set: They weren't a Southern California-based act to begin with. The rarity of the material overall, however, makes this a worthwhile, if uneven, package for fans of California swing.

Jim & Jesse: Sony Legacy's *Y'all Come: The Essential Jim & Jesse* (Legacy 65076) assembles 20 of their Epic recordings covering their complete period with the label from 1960 through 1970. Among the tracks featured are "Stormy Horizons" from their first session, and "She Left Me Standing on the Mountain" from their first LP, *Bluegrass Special*. "South Bound Train" and "The Ballad of Thunder Road" both come from an unissued 1963 session, while "Memphis, Tennessee" and "Maybelline" originally appeared on their groundbreaking 1965 album of Chuck Berry covers, *Berry Pickin'*. "I Don't Believe You've Met My Baby" was on their Louvin Brothers tribute LP, and "I Like Trains" comes from their final Epic LP, *We Like Trains*. Bear Family's Jim & Jesse boxed set contains the complete Epic recordings, but for those with less intense interest, this is the way to go.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Little Jimmy Dickens, *Country Boy* (BCD 15848), a four-CD boxed set, \$137.50/Eddy Arnold, *My World* (DZS 146), available on CD only, \$12.98/Roy Orbison, *Combo Concert 1965—Holland* (HCC 1965D), available on CD only, \$15.98/Tex Williams, *On the Air: 1947-1949* (RFD CD 17), available on CD only, \$17.98/Hank Thompson, *Radio Broadcasts 1952* (Flyright CD 948), available on CD only, \$16.98/Various Artists, *Swinging West: 1940's Western Swing from Southern California* (KKCD 15), available on CD only, \$17.98/Jim & Jesse, *Y'all Come: The Essential Jim & Jesse* (Legacy 65076), available on CD only, \$14.98. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 030498, 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 June 30, 1998



THE FINAL NOTE

by Patrick Carr

Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?

It's been a hell of a spell for mortality. As I write (long before you read), strokes have just killed Carl Perkins and stricken Waylon Jennings, and Johnny Cash is ailing with Shy-Drager's Syndrome, a neurological disorder of dire import.

These men have had personal as well as musical value in my life, so, yes, I've been taking it hard. It doesn't help that even closer to home, my best hunting buddy, a man only 49, just suffered a stroke that numbed his whole left side, perhaps temporarily, perhaps not. He's a mess. He invites the unwelcome realization that if you lose fifty percent of your body, it amounts to much more than half.



MARSHALL FAUVELL

Perkins

Search for meaning if you like. I'll just haul out my standard quip: When someone says, "Man, getting old is tough," I say, "Well, it beats the alternative, doesn't it?" Though of course, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes death has a lot to recommend it. My sister, for instance, has been trapped for years in a web of neurological damage so tangled (and painful) that she's lost almost everything but her mind. To her, a trip out of this world—quick, slow, whatever, but *soon*—often looks like sweet relief.

You might be thinking this doesn't belong in a magazine about entertainment. If so, you're right. On the other hand, it fits just fine in a magazine about country music. Real country music is about the whole of life, not just dating and dancing, so necessarily it's also about death—or, as some people put it, "passing."

Passing. We pass from one place to another, from one state of being to another. Some adult males pass kidney stones; we all pass gas, and sooner or later, everyone, man, woman, and child, passes a test, or

fails it. We pass each other. We pass by. We pass on. Some of us pass *something* on. All of us want to.

What will Perkins and Jennings and Cash pass on? Where, within the broadly accepted boundaries of modern commercial country music, is their legacy? The Perkins guitar style is almost palpably present—it's everywhere in rock and pop, not just the Nashville variant thereof—but where is Carl's simplicity, his spirituality, his deep and fervent grounding in the blues? Where is Waylon's nonconformist vigor, his saving humor, his love of absurdity, his hunger for imagery and meaning in a song? Where is Cash's integrity, his rebel eye, his tension, that inner clash of morality and mayhem flinging fireballs into the darkness beneath the notes?

The answer to each of these questions, I fear, is the same: nowhere.

Nashville's male singers have done reasonably well keeping up the George Jones style (its females have excelled at just about everything), and altogether the town has done a masterful job of integrating the last four decades of American pop into the product now marketed as contemporary country, but where, pray, are



Cash

the new giants? Where on your country radio dial are men with anything even approaching a Cash- or Jennings-level combination of intelligence, originality, vision, talent, and depth?

This is no news flash, but it bears re-



Jennings

peating: in modern Nashville, real greatness in a man is a serious career inhibitor. If Cash, Perkins, or Jennings (or Lefty, Hag, or Hank) were to try for a recording contract today, they'd probably be shown the door. Today, something to say and a new way of saying it—the singer's wares recognized and exploited by visionary music businessmen from Sam Phillips and Owen Bradley (another recent loss)

on down—have become much less important in a country recording artist than, for instance, a strong work ethic and a Billy Bob demeanor. Blame video, marketing consultants, corporate homogenization, the end of sin, the loss of redemption, whatever. Fact is, Bubba, if you're too bright or maybe none too stable, if your needle goes all the way to both ends of the dial and you think that's okay, you're not getting in the club.

All of which just stinks. Watching my favorites take their leave is sad, but at least I know it's an organic, inescapable process far beyond human control. The death of their musical values, on the other hand, has felt neither natural nor inevitable. It's been in fact like a murder, and not a crime of passion, either; more a slow, deliberate suffocation of spirit for money. Two-plus decades' worth of watching the light bulbs dim. Country is the same place it was 20 years ago—the same rooms, the same furniture, even some of the same people—but they've cut the power even as they've cranked the volume. There's much more noise, much less meaning.

If you don't know what I'm talking about—if you think the current generations of country-singing males, from Strait to White, are as good as it gets—I wish you well. You're probably young, and the future is yours. Have at it. I just want you to know that you're in possession of stolen property. And you're in a haunted house.

Editor-at-Large Patrick Carr has been with CMM since September 1972.

GPC



BEST SMOKE OF THE DAY.

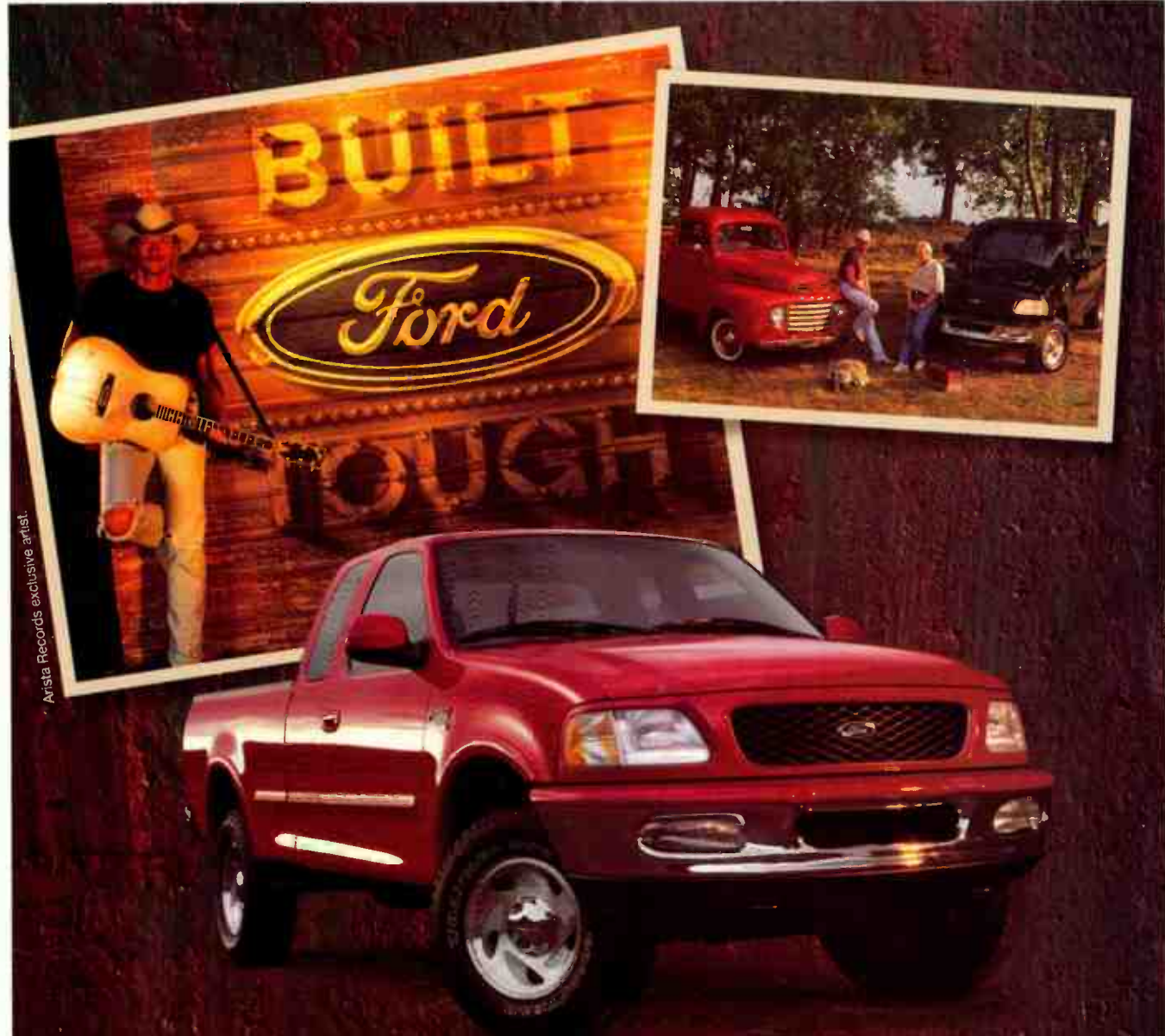
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