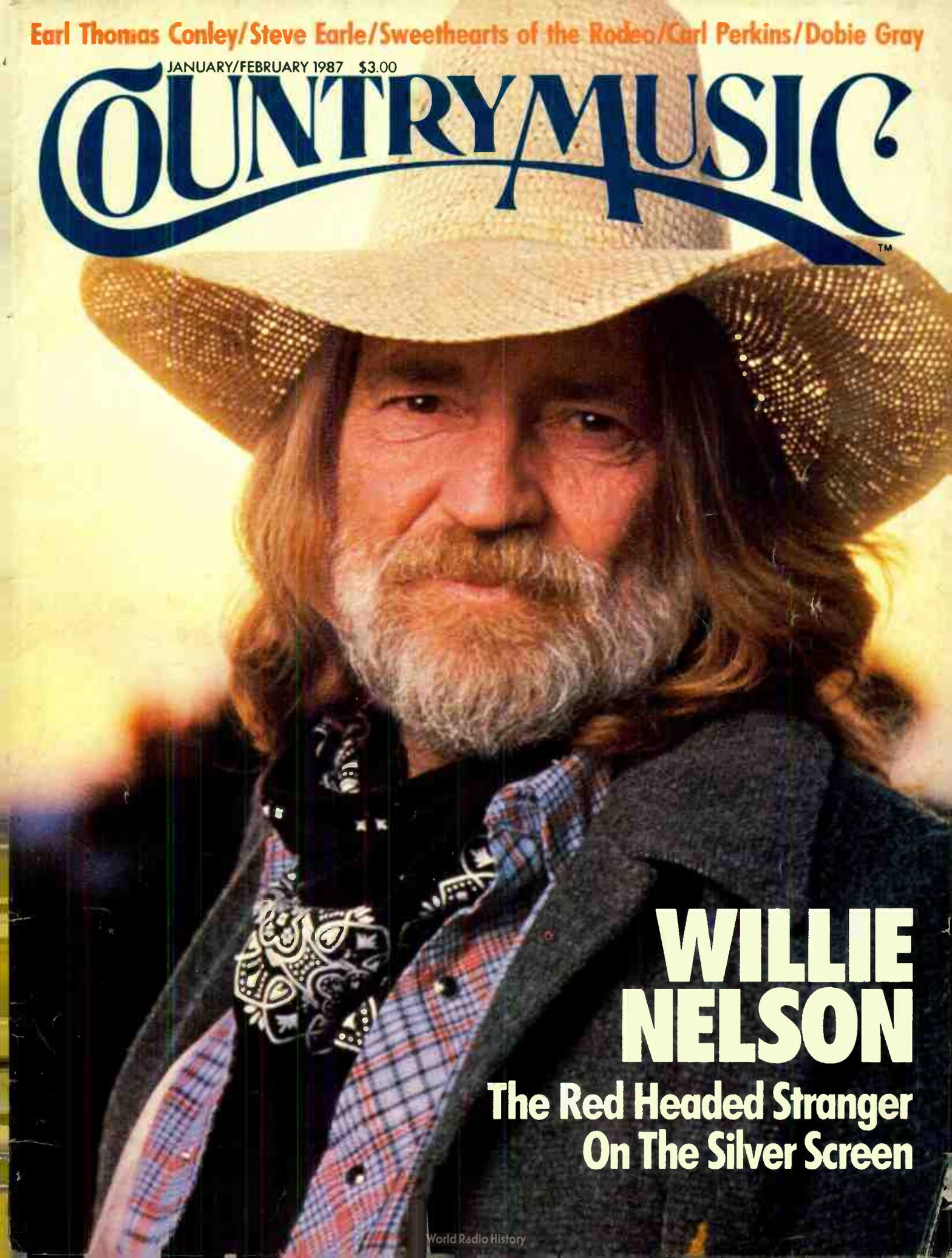


Earl Thomas Conley/Steve Earle/Sweethearts of the Rodeo/Carl Perkins/Dobie Gray

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1987 \$3.00

COUNTRY MUSIC



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Reactions to Hank Jr., The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Rosanne Cash, lots of fans at lots of concerts, some advice to Hazel Smith and how to find various services. Look here for opinion and info.

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Letters

Hank Jr. is Tops

I am a big fan of Hank Jr. and I just can't believe the article y'all put out in the September/October issue. It's the best I ever read on Hank! Michael Bane did a *great job!* He's the only person who's done Bocephus justice in an interview. He shows Hank for what Hank is—real good and a great person.

September was a good month. I received your magazine. Then on September 12th I saw Hank Jr. in concert in the Dallas Reunion Arena. What a *concert!* I am like Michael Bane. I've seen a lot of people in concert, very big names. I am sorry, but, to quote Michael Bane, from my prejudiced viewpoint, there's not any of them fit to tune Hank Jr.'s guitars!

If any of you have any doubts, spend a little time and catch one of Hank's shows. I think y'all will be wondering why Hank hasn't received more awards.

Keep up the good work, *Country Music*. Y'all are doing an outstanding job! If—I mean *when*—you do another interview with Hank Jr., please let Michael Bane do it. He knows *fine wine*.

Joe (Bud) McKiernan
Lueders, Texas

Hank Jr. Writes for the People

Just wanted to congratulate you on the wonderful article on Hank Jr. in the September/October issue. Great pictures, too! I totally agree that Hank Jr. is one of the finest, if not *the* finest male vocalist in country music.

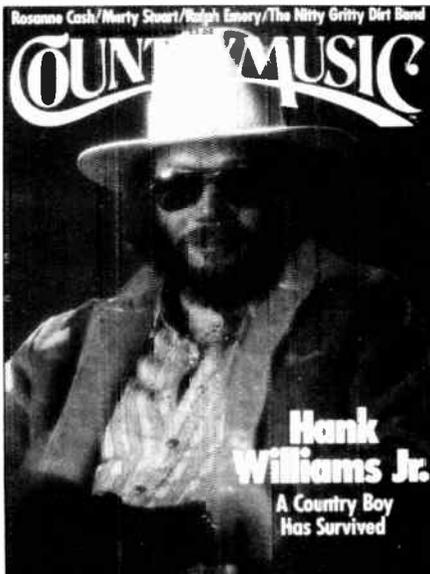
Even though he has not received the recognition he well deserves from the ones who hand out the awards, he has received one honor that tops any of those others—the hearts, loyalty, affection and respect of his many fans. He says he writes songs for people not program directors—well, we the *people* appreciate that. Finally someone recognized that the audience is smart and knows good music when it hears it.

Thanks, Hank. And please—never change.

J. Catalano
Independence, Louisiana

Hank Jr. and Audrey— Picture Perfect

I thought some of the country music fans might like seeing how Hank Jr. looked as a young boy. Enclosed are pictures of



Hank Jr. and his mom, Audrey Williams, after Hank Sr.'s death.

They were taken in the early 1950's, in New Orleans at the old Coliseum arena, which has since been torn down. They were appearing with the Big Bopper that night.

Lester H. Hagler
New Orleans, Louisiana

How Bocephus Got His Name

Your September/October cover story on Hank Williams Jr. surely pleased all his fans and reminded me of a little-known fact which, I'm sure, everyone would

like to know: the origin of his famous nickname. It might even be news to him, too.

In the last century, it was the fashion for educated Southerners to name many of their horses for the fabled steeds of classical history. One of the most popular names for stallions was Bucephalus, named after the much beloved companion and warhorse of Alexander the Great. In fact, Margaret Mitchell, the author of *Gone With the Wind*, and her brother Steven grew up riding a black horse they called Bucephalus. With our relaxed Southern English, it didn't take but a generation or two for it to become Bocephus.

When you realize the name translates as "Ox-headed," it becomes even more intriguing. The massive strength of oxen is legendary. People say 'What's in a name?' Could it be that Hank's father unknowingly or guided by Fate armed his son to withstand and truly miraculously recover from his devastating cephalic injuries on Ajax Mountain? Is Hank's fascination with firearms an echo of warfare passed on to him from the ancient past?

No one tells Bocephus what to do, but perhaps he should consider adding an additional emblem to his personal insignia on the other side of his Cessna's tail section—the image from the 4th century B.C. of a gallant Macedonian warhorse.

Cynthia S. Anderson
Baltimore, Maryland



Hank Jr. and his mom Audrey Williams at a New Orleans show in the 1950's.

Hank Jr., Yes— "Fat Friends," No

I always enjoy your magazine and was pleased to see your September/October issue featuring Hank Williams Jr. I have been a loyal fan of Hank Jr. for many years. I agree with Jeanette Moore (Hot for Hank) that Hank puts on a fabulous show, and it's great to see him getting the recognition he has always deserved.

However, your article on Hank prompted me to write concerning his *Montana Cafe* album. I am disappointed with Hank's decision to record "Fat Friends" and wondered if other fans might feel the way I do about this song. In my opinion, "Fat Friends" is a poor showcase for his talent.

Hank, I still love you but... I'm for taste, not for tackiness.

Lynne Thompson
Boston, Massachusetts

Originality Counts

Michael Bane needs to be commended on his excellent and sensitive articles on both Hank Williams Jr. and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band in the September/October issue. Both articles showed that country entertainers do not have to fit a certain mold to "make it." Individual creativity still has a place.

Carla Gohl
Bloomington, Minnesota

Down and Dirty with the Nitty Gritty

Just writing to thank you for the long overdue article on the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. I feel that without a doubt, they are the best band in country music. So darn talented! Alabama is great, but they go pop too much to match the pure sound of the Dirt Band. Keep up the great work, CMM and the NGBD.

Christopher Beach Potter
Wickford, Rhode Island

A Round-Up of Concerts— A Disappointing Hank Jr. at Two of Them

I am a new subscriber to your magazine. I love it, and I wish I had subscribed earlier.

I keep reading about all these concerts that everyone has seen, so I thought I might offer some insight into the ones I have seen, lately.

In April, I saw a concert from the Marlboro Country Music Tour. The concert featured George Strait, Ricky Skaggs and Hank Williams Jr. I had seen George and Ricky before, and I could see them again and again. But Hank was not very good. He started songs, then never finished them, and he was too loud. Then he started in about how he experimented with alcohol, drugs and sex as he was growing up. A lot of people got up and left. I really like



Southern Pacific take time with their fans, as Sharyl Erickson found out.

Hank's music, but I would not suggest that anyone pay to see him. Some people I know drove to Nebraska and saw the same concert the night before I saw it, and he did the same thing then.

In June and July, Topeka had Lee Greenwood and Reba McEntire in separate concerts. They both put on fantastic concerts, and they stayed to sign autographs after the concert. They each signed about 300. Then I saw the Statler Brothers at the Kansas State Fair, and they put on a great show.

Then I won tickets to see Dwight Yoakam in Kansas City. His concert was good, but it would have been fantastic in a different place. (The sound just bounced around.) I would like to see him again, but in a place that equals his talents. He looked great, but I will never know how he got in those pants.

Debra Anderson
Topeka, Kansas

Say It for Southern Pacific

This year at the Minnesota State Fair was the best ever! What made it so

Magazine Available to Handicapped

Each month, Country Music Magazine is put on both braille and records, so it can be enjoyed by the visually handicapped as well as by those who read like eagles. For information, contact the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. or your own public library.

great—besides seeing the Oak Ridge Boys—was going to see show after show of Southern Pacific. They are a fantastic group. Not only do they put on a great show, but afterwards they came out and took the time to sign autographs, talk with fans and have pictures taken, something not a lot of groups do these days.

Sharyl Erickson
Forest Lake, Minnesota

Waylon Jennings' Many Roles

Hazel, I am shocked! You of all people should know Waylon's career. In February of 1967 *Nashville Rebel* made its debut. The star of the movie was none other than Waylon A. Jennings. Mary Frann of Newhart fame was his co-star. It was billed by producers as "The story of a young singer's rise to fame, downfall, and climb back up, both in life and in music." The great Tex Ritter and others made appearances.

The Oklahoma City Dolls was a "made for television movie" starring Waylon and Susan Blakely. Waylon portrayed a quarterback.

And last but certainly not least, what about his *Dukes of Hazzard* episode? Filmed in July of 1984, it aired that fall and was titled "Welcome Back, Waylon Jennings."

Stagecoach was great, but far from Waylon's first effort.

Loranda J. Danic
Ainsworth, Neb.

Waylon's office, where Hazel work, confirms that this is true—we are going to have to go set.—Ed.

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Who Was in What Stagecoach?

In your September/October issue in People, Hazel Smith was quoted as saying that, "Willie Nelson did one helluva job as Doc Holiday, delivering Mary Crosby's baby and that her dad, the late Bing Crosby, was in the first." This is wrong. Granted, Bing Crosby was in the color version of *Stagecoach*, but not the first.

To set the story straight, *Stagecoach* was first made in black and white in 1939, directed by John Ford, and starred John Wayne and the great character actor Thomas Mitchell in the role of the doctor. I might add that *Stagecoach* made a star of John Wayne and that Thomas Mitchell was nominated for an Oscar.

If reporter Hazel Smith is to do articles on great classic western movies, she should at least do her homework.

Jay Stepper
Silver Spring, Maryland
Hazel isn't old enough to know about things like that!—Ed.

More Pay for Michael Bane

It's too bad that country music journalists like Michael Bane don't make enough money to be able to buy the record albums they write about. If Michael owned a copy of the Dirt Band's *Dream* album, he wouldn't have had to recall "Ripplin' Waters" from memory, as he did in his article "Twenty Years of Plain Dirt" in the September/October issue.

To refresh Michael's memory, it was Jim Ibbotson, composer of "Ripplin' Waters," singing lead, not Jeff Hanna. Also, the instrument he describes as a banjo is actually a mandolin, played by John McEuen. There is no banjo on this cut. Listening to the album will bear this out, and the liner notes will back it up. Other than these two little errors, it was an excellent article.

Orin Friesen
Wichita, Kansas
If we gave Michael an album, we'd have to give him a record player, too!—Ed.

Patrick Carr Gets a Big Hand, Too—For Rosanne Cash's Straight Talk

Patrick Carr outdid himself on his down to earth interview with Rosanne Cash. What a magnificent interview. We enjoyed it tremendously. Keep up the good work, Patrick. You're a natural.

Marie Federico
Brooklyn, New York

One Mother's Reaction

How Rosanne Cash can call herself a good mother and be on drugs until the last year or so is more than I can see. I don't believe you should do drugs at all, and if you did, you better not have any

children. Give me a mother like Barbara Mandrell any day, any time. What a person and a star Barbara Mandrell is, and her latest song is terrific—but she is terrific. I'm not a Rosanne Cash fan at all.

Mary Ann Jones
Mountain View, Arkansas
Drugs are bad, but quitting drugs is good, good, good.—Ed.



Ron Mathis made Merle Haggard go under cover after he no-showed.

Take a Towel to Merle

I own Cracker's Tavern in Grants Pass, Oregon. Merle Haggard was to appear in Roseburg, about 60 miles away. Six of us went to see him, but he didn't show. He missed a few dates in a row. Here's a picture of a poster I have above my jukebox. I hung a towel over Merle's face. Everybody got a kick out of it. I've been to Silverthorn about 10 times. I don't know what his problem is, but I hope he gets straightened out. He is still my favorite!

Ron Mathis
Grants Pass, Oregon

Where Can I Buy "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes" Video?

Am wondering if you can tell me where I can buy the George Jones "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes" video cassette, VH5 format. Can't find it here and the video rental store had no luck with where they get their films.

Cora Shultz
Red Creek, New York
Not for sale—you have to catch it on TV.—Ed.

Grab That Yoakam Album

I just received my second issue of your magazine and I must tell you I've enjoyed reading it. Also let me say, Yoakam is the man. He's a fine singer and he really dances country. I love the way he dances. I watch the country videos, so I can see him. I just bought his record *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.* It wasn't easy getting the album. Every store I went to, they were all sold out. I was so disappointed, when on the way home we spotted Sound Warehouse. I was so happy. There were only three albums left and the cassettes were all gone.

Dwight, if you happen to see this

letter, don't stop what you're doing. I love your music, and I just love the way you handle your guitar.

Jenny Hilton
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Hot albums like Yoakam's are available through our Top 25 in every issue. No need to rush around town.—Ed.



The Girls Next Door were just as friendly as neighbors.

Great Girls Next Door

One of the best shows I've ever seen was by the Girls Next Door at the Cassopolis Fair in Michigan, and it only cost me \$2.00. I don't know how they could do it so cheaply. They couldn't have made any money on it. Not only were they so talented, they are all so pretty. After the show, Diane came over to my daughter, my granddaughter—who's one year old—and me and asked us how old my granddaughter was and said she has an eleven-month old baby back home that she was missing very much. She was so friendly. After that we bought an autographed picture of the four of them. Our family also performs and sings country music and includes the song "Love Will Get Ya," by the Girls Next Door. We also like their song "Slow Boat to China." All their songs are good. Sure hope they keep up the good work and keep on entertaining.

Sharon Fryling
Vicksburg, Michigan

New Birthplace for Will Rogers

Just received the September/October issue and just finished reading it—from cover to cover—and, as always, enjoyed everything.

I would like to correct Hazel and Rochelle on something I've seen (twice, I think) in the People section—the home town of the one and only Will Rogers was not Claremore, Oklahoma. Will was born in a house overlooking the Verdigris River and the post office serving that area was Oologah. Will, with that famed wit of his, always said he was from Claremore since, as he said, only an Indian could pronounce Oologah.

Will's birthplace has been moved, restored and now is located in the Will Rogers State Park, alongside of Oologah Lake, which is located between the

towns of Oologah and Claremore. Claremore is also known as the home of a pretty fair singer, one Patti Page.

Dick Berry
Webbville, Kentucky
P.S. Webbville, where I live, is in Ricky Skaggs' home county and not too far from Butcher Holler, but for years I lived down the road from Oologah. So that's how you know!—Ed.

Jean Shepard's Smile

Enclosed is a picture of Jean Shepard when she appeared early last summer at Cortland Country Music Park. Also featured around the same time were Dick Curlis, Penny DeHaven, Porter Wagoner and his Right Combination Band and Bill Anderson.

Jean and her backup band were the nicest people one would ever want to meet. They are friendly and sit and talk. Nashville should be proud of them.

I first met Jean about nine years ago in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. Her friendly smile makes everyone love her.

Cortland Music Park has an opry barn and is the first country music park with its own Hall of Fame and opry barn in the Northeast.

Mrs. Robert G. George
Cortland, New York



Mrs. Robert G. George and friends met Jean Shepard at Cortland Music Park.

Thankful Fans From Small Towns

I was lucky enough to attend two country music concerts last summer and did not have to travel miles to do so. The first one was Mel McDaniel's, who came to our county fair in Norwich, New York. The second was Randy Travis, who came to Babcock's Country Western Club in Wellsbridge, New York. Both performers gave super performances and took time to sign autographs and talk to the people. They were very friendly and appreciative of their fans.

We sure appreciated them coming to our small country towns, and I know I

will always remember their great music and friendly smiles. Mel McDaniel's band was exceptionally good.

Linda Schmidt
Sherburne, New York
Babcock's was featured in the November/December Newsletter as a recommended honky tonk, and Randy's visit was mentioned there, too.—Ed.



Mt. Vision felt like Nashville when Cindy Gregory met Mel McDaniel at his show.

Mel McDaniel in Nowhere, New York

Recently I attended a show Mel McDaniel put on at a local fair. Not to mention the great time I and many others had, after the show he was kind enough to sign autographs and let some of his more loving fans have a picture with him. This is one fifteen-year-old, loving fan who was overwhelmed. I would just like to say that this is one terrific man to come to place that must have felt like Nowhere, New York, and treat it like a show in Nashville. He sure made a believer out of me.

Please let me know where I can write Mel.

Cindy Gregory
Mt. Vision, new York
To reach Mel, write P.O. Box 980, Hendersonville, Tennessee 37077.—Ed.

Call the Repairman for My Gibson Guitar

In the July/August issue, in People, I saw where Bill Monroe has had his mandolin repaired at the Gibson factory. I have a guitar which was bought in 1934. I treasure it highly. It needs repair, and I'd like to know if you could furnish me with the names and addresses of some very reliable sources through which can get this repair done. Thanks.

McKenzie
*Gibson has recommended
ters in every state—*

referral centers where the age and value of older guitars can be determined. To locate the one nearest you, call Gibson in Nashville, 615-366-2400. Don't expect to speak to someone in the factory, but the switchboard operator will be glad to help.—Ed.

A Musical Summer

This past summer was a fantastic one for me. I saw many of my favorites. They include Sawyer Brown, Gary Morris, T.G. Sheppard, Exile, Lee Greenwood, Reba McEntire, Hank Jr., The Bellamy Brothers, Eddie Raven, Leon Everette, Ray Stevens, The Oak Ridge Boys and Earl Thomas Conley.

I can think of no better way to spend the 4th of July than attending an Earl Thomas Conley concert. What better way to celebrate this nation's birthday than with its *best performer*.

I'm still waiting for that cover story on Earl. When will we ever get to see him gracing the cover of your fabulous magazine?

Elsie Sullivan
Sims, North Carolina

Sorry to keep you ETC fans waiting.
For our latest on Earl see page 36.
—Ed.



Elsie Sullivan's favorite photo of her favorite star, Earl Thomas Conley.

White Meets Whites

I recently attended a concert of The Whites in Hendersonville, Tennessee, and they really put on a fabulous show. Afterwards I had the pleasure of meeting and talking to them. I encourage anyone who enjoys country music to go



Cheryl, Buck and Sharon White with Tommy White after a recent concert.

see them in concert whenever they have a chance.

I am also a White—no relation to them—and a country singer in a country band called the Country Outlaws.

Tommy White
Leitchfield, Kentucky

What's Fan Fair?

I have heard so much about something called Fan Fair. I am somewhat a new country fan and I would sure like to find out more about Fan Fair and the dates.

Sheri Jonson
Bishop, California

Fan Fair is an annual week-long festival of fans and stars, held at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds in Nashville in early June. It features nightly shows plus booths where fans meet stars, take pictures and get autographs. Joint sponsors are the Grand Ole Opry and the CMA. Other organizations, such as Music City News, record companies and the IFCO, plan gala events during Fan Fair week. For information on Fan Fair 1987, write Fan Fair, 2804 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tennessee 37214. —Ed.

"Whatever Happened to..."

I have enjoyed Country Music since my teenage years and can remember seeing in person artists George Jones, Marty Robbins, Johnny Cash—to name a few. I saw these people before they were big,

and especially enjoy your letters portion when people write in, "Whatever happened to..." I read your article about Marvin Rainwater and remember him well. I would like to ask whatever happened to Texas Bill Strength, who used to play in the Minneapolis area, and Claude Grey, who had a big hit, "I'll have another cup of coffee, then I'll go."

Joe Acker
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Texas Bill or Claude Grey—or anyone who knows them—come in, please.
—Ed.

What About Wayne Kemp?

I am writing to see if you or anyone knows of a Wayne Kemp? I have seen his name on records by George Strait, Moe Bandy and Joe Stampley, Conway Twitty, Johnny Paycheck and more. I have seen him in person, and I think he is great, a great singer himself. Does he still make records? Didn't he also write "One Piece at a Time" for Johnny Cash?

B. J. Littleton
Lenoir City, Tennessee
Wayne Kemp is a singer and songwriter of note. He did write "One Piece at a Time" and many others. Under contract to Door Knob Records, he has had several duet singles with Bobby G. Rice on the charts recently, and he has an album out, sold only on TV, entitled Wayne Kemp: Past, Present and Future.—Ed.

Storm of Praise for Storms of Life

Michael Bane's review of Randy Travis' *Storms of Life* album in your September/October issue was right on target. This album rates with such greats as George Jones' *I Am What I Am* and Don Williams' *Volume II*. I've been listening to country music for twenty years, and this album has to be one of the best pieces of pure country I have ever had the pleasure to own or hear. I have a

Correction

In the Randy Travis article in the November/December issue we credited Buddy Blackman and Vic Viperman with writing Randy's "On the Other Hand." The correct writers are, in fact, Don Schlitz and Paul Overstreet, who won this year's Song of the Year award from the CMA. We regret the error.

modest collection of around 150 country albums, but the *Storms of Life* I shall keep so my great-great grandchildren can hear country music at its best.

Kenneth M. Parnell
Schofield Barracks, Hawaii

Randy...Trizzell

In the Randy Travis review, Michael Bane states that he has spent "...a decade writing about country music." He needn't have told us of his short experience. Only a reviewer of "Johnny-Come-Lately" status could write about Randy Travis and not know that his voice has more than a "touch" of Lefty. Three lashes....

Ed La Neve
Chester, West Virginia

That's because we won't give Michael a record player.—Ed.

Lovely Concert with Lacy J.

We recently went to a Lacy J. Dalton concert in Shoeneck, Pennsylvania. Lacy J., as always, had a very fine show and spent over an hour signing autographs and posing for pictures with her fans. Enclosed is a picture of Sharon Young and her idol, Lacy J. Dalton. Sharon is a D.J. on WIOV/FM in Ephrata and was really delighted to get to talk to Lacy J. and have her picture taken with her.

Keep up the good work, Lacy J. Dalton. We think you are the greatest.
Joan and Charlie Rothrock
Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania



The country D.J. is the artist's friend—here Lacy J. Dalton and D.J. Sharon Young talk things over.

People on Paycheck

Really appreciated the Update on Johnny Paycheck. I've always liked his style of music and think he deserves more recognition than he gets. I'm sure there are many other supporters out there who share the same thoughts. If you know of any addresses or fan clubs

to write to Mr. Paycheck, please pass them on. His new single is one of the best songs I've heard in years.

Lisa Gale Daniel
Virgilina, Virginia

While looking through my September/October issue, I came to page 13. There, with a picture, was an article about Johnny Paycheck. This individual is a disgrace to a fine industry. His personal conduct does not put him in line for consideration of any kind, from co-workers in the industry, let alone fundraising events to bail him out. Why don't they have fundraisers for his victims?

Anyone can make a mistake, have their day in court and learn from the experience. Apparently, Mr. Donald Lytle has not learned yet.

One final thought—you can take this guy and shove him.

George Wendt
St. Charles, Missouri

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

Sorry we cannot answer individual letters. Questions of general interest will be dealt with in this section.



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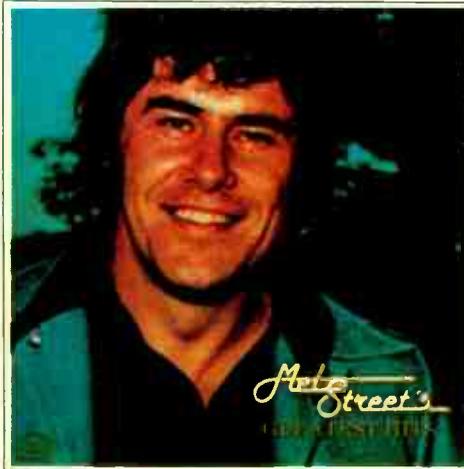
TANYA TUCKER

The Man that Turned My Mama On • You Are So Beautiful • Would You Lay with Me in a Field of Stone • Spring • Blood Red & Goin' Down • Bed of Roses • What's Your Mama's Name • How Can I Tell Him • The Happiest Girl in the Whole U.S.A. • The Jamestown Ferry • Delta Dawn • Almost Persuaded • Greener than the Grass • Love's the Answer • I Believe the South is Gonna Rise Again • Teddy Bear Song • Guess I'll Have To Love Him More • Let Me Be There • and MORE!



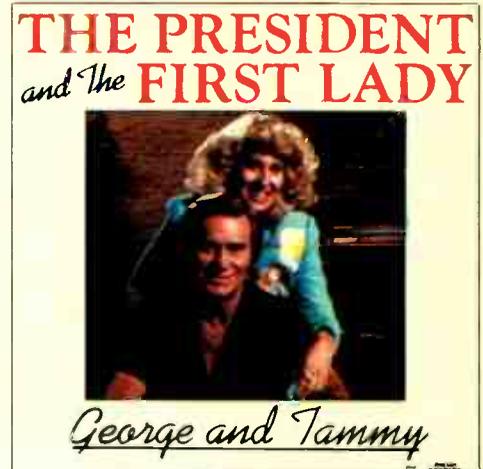
TAMMY WYNETTE

You and Me • Stand by Your Man • Til I Can Make It On My Own • D-I-V-O-R-C-E • Singing My Song • Kids Say the Darndest Things • Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad • Womanhood • One of a Kind • I'll See Him Through • Bedtime Story • I Don't Wanna Play House • Take Me to Your World • Apartment No. 9 • The Way to Love a Man • He Loves Me All the Way • Run, Woman, Run • Good Lovin' (Makes it right) • My Man (Understands) • Till I Get It Right



MEL STREET

Borrowed Angel • The Town Where You Live • Bad Bad Leroy Brown • I've Hurt Her More Than She Loves Me • Last Affair • I Met A Friend Of Yours Today • Big Blue Diamond • Forbidden Angel • Country Pride • Don't Lead Me On • Smokey Mountain Memories • Rub It In • Virginia's Song • Don't Be Angry • Even If I Have To Steal • You Make Me Feel More Like A Man • Today I Started Lovin' You Again • Love Me Tender • and MORE!

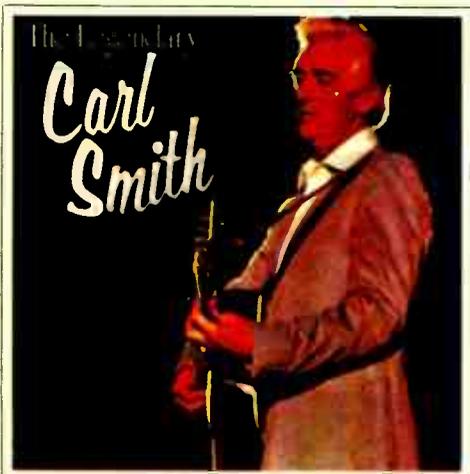


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and The FIRST LADY**

George and Tammy

GEORGE & TAMMY

We're Gonna Hold On • Two Story House • Take Me • The Ceremony • Old Fashioned Singing • (We're not) The Jet Set • We Loved It Away • God's Gonna Get'cha (For that) • Someone I Used to Know • Livin' on Easy Street • Golden Ring • After Closing Time • Something to Brag About • We'll Talk About It Later • Rollin' In My Sweet Baby's Arms • Near You • Southern California • Let's Build a World Together After the Fire Is Gone • If We Don't Make It



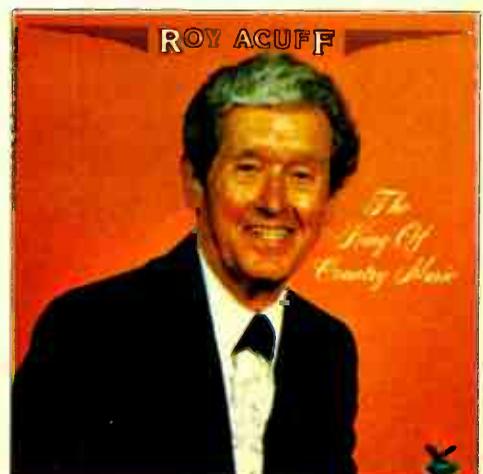
CARL SMITH

Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way • Mr. Moon • Just Wait Till I Get You Alone • Back Up Buddy • Deep Water • Hey Joe • Are You Teasing Me • If Teardrops Were Pennies • It's a Lovely Lovely World • You Are the One • Don't Just Stand There • Satisfaction Guaranteed • Kisses Don't Lie • Our Moon • Trademark • Let's Live a Little • Take My Ring • Finger • I Overlooked an Orchid • Go, Boy Go • This Little Birdie



JOHNNY HORTON

North to Alaska • Battle of New Orleans • When It's Springtime in Alaska (It's 40 below) • Johnny Reb • I'm Coming Home • Honky Tunk Man • Sink the Bismarck • All for the Love of a Girl • The Mansion You Stole • Guzmanche • Jim Bridger • I'm a One-Woman Man • Sleepy Eved John • They'll Never Take Her Love from Me • Old Slewfoot • All Grown Up • Saf • Got a Sugar Lip • Whispering Pines • Johnny Freedom (Freedom Land) • I'm Ready If You're Willing



ROY ACUFF

Great Speckled Bird • Tell Mother I'll Be There • Wait for the Light to Shine • Wreck on the Highway • I Saw the Light • The Precious Jewel • The Great Shining Light • If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again • The Great Judgment Morning • Great Speckled Bird (No. 2) • Wabash Cannon Ball • Lonesome Old River Blues • Be Honest with Me • Firehall Mail • Tennessee Waltz • Muleskinner Blues (Blue yodel no. 8) • Low and Lonely • Pins and Needles • Freight Train Blues • MORE!



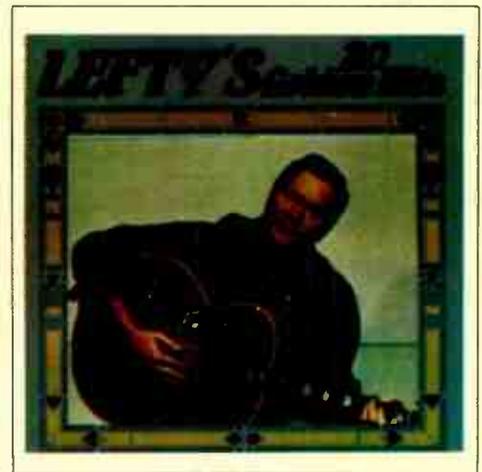
RED SOVINE

Teddy Bear • Daddy's Girl • Las Down Sally • Truck Drivin' Son of a Gun • Colorado Kool-Aid • Giddyup Go • Ole Rivers • The Days of Me and You • Little Rosa • I Didn't Jump the Fence • It'll Come Back • Little Joe • I Know You're Married (But I love you still) • Last Goodbye • Phantom 309 • Roses for Mama • 18 Wheels a Humming Home Sweet Home • Anything Leaving Town Today • Daddy • Woman Behind the Man Behind the Wheel



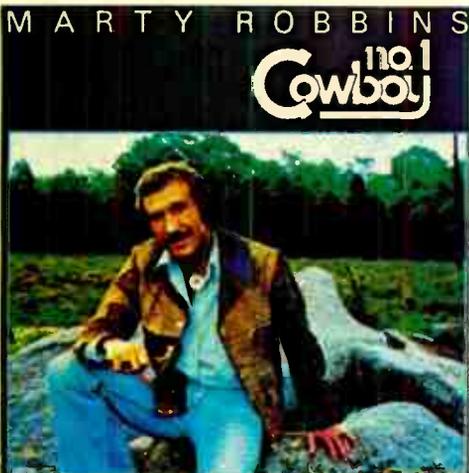
JOHNNY CASH

(Ghost) Riders in the Sky • Man in Black • See Ruby Fall • Daddy Sang Bass • Ring of Fire • One Piece at a Time • Kate • Any Old Wind That Blows • Flesh and Blood • Don't Take Your Guns to Town • One • Sunday Morning Coming Down • The One on the Left is on the Right • Folsom Prison Blues • Rosanna's Going Wild • A Thing Called Love • What Is Truth • A Boy Named Sue • The Matador • Understand Your Man



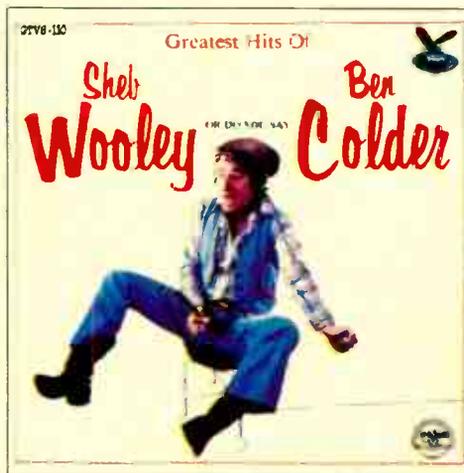
LEFTY FRIZZELL

If You've Got the Money, I've Got the Time • I Love You a Thousand Ways • Look What Thoughts Will Do • I Want to Be with You Always • Always Late with Your Kisses • Mom and Dad's Waltz • Travelin' Blues • Give Me More, More, More of Your Kisses • Don't Stay Away • Forever • Release Me • Cigarettes and Coffee Blues • The Long Black Veil • Saginaw, Michigan • She's Gone, Gone, Gone • Watermelon Time in Georgia • The Waltz of the Angels • and MORE!



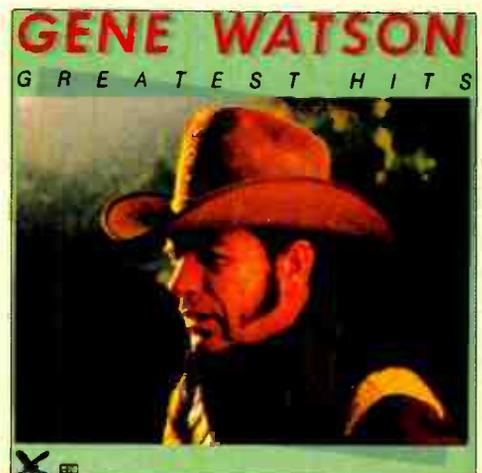
MARTY ROBBINS

El Paso • El Paso City • The Hanging Tree • Red River Valley • Streets of Laredo • San Angelo • All Around Cowboy • Tumbling Tumbleweeds • The Fastest Gun Around • Meet Me Tonight in Laredo • Mr. Shorty • They're Hanging Me Tonight • Coal Water • Strawberry Roan • Ballad of the Alamo • Big Iron • Running Gun • Five Brothers • The Cowboy in the Continental Suit • Old Red



SHEB WOOLEY • BEN COLDER

Purple People Eater • That's My Pa • I Walk the Line (No. 2) • Detroit City (No. 2) • Runnin' Bear • Don't Go Near the Eskimos • Harper Valley P.T.A. (Later the Same Day) • Little Green Apples • 10 Little Bottles • 15 Beers Ago • Almost Persuaded • Hello Walls (No. 2) • Green Green Grass of Home (No. 2) • Sunday Morning Fallin' Down • Rollin' in My Sweet Baby's Arms • Folsom Prison Blues • Little Brown Shack On Back • Divorce (No. 2) • Easy Lovin' • and MORE!



GENE WATSON

Love in the Afternoon • Farewell Party • Pick the Wildwood Flower • One-Sided Conversation • Should I Come Home (Or should I go crazy) • I Don't Need a Thing at All • The Old Man and His Horn • Where Love Begins • Cowboys Don't Get Lucky All the Time • Paper Rosie • No One Will Ever Know • Bedroom Ballad • Raisin' Cane in Texas • Nothing Sure Looked Good on You • You Could Know as Much About a Stranger • Bad Water • and MORE!



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World Radio History

People



Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter, June Carter Cash, Carlene Carter and Helen and Anita Carter of The Carter Sisters joined Johnny Cash and Jack Clement in the studio for the song "The Night Hank Williams Come To Town." The single is to be included in Cash's first Mercury album and is also being made into a video. You may be wondering about the hats. The guests donned old-timey headgear to get in the mood.

CRAZED BUT NOT CRAZY

The Oak Ridge Boys may be a little crazed, but never crazy. For example, they ain't never been crazy enough to bust up. Recently they called a press conference to announce and reconvince every man, woman, child, beast and William Lee Golden that The Oak Ridge Boys are still an act, even though William Lee has his own album on MCA Records that is doing quite well, as is the group's product.

Joe Bonsall kept talking, talking and talking, trying to convince the press, himself and William Lee that they are in show biz together. Duane Allen, whom I know best of the four, kept trying to explain that the group was dissolving some of their business interests, such as their publishing companies, Silverline

and Goldline, that are on the auction block, and making certain personnel changes. 'Course, Joe Bonsall kept talking, talking and talking. He even interrupted Duane a time or ten.

As I said in the beginning, crazed they are, but not crazy. They have decided they want to discard their longtime producer, Ron Chancey, who was an MCA exec BB (Before Bowen) and go with someone else. So who do you suppose they go for? The hand that rocks their cradle? You bet your sweet booty! Right to the heart—Jimmy Bowen will be in the producer's chair for forthcoming Oaks product. And at the news conference Bowen sat abreast with them—two Oaks on either side.

This Oaks-keep-a-changin' has been going on for two years or more. Wayne Halper and Shelley Davis were cut loose from managerial a couple of years back,

leaving the new kid on the block, Ted Hacker, in charge. Earlier this year Ted was axed, and, as rumors went rampant, longtime employee Pat Rowe Halper found other work for fear of the consequences if she didn't. The word I got on Hacker's dismissal was that there were insoluble differences between him and William Lee Golden. Next, I hear they have or are about to drop their longtime concert booker, The Jim Halsey Company. In the midst of all this, the remaining employees are sorta looking out the window of the Oaks' office building on Rockland Road in Hendersonville as they twiddle their thumbs wondering, "Who will be next?" Duane kept trying to say that they wanted to concentrate more on the music, rather than on their business interests. That made more sense to me than anything else they said. In effect,

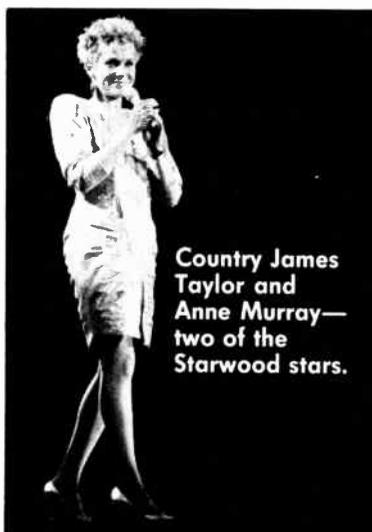
Editor: Rochelle Friedman

Reporter: Hazel Smith

People



CHARMAINE LANHAM



Country James Taylor and Anne Murray—two of the Starwood stars.

let's get great songs, a great producer and make some great music. If Joe Bonsall stops talking, he too might learn why The Oaks are not breaking up.

Richard Sterban eased in and out without much to say, looking sharp in them GQ duds, and William Lee's locks were a-blowing in the air conditioning. You know, William Lee is not totally happy. He looked happier to me alone at FarmAid II, singing a song from his solo album than I've ever seen him onstage in my life.

Thought for the day: since The Oaks are doing a major recapping, maybe William Lee will feel a need to clip the locks that grow from his head. Lord knows, he ain't Samson.

BOBBY OSBORNE BUYS RANDY TRAVIS

I've never hidden my feeling about bluegrass music—and **The Osborne Brothers** make some of the finest. **Sonny** and **Bobby** aren't prejudiced either. Why, this summer they even performed with the Owensboro, Kentucky, Symphony Orchestra at a local bluegrass festival. Anyway, the story goes that Bobby Osborne, who hadn't bought a phonograph record in years, went out and bought the Randy Travis album *Storms of Life* just so he could hear that great single, "Digging Up Bones." Bobby's point was that he—a great musician and well known, at that—appreciated great songs. My friend **Paul Overstreet** penned "Digging Up Bones" with **Al Gore**. Congrats to all the above and especially to Big Al Gore who has had more down time than he deserves.

Songwriter **Paul Craft** produced The

Osborne Brothers' latest album, *Once More With the Osborne Brothers*, on CMH Records.

GEORGIA ROYALTY

The princesses of Lookout Mountain, Georgia—called **The Forester Sisters**—went back home for a benefit at the high school where one of the girls taught for seven years in northwest Georgia. The concert benefitted the school band and athletic department. Recently the youngest, **Christy Forester**, revealed how handsome **Gary Smith** proposed. (Gary is **Ricky Skaggs'** keyboardist.) Seems the couple met on Valentine's Day 1986, and since that time, wherever in this great world Christy is, Gary sends her a dozen roses on the 14th of every month to honor their first meeting. It just so happened they were together last August 14th. Gary presented the roses to Christy and also gave her a package, which she opened to find a Jack-in-the-box. "Wind him up," Gary said. When Jack popped out of the box, there was a bag around his neck. Inside the bag was an engagement ring. God, I wish somebody would give me a Jack-in-the-box with a sack tied around its neck with the key to a new car inside! I'd rather have a car than a ring. *Hmmmm*. That comes with maturity.

SAWYER BROWN DANCING IN THE BIG APPLE

Award-winning video director Martin "Country Boy" **Kahan** was in the driver's seat for the new **Sawyer Brown** video. Filmed in New York City, the video features the popular group shimmy-ing around the fountain at the

fab Plaza Hotel with a bunch of girls who all look like **Cyndi Lauper**. You know, pink hair and limp brains.

STARS AT STARWOOD

I swear before God and man, I never dreamed I'd have a hero who wears jeans and brags on 'em and plays a guitar with a hole in it. But, here he is, **Willie Nelson**. This photo was shot at the new Starwood Amphitheater located on Murfreesboro Road in Nashville that has been the venue for a bunch of shows this summer. **Hank Jr.** cut his latest live album out there. Some other country acts besides Willie and Hank who have performed there to date are **Anne Murray**, **George Strait**, **Randy Travis** and **Charlie Daniels**. Charlie's Volunteer Jam took place there. We are very fortunate to have this venue in Music City. Oh! I almost forgot another performer who has seen action on the country charts who sang at Starwood for the friends and neighbors...**Julio!** He's about as country as *escargot*.

HYLAND LANDS

Mike Hyland, public relations maven, who has moved his company in good standing more than People Express, swears to me that he's found a home at 1001 18th Avenue South. Hyland allows as how he just signed up **Ronnie McDowell**, whose first release on MCA Curb is titled "All Tied Up in Love."



WEDDING BELLS

Marie Osmond is all teeth (oops, I mean smiles) after her marriage to **Brian Blosil**, a record producer from Provo, Utah. The couple plan to make their home in Provo, and Marie says she'd like to have a second home in Nashville as soon as she can find the time to buy one.

People

DOLLY AND KENNY TOGETHER AGAIN

The musical team of **Dolly Parton** and **Kenny Rogers** toured Canada with much success, so I've heard. Dolly's band ain't no award winning country band, but when you've got Dolly to feast your eyes upon, maybe it don't matter as much if the lead guitarist breaks time or the bassman can *read but not feel*. (He'd be in a helluva mess trying to play bluegrass.) Hey, Dolly girl! Don't you know the best pickers in the world ain't in Los Angeles, unless they are visiting? Come on home to Tennessee.

DON'T RIDE MOTORCYCLES

Drummer extraordinaire **Eddie Bayers** was sitting at a red light on his motorcycle when he was hit by a 17-year-old in a Z-28. Suffering a broken hand, bruised brain and other injuries, Eddie will be at the sidelines for at least six months. We are praying for you, Eddie!

TV GUIDE "CROSSWORDING" OVER TO COUNTRY

I believe *TV Guide* is the top selling consumer magazine in the U.S.A., and I feel it my Christian duty to allow you-all in on the hipness of this tube teller. In one issue in September, the television crossword clued us with 30 across, "Country singer Mel _____." So, me, God and everybody knew that was ole **Mel Tillis**. Bless your soul, in the next issue, 8 across read, "The _____ Ridge Boys," which of course was Oak, or could we call these boys the sons of acorns? Whatever. But I can dig *TV Guide* a-leaning toward the countryside. Now, if *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, **David Letterman** and **Madonna** all start turning country, I believe they would have a better place to love, live and work!

HAL DURHAM—JUST ONE OF THE BOYS

Hal Durham, McMinnville, Tennessee native, small town boy done good. Hal is the manager of the Grand Ole Opry, no small time job. Hal and **Dottie West** both boast McMinnville as home and both are proud, as is the town proud of them. So proud, as a matter of fact, that on September 9 McMinnville declared Hal Durham Day and honored their favorite son. Hal knew about the honor in advance. Nevertheless, he was pleas-

ONE OF THOSE STORMS OF LIFE



Can you imagine nine musicians, all their gear and clothing and no transportation? Well, **Randy Travis** will tell you it's no picnic. Recently, after their band vehicle broke down, the guys had to pile themselves and their instruments and stage clothes into one six passenger van. Allowed to take only what was necessary for the night, they are seen here sorting through their belongings.

antly surprised when many of the Grand Ole Opry staff band showed up, along with **Jan Howard**, **Johnny Russell**, **Charlie Walker** and the King of Country Music, **Roy Acuff**, with **Charlie Collins** and **Pete "Oz" Kirby**, members of his **Smoky Mountain Boys Band**. The entourage traveled up from Nashville by bus and had a blast. 'Course you know by now that a bus is a hillbilly limo and a home away from home.

Back to Smalltown Hal. Hal has been with the Opry for a long time. In his first years with the organization, he was an announcer and disk jockey. When E.W. "**Bud**" **Wendell** was made head of Opryland, Durham was promoted to the managerial position with the Opry. Hal is a real nice fellow. He still likes a good joke, still laughs when one entertainer "gooses" another, as they occasionally do in the wings of the Opry stage, and still maintains the down-home friendliness that goes with being from a small town in the South. I'm glad Mr. Hal Durham was honored. I'm also glad he's still one of the boys.

CASH IS A BEAUTY

Kellye Cash, a 21-year-old niece of **John R. Cash**, is now Miss America. Kellye is the daughter of **Roy Cash Jr.**, who is the son of **Roy Cash Sr.**, John's brother. I knew from the first photo that there was not another contestant who had a snow-

ball's chance in Hades against that Cash girl. Kellye would be described as medium complected, while **Rosanne**, **Cathy**, **Cindy** and **Tina Cash**, beauties to the *n*th degree, have their dad's looks blended with their mother's Italian, which is beautifully prominent in all four daughters. You could just see that Cash charisma oozing as Kellye did her thing—proud as a peacock to be there and to represent Tennessee in the pageant. Cash described his niece as an all-American girl, adding that his wife **June Carter** was ready to fix up Kellye with a fur coat. Beauty does run in the Cash family. The best part of it is that a lot of the beauty is from the inside. They call it good-hearted. I'm such a Johnny Cash fan. I'm like **Waylon**—I'm not sure I would want to live in a world with no Johnny Cash. And folks, that is one of the reasons I plan to take my vacation in heaven! Johnny plans his vacation there, too.

OPRY E

Remem-
duced O
awards :
recently
the Opry
as Jerry.
The audie
it was Ga
wives ma

14 COUNTRY MUSIC

People

ing their heads off. I was glad I didn't have a husband to smile as he stared at me. *Whoooops!*

My mother! She's not a blooper, but she is a fan. 72-years-old and she knows better, but does no better. Backstage at the Opry and she would not let well enough alone until she threw her arms around **Ricky Skaggs'** neck and got her picture made with him so all the folks back home in Caswell County could see. Her name is **Linnie Boone**. If any of you friends and neighbors out there know her, try and slow her down just a little. Her being a member of the church and all, it don't look like she'd be hugging men young enough to be her grandson. Mama just never stopped liking 30-year-old men. I don't see much wrong with that, do you?

Foster Brooks on the Opry? Yep!! Folks, I wouldn't lie to you. Foster said the reason he was drunk was that he'd been drinking all day. I thought he was gonna say his wife left him for an Irish setter, but that wasn't the reason.

LANA BLEW IN

My pal **Lana Nelson**, daughter of **Willie**, blew in from her palatial Austin spread to accompany her friend and mine, **Rattlesnake Annie**, to some TV-ing. Later in the week we did get down a bit at the Nashville residence of **Robert K. Oermann**, chief music writer for *The Tennessean*, the Gannett chain and whomever he feels like writing for. He and his delightful wife, **Dr. Mary Bufwack**, reside in one of the historic homes across the river in Nashville. If all that sounds just bigtime, well, it is! An attorney showed up, but he wasn't pleading a case (thank God), and several of Lana's buddies from high school and others she picked up here and there. For all you fellows who think Lana is the most, I want you to know that her escort was an alive and well gent from Hollywood whose grandfather did the first sound for movies, whose father was a 'final sound man,' and so is he. What's his name? **Mike** somebody, but I forget the last name. He was a real cutey, however.

Lana is a beauty. By the way, papa Willie has moved back to Texas and the movie *Red Headed Stranger* is now a reality. Can't wait to see the movie.

Lana said **Kathryn Ross** was wonderful in the film. And Lana's second son, **Brian**, played Kathryn's son. Seems **Brian** was taken with young **Brian**. **Brian**'s a natural actor. Hell's bells, I expect out of Willie's sons should be able to do



Kawliga, The Wooden Indian, stands proud in the store that is part of Honk's office complex in Paris, Tennessee.

whatever his heart is set on. Lana does. Oh, and sister **Susie Nelson** is writing a daddy book. Wonder if **Susie** is writing a "Daddy Dearest?" I can't imagine **Willie** cracking someone over the head with a coat hanger like 'daughter dearest' said mama **Joan Crawford** did.

THE AGE OF MUSIC

Roy Acuff turned 83 on September 15 and **Bill Monroe** turned 75 on September 13. Methuselah better watch out for these two. Either one of them might just last another 900 years.

COUNTRY KITCHEN COOKING UP A STORM

A little bird told me that *The Nashville Network's* cooking show, *Country Kitchen*, has turned out so well that the show's headers-up may just be doing other cooking shows, another place, another time. The Music City show is sponsored by Wesson Oil and hosted by Wesson's spokesperson, **Florence Henderson**. **Loretta Lynn**, who is an excellent cook, so I am told, probably won't be cooking up a storm on *Country Cooking* since Wesson Oil is the arch-competitor of her baby, **Crisco!** Reckon that's show biz.

SAWYER BROWN WALKING IN NEW SHOES

Capitol Records recording stars **Sawyer Brown** are now walking in new shoes by **Converse**. The hip songsters are sponsored by the shoe company. Makes sense since they always wear sneakers.

HANK JR. SELLING GARAGE

Don't panic, fans, **Hank Jr.** still has a place to park his cars, buses, trucks and airplane. He ain't really selling the physical garage, he's just doing some "hillbilly cleaning," and in the process he is marketing used guns, boots, jackets, gun racks, and assorted paraphernalia he no longer uses. The place is **Paris, Tennessee**, where **Hank** migrated ... lock, stock and **Merle Kilgore**. He calls the shop **Kaw-Liga Korners**, from his dad's penned song, "Kawliga."

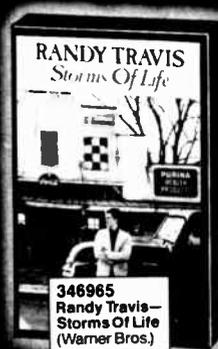
DOLLY'S LITTLE SISTER RACHEL IN HOLLYWOOD NOT DOLLYWOOD

The only **Parton** who ain't working **Dollywood** these days is sister **Rachel Dennison**. **Rachel** is up and at 'em again on the West Coast with *9 to 5*. The television show was dropped from the networks for reasons of ratings, but it's now been picked up by a conglomerate for syndication. Guaranteed 26 shows, **Rachel** couldn't say no. From what I understand, **Dolly's** sis may be pulling in a bunch of bread for just six months work.

LETTERS TO ANDREW AND PAPA RICKY

Some of the celebs who wrote, wired or contacted **Ricky Skaggs'** son, young **Andrew**, who survived a senseless shooting by a trucker in **Roanoke, Virginia**, are **President Ronald Reagan, Johnny Cash, B.J. Thomas, George Strait**, the hippest mayor on this planet, **New York City's Mayor Ed Koch, Kentucky Governor Martha Layne Collins, Marty Stuart, Joan Van Ark, Kenny and Marianne Rogers, Mary Anne Mobley and Gary Collins, Marie Osmond and The Osmond Family** and thousands of others. **Ricky** told me about the **P.Y.E.** truckers sending him a wonderful letter and **Andrew** gifts of little trucks, and the **Carolina** truckers out of **Cherryville, North Carolina**, sent a letter with over 300 signatures from truckers, all stating they were behind **Ricky Skaggs** and his music 100%. It seemed that these 'white knights of the road' wanted to join hands to make a statement, so that **Ricky** and his son and family would know that just because one trucker committed a horrible thing, all truckers are not the same as he. Trucking is just like music, preachers, bankers and butlers... there's good and bad examples of each.

12 HOT HITS FOR A



346965
Randy Travis—
Storms Of Life
(Warner Bros.)



348128
Lee Greenwood—
Love Will Find Its
Way To You (MCA)



349548
Reba McEntire
—What Am I
Gonna Do About
You (MCA)



344614
Dwight Yoakam—
Guitars, Cadillacs,
Etc., Etc. (Reprise)



348896
Ricky Skaggs
—Love's Gonna
Get Ya! (Epic)

349571 BOSTON THIRD STAGE (MCA)	349233 THE GAYLIN BROS. —LARRY TRIVE, RUDY PARTNERS (COLUMBIA)	348961 SWEETHEARTS OF THE RODEO (COLUMBIA)	348953 GARY MORRIS PLAIN BROWN WRAPPER (REPRISE EPIC)	348342 CRYSTAL GAYLE —TOUCH TO THE HEART (WARNER BROS.)	348318 THE POLICE EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE (COLUMBIA)
346957* STEVE WINWOOD —BACK IN THE HIGH LIFE (REPRISE)	346510 THE FORESTER SISTERS —RUBY RIBBONS & PEARLS (WARNER BROS.)	346478 MADONNA TRUE BLUE (EPIC)	346312 BILLY JOEL THE BRIDGE (COLUMBIA)	346296 JANIE FRICKE BLACK AND WHITE (COLUMBIA)	346288 RAY CHARLES FROM THE PAGES OF MY MIND (COLUMBIA)
349704* "WEIRD AL" YANKOVIC KOLA PARTY (DOOR 21 RECORDS)	348643* ANDREA VOLLMEYER —DOWN TO THE MOON (CBS)	346635 EXILE GREATEST HITS (EPIC)	348023 GENESIS Invisible Touch (ATLANTIC)	346536 THE A & NOW THE BEST OF THE MONKEES (GUNTER)	346270 WHAM MUSIC FROM THE EDGE OF HEAVEN (COLUMBIA)
331645 MADONNA LIKE A VIRGIN (EPIC)	328302* TINA TURNER PRIVATE DANCER (CAPITOL)	336222* DIRE STRAITS Brothers In Arms (WARNER BROS.)	324616 CYNDI LAUPER SHE'S SO UNUSUAL (POSTRATT)	319541 ELTON JOHN'S GREATEST HITS (MCA)	340323 SADE PROFANE (POSTRATT)
349647 LIBERACE Concert 1 Favorites (CBS)	346304 LACY J. DALTON HIGHWAY DINER (COLUMBIA)	344408 NEIL DIAMOND —HEADED FOR THE FUTURE (COLUMBIA)	331819 THE BEST OF DOTTIE WEST (LIBERTY)	330738 PROFILES II: THE BEST OF EMMYLOU HARRIS (WARNER BROS.)	341065 FERRARTE & TEICHER —A FEW OF OUR FAVORITES ON STAGE (AWAY GARDEN)
329235 BARBARA HANDBRILL LEE GREENWOOD —MEANT FOR EACH OTHER (MCA)	319178 TAMMY WYNETTE BIGGEST HITS (EPIC)	318089 MICHAEL JACKSON THRILLER (COLUMBIA)	317788 EAGLES GREATEST HITS—VOLUME 2 (REPRISE)	314443 NEIL DIAMOND 12 GREATEST HITS—vol. 2 (COLUMBIA)	337519 HEART (CAPITOL)
349589 CHICAGO 18 (WARNER BROS.)	346206* BELINDA CARLISLE BELINDA (LIBERTY)	343947 TONY BENNETT THE ART OF EXCELLENCE (COLUMBIA)	331801 THE BEST OF MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHY (MCA)	330720 JOHN ANDERSON GREATEST HITS (REPRISE)	341024* ELLA FITZGERALD WITH THE MON MIDDLE ORCH. —JEFFERIE KLEIN SONGBOOK (VANGUARD)
328906 EXILE KENTUCKY HEARTS (EPIC)	318733 MELISSA MANCHESTER'S GREATEST HITS (MCA)	310235 THE OAK RIDGE BOYS GREATEST HITS (MCA)	243642 LORETTA LYNN'S Greatest Hits, vol. 2 (MCA)	187088* Barbra Streisand's GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA)	337303 GARY MORRIS ANYTHING GOES (WARNER BROS.)
349340* B. J. THOMAS NIGHT LIFE (COLUMBIA)	346155* WIZARD OF OZ Original Soundtrack (MCA)	343822 PRINCE AND THE NEW POWER GENERATION PARADE (PAMBLER PINK)	331587 WILLIE NELSON Family Bible (MCA)	330704 GEORGE STRAIT DOES FORT WORTH EVER CROSS YOUR MIND (MCA)	340976 THE KENDALLS —THANK GOD FOR THE MUSIC (AND ALL THE HITS) (REPRISE)
360280 PAUL YOUNG Between Two Fires (COLUMBIA)	318394 MOE BANDY GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA)	286914 FLEETWOOD MAC RUMOURS (WARNER BROS.)	236885 CARPENTERS SINGLES 1969-1973 (A&R)	138586 BOB DYLAN'S GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA)	336818 THE METTY GRITTY —THE METTY BROTHERS (WARNER BROS.)
349332 VINCE GIORDANO'S NIGHTWALKER—DANCING CHEER TO CHEER (BIRD QUAIL RECORDS)	346148* SINGAL IN THE RAIN ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK (MCA)	343808* LIONEL LAMBERTSON —Lionel's Sentimental Journey (ATLANTIC)	331264 BRYAN ADAMS RECKLESS (A&R)	329672 MERLE HAGGARD HIS EPIC HITS SEVEN (EPIC)	340893* MIKE + THE MECHANICS (ATLANTIC)
328609 JUICE NEWTON GREATEST HITS (CAPITOL)	318386 MARTY ROBBINS BIGGEST HITS (MCA)	286740 LINDA RONSTADT'S GREATEST HITS (CAPITOL)	219477 Simon & Garfunkel's Greatest Hits (COLUMBIA)	345645* EL DEBARGE (CAPITOL)	336792 JOHN ANDERSON TOKYO, OKLAHOMA (WARNER BROS.)
349209 VARIOUS ARTISTS TODAY'S COUNTRY CLASSICS (EPIC)	346122 T. G. SHEPPARD 17 SINGLES FROM THE 1960S (COLUMBIA)	343319* JANET JACKSON CONTROL (A&R)	331157 ANNE MURRAY HEART OVER MIND (CAPITOL)	329531 RICKY SKAGGS COUNTRY BOY (EPIC)	340760 STEVIE NICKS ROCK A LITTLE (GOSHAWK)
328237 RAY CHARLES FRIENDSHIP (COLUMBIA)	317990 MERLE HAGGARD HIS WILDE NELSON PARCHED AND LEFTY (EPIC)	266403 CHARLIE RICH GREATEST HITS (EPIC)	331157 ANNE MURRAY HEART OVER MIND (CAPITOL)	329531 RICKY SKAGGS COUNTRY BOY (EPIC)	336750 EDDIE RABBITT #1'S (WARNER BROS.)
348904 GEORGE JONES WINE COLORED ROSES (EPIC)	345906 OAK RIDGE BOYS SEASONS (MCA)	342972 EMMYLOU HARRIS THIRTEEN (WARNER BROS.)	34810 BILLY HOULY —FROM THE Original Master Tapes (MCA)	324053 OLDIES BUT GOODIES FROM THE RADIO (CAPITOL)	340729 BARBARA MANDRELL GET TO THE HEART (MCA)
327296 HANK WILLIAMS, JR. MAJOR MOVES (WARNER BROS.)	317149 DAN FOGELBERG GREATEST HITS (PUBLISHED BY EPIC)	2612-8 LORETTA LYNN'S GREATEST HITS (MCA)	319996 MOTOWN'S 25 #1 HITS 1959-1988 (REPRISE)	346841 VARIOUS ARTISTS TEXAS COUNTRY (MCA)	336689 STING DREAM OF THE BLUE TURTLES (A&R)
348102* DOUBLE BLUE (MCA)	345876 DAVID ALLAN COE SON OF THE SOUTH (COLUMBIA)	342956 DON WILLIAMS NEW MOVES (MCA)	346486* LAWRENCE WELK & HIS ORCHESTRA—MEMORIES WITH LAWRENCE WELK (RAMBLER)	349887 LINDA RONSTADT ROUND MIDNIGHT (ATLANTIC)	340463 THE BEST OF FRANK SINATRA (CAPITOL)
327171 ROY ROGERS (COLUMBIA HISTORICAL REISSUES)	316711 HANK WILLIAMS, JR. GREATEST HITS (BLACK/BLUES)	260638 CHICAGO'S GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA)	314997 STEVE WONDER HIS GREATEST HITS Original Masterpieces (MCA)	346445 THE BEACH BOYS Made In The U.S.A. — Their Greatest Hits (CAPITOL)	336644* More of the Best of BILL COSBY (WARNER BROS.)
348094* ORIGINAL SOUND TRACK STAND BY ME (ATLANTIC)	345868 GENE WATSON Starting New Memories (MCA)	342881 CHARLY MCCLAIN —WHEN LOVE IS RIGHT (EPIC)	345637* ANDRE KOSTELANETZ Woman's Original Love Songs (COLUMBIA)	313221 SHIRLEY BASSEY GREATEST HITS (LIBERTY)	340430 Vince Giordano's HighFidelity DIGITAL 800 BAND HITS OF THE 20's & 30's (BIRD QUAIL RECORDS)
327148 THE JACKSON 5 GREATEST HITS (MOTOWN)	316703 MEL TILLIS GREATEST HITS (LIBERTY)	252445 THE LETTERMEN All-Time Greatest Hits (CAPITOL)	311373* LENA HORNE —THE LADY AND HER MUSIC (GEMINI)	345454* DINA ROSS & THE SUPREMES 25TH ANNIVERSARY (GEMINI)	336362 OAK RIDGE BOYS STEP ON OUT (MCA)
348003 ROBERT OULLET WITH THE MAN (NONE)	344663 RONNIE McDOWELL All Tied Up In Love (MCA)	342360 ANNE MURRAY SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT (CAPITOL)	342786 VARIOUS ARTISTS—TELEVISION'S GREATEST HITS—THE BEST FROM THE 50'S AND 60'S (THE 18 RECORDS)	311001 WILLIE NELSON'S GREATEST HITS (AND SOME THAT WILL BE) (COLUMBIA)	340168 HANK WILLIAMS, JR. GREATEST HITS Vol. 2 (WARNER BROS.)
326629 Bruce Springsteen Born In The U.S.A. (COLUMBIA)	315358* GENE AUTRY (MCA)	252387 THE BEST OF MAT KING COLE (CAPITOL)	310896* MEL TORNELO AND FRIENDS RECORDED AT SANTO'S NEW YORK CITY (REPRISE)	342113* RICKY NELSON ALL MY BEST (WARNER BROS.)	336339 BELLAMY BROTHERS HOWARD & DAVID (MCA)
347997 MARTY STUART (COLUMBIA)	344242 JOURNEY Raised On Radio (COLUMBIA)	342287 MERLE HAGGARD FRIENDS IN CALIFORNIA (EPIC)	341461 VARIOUS ARTISTS—50 YEARS OF BLUEGRASS HITS, VOLUME 2 (MCA)	310219 JOHNNY MATHEWS 390211 SILVER ANNIVERSARY ALBUM (MCA)	340028 VARIOUS ARTISTS TODAY'S COUNTRY CLASSICS (MCA)
325233 LIBERACE LIVE WITH THE LONDON PHILHARMONIC (AMERICAN SOCIETY)	315341 LEFTY FRIZZELL (COLUMBIA HISTORICAL REISSUES)	249953 TANYA TUCKER'S GREATEST HITS (MCA)	223131 TONY BENNETT ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS (COLUMBIA)	336396 BILLY JOEL GREATEST HITS VOLUME 1 (COLUMBIA)	336321 REBA MCENTIRE —I WOT A DEAL FOR YOU (MCA)
347989* DAVID & DAVID Boomtown (A&R)	343889* THE FABULOUS THUNDERBOLTS TUFF TRUFF (CBS ASSOCIATED)	342253 JOHN SCHNEIDER A Memory Like You (MCA)	335877* BEST OF THE 395871 MILLS BROTHERS (MCA)	212654 BOB DYLAN'S Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 (COLUMBIA)	340018 JIMMY BUFFETT Last Mango In Paris (MCA)
324764 RAY CONNIFR'S GREATEST HITS (MCA)	349324* SOUTH PACIFIC: Kim T. Karver, Jose Carreras, Sarah Vaughan (MCA)	246888 JIM CROCE —THE BEST OF HIS GREATEST HITS (MCA)	221937 RAY PRICE'S 391938 ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS (MCA)	329813 DAVID ALLAN COE FOR THE RECORD —HIS BEST 10 YEARS (MCA)	335935 ROSANNE CASH Rhythm And Romance (MCA)
347880 GEORGE THORGOOD AND THE DESTROYERS LIVE (EPI MCA)	343830* VARIOUS ARTISTS STAR SEARCH THE WINNERS ALBUM (MCA)	342212 BING CROSBY + THE RADIO —THE BEST OF HIS GREATEST HITS (EPIC)	329849 MICKEY GILLEY Ten Years Of Hits (EPIC)	318147 GEORGE JONES— TEN YEARS OF HITS (EPIC)	335911 JIMMY BUFFETT'S GREATEST HITS SOUNDS YOU KNOW BY HEART (MCA)

COOL PENNY

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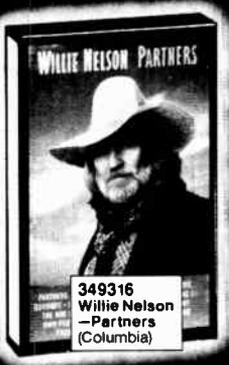
plus shipping/handling



345793
Steve Earle
—Guitar Town
(MCA)



345389
George Strait
—#7 (MCA)



349316
Willie Nelson
—Partners
(Columbia)



348938
Merle Haggard—
Out Among The Stars
(Epic)



347047
Hank Williams, Jr.—
Montana Cafe
(Warner Bros./Curb)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| 348235
RAY STEVENS
Surely You Joust
(MCA) | 348227
JOHN SCHNEIDER
TAKE THE
LONG WAY HOME
(MCA) | 347955
HUEY LEWIS
AND THE NEW
POWER
(COLUMBIA) | 347153
CYNDI LAUPER
True Colors
(MCA) | 347064*
DAVID LEE ROTH
EAT 'EM AND SMILE
(WARNER BROS.) | 347039*
BILLY IDOL
Whiplash Smile
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BEST OF THE NIFTY
GRITTY GIRT BAND
(MCA) | 345231
JOHNNY CASH
WAY ON JENNIFER IS
—MEMORIES
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REBA MCKENTRE
WHOLE EYES
IN NEW ENGLAND
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The Promiseland
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| 346781
PAUL SIMON
GRACELAND
(WARNER BROS.) | 344872*
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DANCING
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(MCA) | 344622*
ANITA BAKER
RAPTURE
(ELECTRA) | 344473
BILL COSBY: those of
you who of musical children
you're "Starband"
(DECCA) |
| 334425
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MONEY
WANTS TO BE ALONE
(MCA) | 342097
Barbra Streisand
The Broadway Album
(COLUMBIA) | 334391*
WHITNEY
HOUSTON
(MCA) | 347864*
KE AND TRINA TURNER
HONEY TOGETHER
(The Best Of The Road)
(EMERSON) | 341305*
ROBERT PALMER
RIPTIDE
(MCA) | 324327
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| 34212*
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| 342105*
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| 333897
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KERN RIVER
(MCA) | 341836*
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SOUND-MACHINE
PRIMITIVE LOVE
(Epic) | 331850
GREAT LOVE SONGS
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VARIOUS ARTISTS
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E. KUNZEL Cond.
BROADWAY HITS
(MCA) | 339499
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VARIOUS ARTISTS
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AKTUNAR FREDLER
AND THE BOSTON POPS
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| 345785
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| | | | 347195
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SHAKIN'
(CAPTOL/COLUMBIA) | 323229
"Every Great Moment
Of My MARVIN GAYE"
(MCA) |
| | | | 335117
JOHN SCHNEIDER
TRYIN' TO OUTFRIN THE WIND
(MCA) | 305672
ANNE MURRAY'S
GREATEST HITS
(CAPTOL) | 338061
RAY STEVENS
I Have Returned
(MCA) |
| | | | 34748*
SERGIO MENDES
BRASIL '95
(MCA) | 339291
JAMES TAYLOR
That's Why I'm Here
(COLUMBIA) | 322867
LACY J. DALTON
GREATEST HITS
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| | | | 335109
LEE GREENWOOD
GREATEST HITS
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The Very Best Of LORETTA
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GATLIN BROTHERS BAND
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CHARLIE DANIELS BAND
A DECADE OF HITS
(MCA) |
| | | | 334000
GENE WATSON
GREATEST HITS
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The Human League
CRASH
(A&M) | 337709
EXILE HANG ON
TO YOUR HEART
(Epic) |
| | | | 346718*
BOB DYLAN
Knocked Out Loaded
(MCA) | 338816
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK MUSIC
FROM THE TELEVISION SERIES
MIAMI VICE
(MCA) | 319269
JOHNNY PAYCHECK
BIGGEST HITS
(MCA) |
| | | | 334486
GEORGE STRAIT
GREATEST HITS
(MCA) | 288951
LARRY GATLIN & THE
GATLIN BROTHERS BAND
GREATEST HITS
(COLUMBIA) | 337800
HITBY CLINE
TODAY, TOMORROW
AND FOREVER
(Epic) |
| | | | 346502
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FALLIN' FOR YOU
FOR YEARS!
(COLUMBIA) | 338608
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK
SWEET DREAMS
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JOHNNY CASH
BIGGEST HITS
(COLUMBIA) |
| | | | 33445R
SAWYER BROWN
(CAPTOL/COLUMBIA) | 287003
EAGLES 1971-1975
GREATEST HITS
(MCA) | 319194
ROBINNE MCDOWELL
GREATEST HITS
(Epic) |

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EMERY SHAVES!

Thank God and the razor, *Nashville Now* Host Supreme **Ralph Emery** has shaved off his 14-year-old beard. Gone are the days of Ralph's stroking his beard as he thinks up some clever way to quiz whomever he has on the hotseat on his couch. The first day "it" was missing,



Emery sans beard.

I walked into my den, did not recognize right off what was changed, and said to my family, "My God, I'd never noticed that Ralph Emery favored **Walter Cronkite**, only younger." Then, lo and behold, I saw the beard was a has-been. I vote: keep it off. The folks Ralph kisses have gone through a brushpile to get to a picnic for too long!

THESE SHOES PROMO IS A SHIRT

Don't make a lot of sense, but Reeboks, makers of those shoes that make happy feet, sent out shirts as part of a promotion. I appreciate the shirt, but wear, love and praise the shoes. The promo really had to do with the **Everly Brothers** single on Polygram titled "These Shoes." The tie-in with the shoes and song title was clever, if I must say so myself. Let me tell you, folks, I wore and continue to wear Reeboks. Why, I wore them all week long during Fan Fair and never had sore feet once. Another point here for the friends and neighbors out there in *Reader Land*, I was on my feet some 60 hours.

LEROY CELEBRATING THREE DECADES

Good looking **Leroy Van Dyke** is celebrating his thirtieth anniversary in country music. "The Auctioneer" launched his career in 1956 with the self-penned song "The Auctioneer" that went on to become a multi-million seller for the Missouri native. It was followed by the crossover hit "Walk On By." Leroy then staged a Las Vegas type show that was second to none. He also hosted his own syndicated radio show, *Country Crossroads*, and starred in the motion picture *What Am I Bid*. Leroy has literally appeared around the world, still performs 150 to 200 days a year, and is *still* a looker!

TEN YEARS AGO

Was it really ten years ago that Waylon and Willie and the boys turned Music City upside down with the Outlaw Movement? According to *Country Music's* cover story ten years ago, the Outlaws were in full swing. Even the CMA deemed them honest and pure, and backed up their opinion by giving them three awards. *Wanted: The Outlaws* won Album of the Year, Willie and Waylon took Duo of the Year, "Goodhearted Woman" nabbed Song of the Year. Their music was—finally—wholesome enough for the entire country-music listening population. As Dave Hickey reported in his cover story, "This music was now a 'movement' complete with its own press, bumper stickers, buttons, tee-shirts and souvenir ashtrays." Dave went on to explain that "the original rebellion was against the stylistic bondage enforced by executives and programmers as to what was country music. They simply broke away from the mainstream so they could express themselves as individuals and honor the tradition of country music which they felt to be worth preserving."

Now, ten years later, Willie and Waylon are still recording, and people like Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakam, Steve Earle, Reba McEntire, George Strait, Ricky Skaggs and others don't have to leave Nashville to get their point across. Also, they sell a lot of records, which makes everyone happy.

As Hazel reports elsewhere in this section, Harlan Howard celebrated another birthday recently. The tradition was founded ten years ago, when Harlan had his first birthday bash. Not that it was his first birthday, but yes, it *was* his first party. As a kid, Harlan was brought up in foster homes, and his birthday went unnoticed. So, in adult years, he decided to make up for lost time. But that first party was not without its share of unhappiness. The day after the bash, Harlan's house was completely destroyed by fire, as was his 1976 Cadillac parked nearby. It was a sad ending to a happy beginning.

Another country favorite who had some trouble at home in those days was Ray Price. His home was bur-

glarized to the tune of some \$70,000 in damages.

And, domestic problems for Merle Kilgore and Faron Young were so bad that they decided to move in together. Both Merle and Faron were getting divorced, so it seemed only natural that they room together, and they did have some experience, since they had been roommates once before, when they were 18 years old.

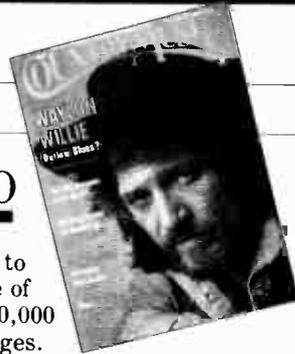
One court battle was finally settled. That was the one between Ray Stevens and Webb Pierce. Webb was allowed to build a tour bus ramp next to Ray's property. So, Ray promptly put his house up for sale. Ronnie Milsap didn't have any problems with the ramp and bought the house from Ray. At the time Ronnie said, "I bought the house sight unseen." He also told Webb to sell as many albums and tapes at his famous swimming pool as he wanted to. "If anybody asks," said Ronnie, "I'll just say I never saw a thing."

A face to watch in country music ten years ago was Mel McDaniel, who was just making the charts with "Have a Dream On Me," "Thank God She Isn't Mine," and "The Grandest Lady of Them All." About his music Mel simply said, "I'm just country." Does this man sound familiar?

Our Rising Star award ten years ago went to Crystal Gayle, whose style of country was just about to cross over onto the pop charts. Crystal didn't have any trouble with that. She said, "I would love to have a crossover—it means more sales, and I don't think any entertainer could say they didn't want one." She also opined, "I think country music really is changing... it's broadening and opening its doors to a whole lot more people." Spoken ten years ago, it could've been said yesterday.

Other stars on the move were Dolly Parton, who put together a new band called Gypsy Fever; Helen Cornelius, who joined the Jim Ed Brown show; and Webb Pierce, who joined up with Carol Channing for a new duet album.

And that was ten years ago in *Country Music*. —R.F.



People



WATCH THE BOGEY

Remember *Country Music's* resident star-catcher, Leonard Mendelson? He's the one in our organization who gets to do all the fun jobs. His most recent assignment was attending the Academy of Country Music's Celebrity Golf Classic in California. Leonard, pictured at left with Red Steagall, Glen Campbell and Don Williams (no, not the Gentle Giant—this one's Andy Williams' brother and Ray Stevens' manager), went on to play ball with the biggies. Leonard wouldn't tell us his golf score, but he was voted group champion for looking for lost golf balls.

BIG JOHN MOVES

We told you about Johnny Cash's big move last issue. After 30 years with CBS Records, he signed up with Polygram. Thinking about it, I feel it's one of your sadder divorces in Music City. What makes it sad to me is that daughter Rosanne Cash and sons-in-law Marty Stuart and Rodney Crowell remain with the CBS folks... sorta a family affair, I thought, until the good-byes were said. Mama always says, "Everything works out for the best"—whatever the hell that means.

ORLEANS FOLLOWING EXILE'S LEAD?

I've met John Hall. He's a nice guy. Must be pretty talented, too. He has two songs on Ricky Skaggs' present album and has lucked up on several cuts on other records, singles by The Oaks and Steve Wariner, to name a couple. Along with his wife, Johanna, John pens most of the Orleans material. With Larry and Lance Hoppin also resurfacing in Music City after a splash in rock 'n' roll, the trio have a new deal on MCA Records with an album titled *Grown Up Children*. One album cover from their previous era shows the guys from the waist up, apparently without any clothes—'course that was the "thing" during the 1970's. But study their current title! Hopefully it is true! There's rumors of Hall drinking for days and being crazy for weeks in days gone by, of the band hating each other and fighting amongst themselves, and more. One of the Hoppin boys was only 18 when he joined the gang. Therefore, *Grown Up Children* may be a self-explanatory title and

justly so.

In the meantime, the other band that laid their rock 'n' roll chops to rest and are climbing the country charts with every J.P. Pennington/Sonny LeMaire-written song that comes out is Exile. Hey, I ain't knocking them boys either; nor am I knocking their songs. Exile has yet to sing a song that deserved trashing. No wonder they took country wings and flew. How could J.P. be anything but country when his mama Lilly May Ledford played banjo for The Coon Creek Gals!!

THE WORLD TURNS OUT FOR THE HARLAN HOWARD BIRTHDAY BASH ...AID FOR NEA AND NSAI

There's jealousies, hatred, covetousness, greed, and all the adjectives that accompany any business... on Music Row. Nevertheless, the good outweighs the bad by a thousand percent. Most of the time, bad ain't even in the running. Case in point, Harlan Howard's party... 3,000 folks turned out to see 25 hillbilly songwriters sing their songs. Some are stars, some aren't... in Nashville it don't make no difference. You're only as great as your last record, whether you sing 'em or write 'em. Remember "The Key's in the Mail Box"? Emmylou Harris showed up and dueted with Harlan on that evergreen. The new boys on a big label, Kieran Kane and Jamie O'Hara, performed their CBS single, "Oh, Darling." Kane and O'Hara call themselves The O'Kanes. Talking about joining hands when there is trouble, you can bank on songwriters and music folks to do just that. Paul Davis, super songwriter and current duo partner with Marie Osmond on "You're Still New To Me" on Capitol Records, made

his first appearance following some idiot poking a gun in his side in front of the Hall of Fame Motor Inn on Division Street... the guy shot Paul, but, thank God, Paul has recuperated and was able to perform at the bash. The crowd welcomed him with a standing ovation. Ain't that just like Music Row. Thom Schuyler and cohorts Paul Overstreet and Fred Knobloch also sang their single on MTM Records, "Years After You."

Harlan, who was born in 1927 but for years claimed it was 1929—making him two years younger—gave his birthday away again this year. Last year he gave it to Frances Preston, and she now heads up BMI around the world. This year he gave his birthday to Bill Monroe. Who knows, by next year this time Monroe may be president or something! I recall the first time Bill Monroe ever visited Harlan's home. It was the big house on the hill that burned to the ground, and it was a birthday party for Harlan. I've never seen Harlan as thrilled as he was to have Bill in his home.

Back to the subject at hand, the party! Frances Preston presented Monroe with a cake shaped like a mandolin (what else), and the crowd sang "Happy Birthday" to the 75-year-old mentor. Monroe then entertained the crowd with some self-penned perennials.

Bluegrass Mac Wiseman, who sings like a songbird, thrilled the crowd with his songs, and newcomer Judy Rodman sang "She Thinks That She'll Marry" from her MTM album. Last year's birthday cohost Rosanne Cash performed her multi-selling "Seven Year Ache" and brought on surprise guest Vince Gill... the RCA star-getter. John Prine sang his monster "Paradise," and Bobby Bare crooned the everfavored "The Streets of Baltimore."

Harlan doesn't beat around the bush when it comes to getting folks to cohost this most talked about event in town. He goes for the biggies. As I mentioned, last year's cohost was Rosanne Cash and her cute hubby Rodney Crowell. This year's cohosts were Even Stevens and Eddie Rabbitt. Eddie sang and sang all the wonderful songs that he and Even cowrote, to the delight of the crowd. Between rebel yells and sweat and tears, the fretting and boozing, came song after song, each outdoing the last as the stream of songwriters continued to flow.

What a wonderful way to spend an evening in Nashville. Remember, it's every September in the parking lot of BMI right on Music Row. ■

From far-off California come two charmers in tight pants who sew their own clothes and sing a mean harmony line. Sisters Janis and Kristine are cutting quite a swath with their blend of country basics and West Coast modern sounds.

Janis Gill and Kristine Arnold SWEETHEARTS OF THE RODEO

by Michael Bane



*I wish they all could be California...
Wish they all could be California...
Wish they all could be California Girls.*
—THE BEACH BOYS

It's a hallowed tradition, old as rock 'n' roll and country as the hills. Somewhere west of the Mississippi River, so far away that the sun doesn't even make it there for hours and the Grand Ole Opry is only a fog-shrouded myth, is the land of Southern California. Legend has it that the natives—friendly natives, we hear—play music there; the music they play is the music of America, but filtered through different ears.

Case in point: The music of John Fogerty and Creedence Clearwater

Revival redefined the old Memphis mix of country and rock in the late 1960's, updating the roots for a whole new generation of rockers. The Eagles, aside from being one of the most successful rock groups in history, redefined country music as well. These were all California artists.

Think of California as a platform, sort of an on-ground space platform, where an artist can look across America and lift a little of this, a little of that, and stir it into a unique mix.

Besides, where else but California can a duo get their music from the radio, their name and their outfits from an album cover and their start in a shopping mall?

"We were a pretty good attraction,

but we weren't *the* attraction," says Janis Gill, who, along with her sister Kristine Arnold, comprise Sweethearts of the Rodeo. The big attraction at the Torrance, California, shopping mall was the pizza. "And we went from the mall to the Pizza Palace. It was at the Pizza Palace where we really, as time went by, acquired a huge following. So huge, in fact, that they asked us to move. Don't play here anymore—people aren't buying pizza."

Is all this making sense yet?

Okay, just the facts, ma'am. On the strength of two singles, the old Everly Brothers' "Hey, Doll Baby" and "Since I Found You," and their debut album, *Sweethearts of the Rodeo*, Janis Oliver Gill and Kristine Oliver Arnold have found themselves part of the cutting edge of country music these days. Their music is rollicking rockabilly with a distinct western flavor, more of a swing beat than the Memphis growl and strongly influenced by the West Coast sounds of Emmylou Harris and Gram Parsons. With their punk stylings and galvanizing stage show, the two sisters join singers like Randy Travis and Dwight Yoakam in the new wave of artists redefining country music—or maybe defining it in older, broader terms.

The story begins in Manhattan Beach, California, before Manhattan Beach was the dreadfully trendy place it is today.

"It was just a quiet little beach town then," says Kristine Arnold, "and it was a good place to grow up."

"When we were just tiny little girls," says Janis Gill, "Mom used to sing us to sleep with 'The Tennessee Waltz.' Kristine has a low voice, and Mom had that same low voice. I remember her singing 'The Tennessee Waltz.'"

The Oliver Sisters didn't waste any time heading for the limelight. Their first gig was in front of their church, Janis nine years old, Kristine seven. They sang the old gospel "Trust and Obey," and everyone applauded.

"We looked at each other and said, 'Boy, this is kind of fun, isn't it?'" says Kristine.

The music that came over the radio was rock 'n' roll, the Beatles and the Bee Gees and boogie blues on records brought home by older brothers. In the early 1970's, though, the teenaged Oliver sisters came across an album by Gram Parsons and the Byrds called *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. The music was great, but what really caught their attention was the cover illustration. There, in all her fringed finery, was a cowgirl. She had on a western dress, fringed boots and a cowboy hat, and Kristine and Janis were smitten. Among the California surfers and leftover 1960's

hippies, two cowgirls blossomed.

"We didn't start suddenly dressing like that," says Janis, "but we began moving along those lines. We've always had this funny little drive to *look* different and *be* different. When all our friends were being into total rock 'n' roll, we were kind of the outcasts. But I always felt they sort of respected that, too."

With the clothing came the music, part of the California country rock underground. From her earliest years, Janis had been attracted to folk music and bluegrass, picking guitar and singing harmony to Kristine's powerful lead. When the first Sweethearts of the Rodeo geared up for the shopping mall circuit, folk and bluegrass had been mixed with Linda Ronstadt, the Byrds, Tracy Nelson and a bit of Commander Cody cosmic country.

"In the first Sweethearts band, our bass player was quite a few years older than we were—he was 21, we were around 15," Janis says. "He had all these great records, Bob Wills and Hank Williams. We started absorbing that music right along with the Beatles."

From the Pizza Palace, the girls found themselves on the verge of the Big Time. They played showcase gigs at such high speed places as the Roxy and the Troubadour. Emmylou Harris saw the girls win a talent contest and eventually invited them onstage at the Roxy to sing a song. It was all just within reach, only to be wiped out, strangely enough, by a fad.

"The urban cowboy thing rolled through and just kind of ruined it, really," says Janis. "Everybody ran out and bought their hats and their boots and their jeans with the little things on the pockets. We can't stand things that are fads, so we just stopped doing it. We were tired at that point, anyway. We were just tired of pursuing it and getting nowhere. So we just took some time off and got married and had our babies. We always intended to get back together, but our energies were worn out."

That's the end of part one, Sweethearts of the Rodeo Version One. The interlude is all about love and marriage and coming to grips with the "real" world, such as it is. Janis met, and eventually married, singer-songwriter Vince Gill. Gill was a member of the successful group Pure Prairie League ("Amy," remember?) at a time when the Sweethearts and PPL shared a double bill. Janis also met a guitarist named John Arnold, whom she introduced to her sister Kristine.

"I went down to where he was playing and met him," Kristine remembers, "and *boink!*"

About three years ago Janis moved to Nashville with husband Vince, who had captured a deal with RCA.

"He needed to be in town, close to his record company," she says, "and I came with him with the idea of scoping things out. Me and Kristine always intended to give it one more wholehearted try."

Vince's connections were good enough to convince Janis that the time was right for the reactivation of the Sweethearts.

"Just a few months after I moved here," she continues, "I called Kristine and said, 'Boy, if we're going to do it, this is where we're going to do it!'"

Kristine, for her part, was more than ready.



"We've always had this funny little drive to look different and be different."

"Janis was calling me and telling me all the things that were going on in Nashville, and I was green with envy," Kristine says. "I just thought, what in the world am I doing here?"

It was not the best of times. Arnold was working for Mattel Electronics and Kristine was working in a fabric store.

"I felt like I was wasting my life away," she says. "I knew we had to give it one more shot. I figured that if I gave it one more shot, win or lose, I would at least grow old knowing that I tried."

Kristine joined Janis in Nashville, and the newest version of the Sweethearts came out of the chute bucking hard. One of the first things they did was win the Wrangler Country Showdown competition in November 1985, grabbing the \$50,000 grand prize and a Dodge van. They also very quickly became an overnight sensation in Music City, where the Sweethearts' music quickly drew heavy praise and record company attention.

"It's definitely a distinctive sound," says Janis. "How would you describe it? Definitely a lot of rockabilly to it. You won't find a lot of violins or anything on it. It's real live, very live and very high energy. That's very important to us. Real rhythmic and very high energy. You can hear the Bob Dylan influences vocally, and you can hear the Everly Brothers, who were another big influence. We just kind of update those things a tad, and that's what I'd say our music is."

They still sew their own performing clothes, and their hairstyles are the talk of Nashville. Janis is still a ball of energy, and Kristine still likes to sleep late.

"I get off the road, I'm happy to have done just one thing," Kristine says. "Janis has redone her whole kitchen, sewn, picked out wallpaper, painted walls, made an outfit for herself, made curtains, who knows what else. If I tried to keep up with this woman, I'd be a wreck."

Mostly what they do off the road is sew a lot.

"Since high school, we've been making our own clothes," Kristine says, "and it's kind of grown along with the music. There have been times when we seriously considered going in that direction instead of singing. Sometimes I've wondered which was more important to me, singing or sewing. It becomes a passion."

The girls have also taken up knitting—"It doesn't jive with the image," says Kristine, laughing.

"People laugh at us all the time," Janis adds. "The band, sometimes I think the band hates us. Either we're whispering about them, or we're sitting there clicking our knitting needles." ■

Catching Up With Ole Willie

It's been some time since Country Music's had a story on The Red Headed Stranger, so when Patrick Carr met up with Willie after a concert, he seized the opportunity. He reports on what the ole boy is up to these days, and how his latest movie almost didn't happen.

by Patrick Carr

It's always nice to have a little chat with Willie. The man may be mellow, and these days there may not be any personal explosions of his present or recent past to investigate, but he's never dull. Usually he's funny and honest in a crafty kind of way, down to earth and only ever so slightly slippery. Willie doesn't have one of those special-for-publication raps he can turn on and off whenever a reporter penetrates his environs, and he's not secretive; he's just sort of sharp, light on his feet, and it's part of his personality to enjoy a good game of thrust and parry and evasion and wit. Basically, he has the writer's instinct to edit or embellish himself in conversation: he likes to be succinct, and he loves to put a little spin on things.

Willie's always been that way; was before his wonderful one-in-fifty-million hippie/outlaw/redneck/party-host/groovy-guru image secured his living, secular sainthood in the old and new country circles of the 1970s, still is now that he's acquired exclusive blessing rights to a worldwide fan mass just as loyal and almost as large and certainly as diverse as those which commune in the grace of Saints Springsteen and Jackson.

In other words, Willie's circumstances have changed in the last ten years—changed a *lot*—but he hasn't. Sure, he plays an awful lot more golf than anyone could ever have dreamed he would, and his output of new songs has shrunk to the dribble anyone with half a brain figured it very probably would

once the gravy train really started rolling, and the mantles of corporate sponsorship and national-affairs involvement have settled about his shoulders as comfortably as both cynics and optimists expected they might, but otherwise ol' Smilin' Willie just keeps smilin' along his own sweet path at his own serene speed, being the good-guy concerned-but-comfortable gypsy con man his life has taught him to be and loving every minute of it.

His story, and his achievements, are of course well known at this point in media time, so there's no percentage in re-hashing it all in any detail here. Suffice it to say that he saved country music from its suburban self in the 1970s, got the kids and cranks and dopers and Yankees interested like they'd never been before, and then slowly evolved into the globetrotting, movie-starring mellow minstrel he is today, meanwhile acquiring an image somewhere in the schizophrenic spaces between Mahatma Ghandi, Pancho Villa, Andy Williams, and the very slickest of your friendly local pool sharks: Willie your brother in peace and music, vaguely heavy. A lovely, crafty, interesting man.

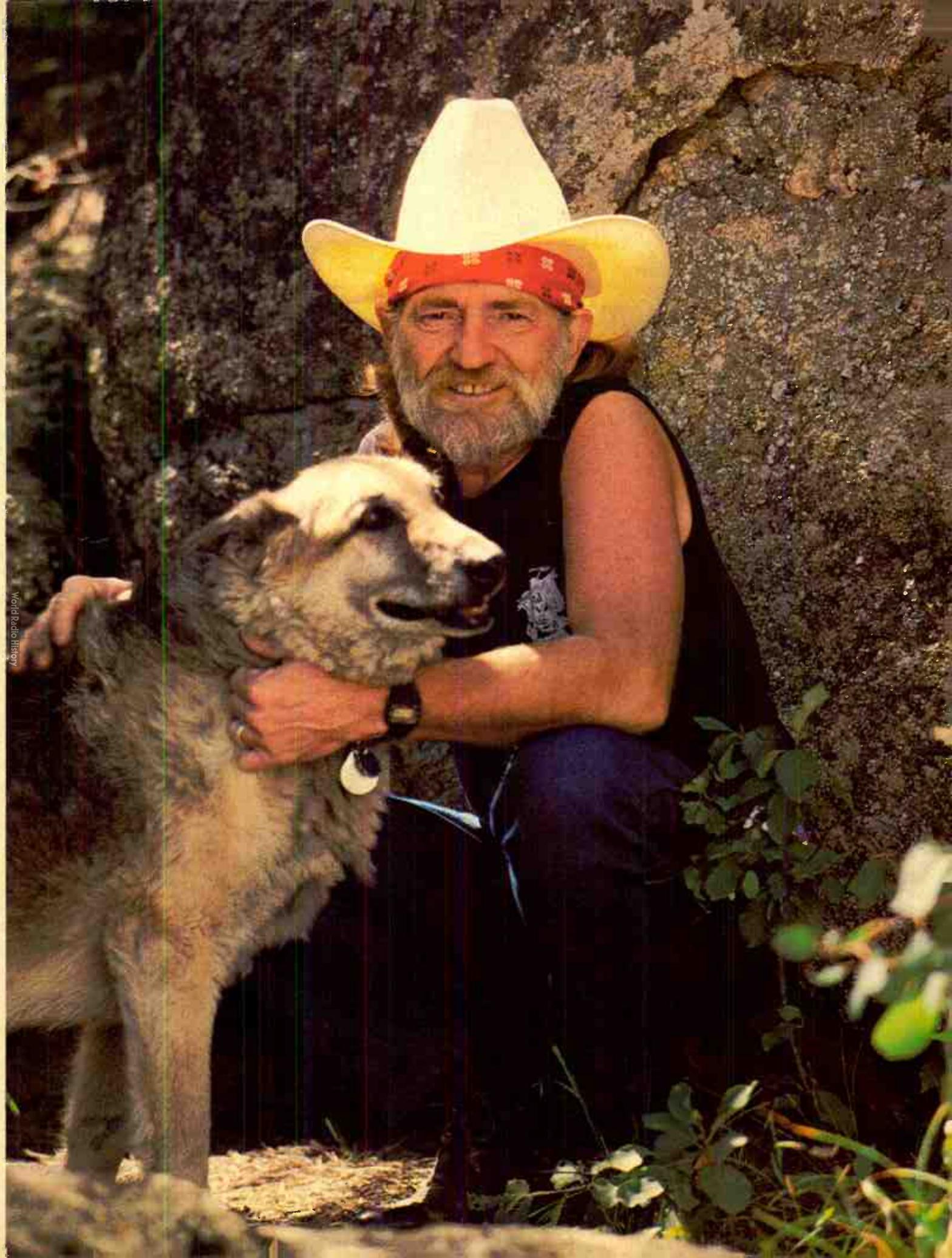
Willie and I haven't encountered each other in five or six years, maybe even seven, but when I walk up to his bus in Florida and hand my card to the hairy feller in the tee-shirt who answers the door and summons the man himself, it's the same

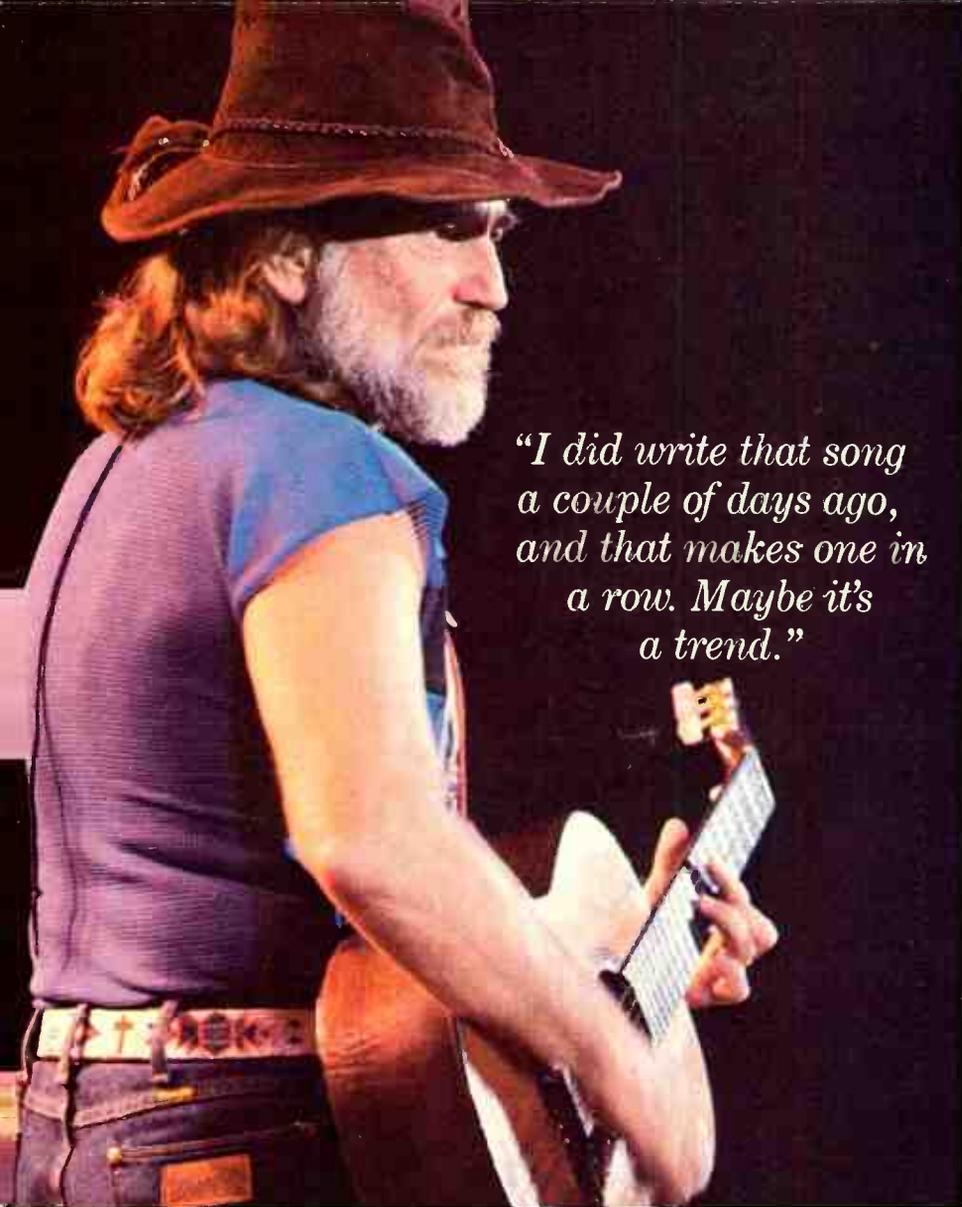
as it ever was; we could have been golfing just yesterday, excepting that I don't golf.

The road digs are great. This is Willie's personal bus, *Honeysuckle Rose*, the pride of the five-bus fleet, and it's done up in the style of the most discreet, respectable Mexican whorehouse you ever saw; the textured gray leather lining the roof and upper parts of the walls is especially nice, sort of like the insides of a very rich, satisfied, and substantial megasnake.

Willie's in his informal state (his hair's not braided), and he's working; going over pictures of himself and sister Bobbie standing outside a country church. The church is the same one they sang in together when they were kids in Abbott, Texas, and the job at hand is how best to fit both church and brother and sister onto the cover of their new joint gospel album, a Christmas mail-order special. The man in the tee-shirt, David Anderson, is in charge of implementing decisions arrived at in the process; he's Willie's right-hand man on the spot, and like most of Willie's crew his appearance suggests that his employment by the well-known entertainer and philanthropist might just be saving him from a life of overt crime.

The fact that these two scruffs, one filthy rich and the other merely very well paid, are hard at work on a *gospel* album could seem strange if you let it, but really, little contradictions like that are unremarkable in Willie World these days; we've all gotten used to them. I





"I did write that song a couple of days ago, and that makes one in a row. Maybe it's a trend."

mean, here's a man who digs Webb Pierce and Julio Iglesias and Kris Kristofferson and Frank Zappa with equal pleasure; why *not* sit around in a mobile bordello, right next to the radio phone and the computer golf game, figuring out a good, conventional, straight-down-the-main-beam gospel album cover in a spirit of perfectly serious sincerity? That's the kind of thing a lot of people, myself included, love Willie for: his bold, calm strokes of complex real-life color splashed in there among the blacks and whites of convention.

The gospel project attended to and little personal curiosities satisfied, we activate the recording unit and turn to another matter a lot of people love Willie for: his crusade on behalf of the nation's family farmers focused in his leadership of the FarmAid project.

FarmAid is going well. Benefit concerts numbers One and Two have so far rendered some fourteen million dollars, and the recent Farming Rights Congress has brought a lot of disparate and often quarrelling factions together

behind some specific recommendations for a new Farm Bill, and as we speak (late in 1986) the recent elections have returned a healthy number of new or newly pro-farm senators to Washington.

This is all very good, and Willie is pleased. He has worked and is working hard on the cause; it is he who signs every FarmAid check personally, and it is his personal organization which identifies appropriate recipients, distributes the funds, and does everything else a non-partisan charity has to do—including watching everyone's tail for things like political endorsements guaranteed to bring the Feds down on them like ten tons of paper pulp.

We talk a lot of detail about this stuff, and Willie comes across pretty sharp as usual, but since this isn't *Progressive Farmer Magazine* I'll spare you the ins and outs of it all. The point is that Willie really is active on this front (he's not just a figurehead, it ain't no publicity stunt), and *his* main point is simple: American farmers must get a fair price for their product; everything else follows from that. In the meantime he'll do what he

can to help farmers in trouble, and help them make as much noise as possible. "The wheel that does the squeakin' gets the grease," he quips quite rightly.

There remains the question of why, when it comes right down to it, he is involved in the farmers' cause. Well, to cut a long story short, it began as something which just seemed like a good idea at the right time in the right place—the first FarmAid benefit in Champaign, Illinois—and mushroomed out from there. But then there must have been some basic receptivity to the idea on Willie's part to begin with. There was.

"I wasn't a farm kid, but I did grow up in a farm town," he says. "I made my money to send myself to school by working the farms. Picked cotton, pulled corn, baled hay, worked in the cotton gin and the corn silos, was a Future Farmer. I still have livestock, still have horses and cattle, and I'd still be losing money if I depended on farming and ranching to make a living. Nowadays, see, people have farms and ranches as a tax write-off, 'cause it's almost a given that they're not going to make any money out of them. And that's crazy."

We start talking about the new tax laws and what they'll do to such ventures—basically, it's bye, bye, the good ol' profit-gobbling Black Angus herd, farewell to yet another bizarre modern-American institution—but then, thankfully, we get reminded of music by the hearty arrival of Jody Payne, one of Willie's two travelling guitar players—the other's the mature and legendary Grady Martin. Jody's blown in from Austin after a few days off the road, and he's dying for a little picking.

We quit talking. Jody picks up a guitar and sings Willie a love song he's been trying to get right for years. It's pretty nice. Then he gives Willie the guitar, and Willie sings one he put together from scratch just the other night.

It's nicer. He still has the touch.

So really, how *is* Willie's Muse? I mean, there are plenty of Willie Nelson albums—seems like there's a new one—or *two*—every time you stop by the record store to see what new old fashion the teenagers have glommed onto this week—but Willie Nelson *songs* are getting to be a seriously endangered species. Though maybe not; the vinyl output is so staggering that it's kinda hard to get a bearing on the question.

But Willie knows. "Well, I did write that song a couple of days ago," he laughs, "and that makes one in a row. Maybe it's a trend."

"I dunno. I guess probably I'd like to do more of it. I think it's really just a

matter of giving myself time to do it; I always seem to write when I get still somewhere for long enough. But I have a tendency to keep myself going so much that I don't give myself that time. I don't know if that's intentional, or what—but that's what happens.”

Yeah, say I. Generally, you find that people who were born to write will fill their lives with anything—*anything*—which prevents them from doing so. And then the only question is, how well they can handle the guilt such stratagems cost them.

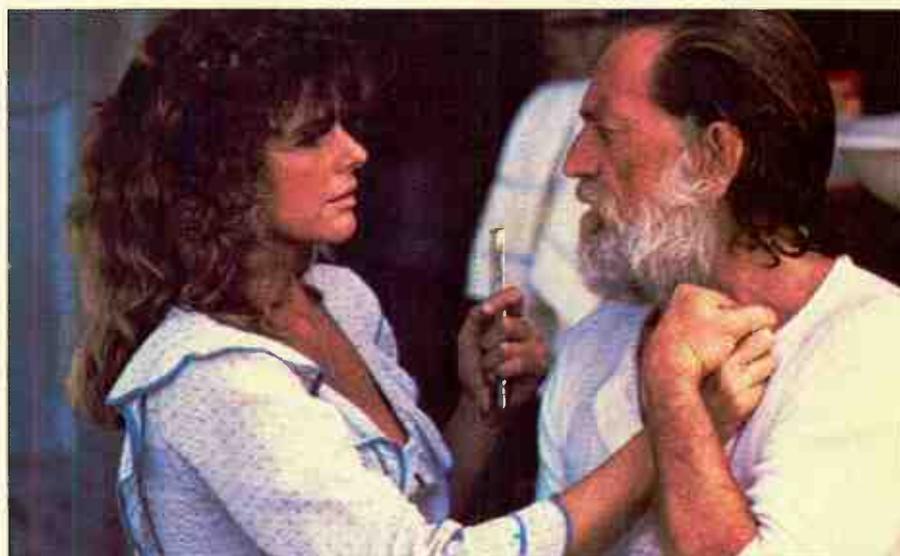
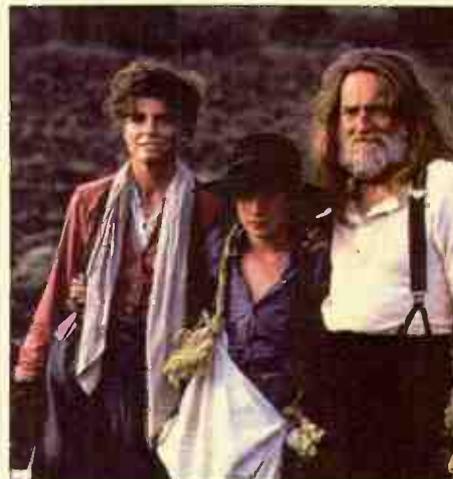
“Right,” laughs Willie. “How long can you go without giving in? That’s me.”

He’s lucky, though. He has plenty of stuff to keep him away from his guitar and notebook. Two hundred-plus road days a year, for instance.

“I’ve been working a lot,” he says. “Probably too much, really. I could probably take off all next year without worrying about it too much. Still, though, after I’m off a few days, I get restless. This time last year I was saying what I just said, and I *still* wound up working over two hundred days.”

He loves the roaming life, is what it is; being in that bus, away from whatever stays in one place and bothers him. When he gets off the bus, he heads for whichever of his homes is closest—Colorado, Maui, or the main enclave outside Austin where Connie and the girls live and the private golf course beckons—until the wanderlust strikes and off he goes again. He does it even though the road is far from being his major bread-winner. “By the time you pay for five buses, thirty people, thirty hotel rooms, and all that stuff, it’s hard to make money on the road no matter *who* you are,” he says. “I make my money from my songs and my record sales; there have been quite a few years when I’ve had to dip into my songwriting money to finance the road tours.”

Then of course there’s his movie career, which right now centers around *The Red Headed Stranger*, apple of his eye and the jewel in his crown. As we speak it is headed for release after many, many trials and tribulations but a final conclusion of breathtaking rightness. It was wrapped up one day under schedule, and \$100,000 under its amazingly low budget of two million dollars, and furthermore all the investors—Willie’s friends, ranging all the way from Coach Darrell Royal to writer Bud Shrake to Frank Tyson of supermarket chicken fame—got every penny of their money back, and then some, out of the distribution deal with Alive Enterprises, an empire built by the very savvy Mr. Shep Gordon on proceeds from his management of the immortal Alice Cooper. In other words, they were in the gravy before the first paying



Co-starring with Willie in the movie are Morgan Fairchild and Katharine Ross; two women who capture *The Red Headed Stranger*'s heart.

customer walked in a movie theater door. The only one still sweating before release was Shep, and he wasn't sweating that hard.

Willie is proud of *The Red Headed Stranger*, and happy about it. “It came out like I first saw it in my mind, only better,” he says. “The actors really added to it; they were *great*. They were wonderful to work with, and we really enjoyed doing it. I mean, raising the money was a giant hassle, and it took forever—we had three or four false starts, you know, days when we had to send actors home—but we made it. It got pretty bad at times, even after we got started. The first week of shooting we had a falling-out with one of our finance people, so there we were with the money gone and the cameras rolling and me writing about \$300,000 worth of hot checks, but then word got back to this wealthy girl in Boston, Caroline Mugar—she was a real fan, she'd been coming to the shows for years—and she came down with a check for half a million dollars and said, ‘Finish your movie.’”

Caroline saved *The Red Headed Stranger* and has since become a moving force in the FarmAid project, and everybody is living happily ever after.

Next up in the movie biz, Willie figures, is either an as-yet-unformed film about American Indians or another *Barbarossa* flick, this one dealing with the bandit's early life as a Texas Ranger. Willie has a particular affection for *Barbarossa*, in part because the ol' feller gets to ride horses a lot—and therefore, of course, so does Willie. So maybe he'll finance the project himself again, and maybe he'll get to zip around the mesas on “the best little horse in the whole world” again. And like zipping around the country in his mobile bordello, that “ain't like work at all.”

Interviewing can get to be, though, so we hang it up for a while again, and Willie teaches me how to play the computer golf game which fills his road life with joy and frustration—as in real golf, sometimes he's “pretty good” and other times he's “just terrible.” Just a touch of it is enough to convince me forever that

the stuff is more addictive than Twinkies. Better stay the hell away from it.

As we play, we chat idly about this and that, and then the subject of Willie's appearance as a retired Texas Ranger on *Miami Vice* comes up. All I really want to know about it is the answer to the burning question of the late Twentieth Century: *Does Don Johnson sweat?*

"No, he doesn't," says Willie. "Not at all." His voice becomes appropriately reverent now as he adds, "And yes, he's a beautiful person. We actually touched, spoke, and spent time together. Quality time. Some of it even in his mobile unit."

Well, that does it, doesn't it? In 1986, quite apart from every other accomplishment and accolade—getting voted Man of the Year by the United Jewish Appeal, for instance—our little man from Abbott, Texas, had a whole *Miami Vice* episode written around him and got to glow live-and-in-person with the Don. Nothing else matters now. He is There; he has Arrived. He has earned the right to Golf in Peace.

Which right he is exercising, after a fashion. As another audience begins to filter into the hall behind his bus and little groups of oglers gather around his all-steel gypsy caravan, Willie's little electronic ball describes graceful and impressively lofty parabolas through the computer-generated graphic sky. He's playing well today.

Activity is mounting, and it's getting hard to concentrate on the job at hand. Members of the band and crew keep popping in and out for decisions or chit-chat, spreading good cheer around the place. One of them shares the message of his favorite bumper sticker with Willie—*S--t Happens*—and Willie cracks up, then remembers that that very bumper sticker used to adorn this very bus. Does it still? Nobody knows, and I forget to look. Another functionary reminisces about little difficulties at the Canadian border, which leads me to ask Willie if there are any countries he's not allowed into these days. No, he says, none—though there are a few where it would have to be just him and his guitar; seems that some of the crew aren't quite so unblemished in the legal department. Then Sister Bobbie arrives in the nick of time, a slightly flustered but still very matronly, down-home-correct gypsy lady. Then Gina, a young thing whose home base is Manhattan's ultra-exclusive Park Avenue, arrives more calmly, changes into a skintight black leather outfit, and sits quietly and adoringly as the fun rolls on around her. During a lull she pulls out a large notebook and commences writing with great intensity. "Songs?" I ask on one of

those think-I've-been-*here*-before hunches. Her eyes glow. "Always," she says.

But time's wasting, so on goes the tape recorder and up come some fast essential questions.

The fabled jogging, for instance. Once upon a time the notion of Willie Nelson out there pounding the pavements seemed about as likely as the Pope out there spearfishing for barracuda, but yes, we got used to it. Willie's not jogging right now, though. When he broke his thumb last year he also hurt

“It's hard to make money on the road no matter who you are.”

his back—which he didn't know about for a while because the pain pills were so wonderful—so jogging is out. He'll get back to it, though. "It's addictive, you know," he says. "It can really get to feel good, out there running around like a deer."

And the other hobbies? Well, there's the golf of course, and there's the horsemanship he loves so much. Any shooting these days? I ask, mainly because I've become such a gun freak myself lately. Nah, not any more, says Willie, and that pleases the horses. "Of course, you can always put cotton wool in their ears, but then they can't hear *you*, either." He sighs. "It's just one big problem after another we cowboys run into, you know."

Moving right along, I'm wondering about corporate sponsorship. Willie of course is signed up with the Wrangler clothing company, which helps promote his shows and pays him an annual fee in exchange for the loan of his image. Specifically, I'm wondering how comfortable such a publicly vulnerable concern feels about certain well-known components of the Nelson lifestyle.

"Well, they're great people," says the man. "They're a lot of fun. We had a party a while back at one of their people's houses, and a couple of us got pretty friendly around a bottle of Cuervo Gold. We came to a mental agreement somewhere along the line. But no, they didn't ask me about any of my other habits. I'm sure they knew what they were before we even started talking about the deal." Willie adds that these days he's not drinking like he used

to, by the way. Right now he's just sipping beer; the traditional Jack Daniels bottle is absent from the crook of his arm.

A couple more questions. First, the book. At long last, after years of invitations and many, many memos and lunches, the publishing industry has finally persuaded our man to construct an autobiography. As we speak, the deal is not finalized, but the terms have been agreed upon. Simon & Schuster has offered Mr. Nelson and his golf-buddy ghostwriter Mr. Bud Shrake 1.25 million dollars for said work. "That got my attention," says Willie.

It's not likely to hurt too bad, Willie figures. Bud can roll tape as they ride the links together, and it will all be about as hard as falling off a log backwards. As to the nature of the final work, well...as the autobiographer puts it, "I'm gonna tell as little as I can get by with. You think I'm gonna go out there and tell everything I know about everybody I know—like you, for instance? There ain't enough money to get either one of us out of jail."

I venture the thought that Simon & Schuster's definition of "as little as I can get by with" might be a tad broader than Willie's, and appraise him of the reputation of Michael Korda, the brilliant Hun who runs the show up there and makes a tidy penny on the side by writing books with titles like *Winning Through Intimidation*. This doesn't faze Willie one bit. "*Winning Through Intimidation*, eh?" he muses. "I sorta like the sound of that; he sounds like he might be okay."

Which leaves us, somehow or other, with The Big One. God, the afterlife, the world of the spirit. Where these days does Willie stand on this ultimate turf?

"About the same as ever," he says. "I personally believe in reincarnation. I don't have any awareness of any other incarnation, though, and I'm really not that interested or concerned about what I was or what I'll be next time. I'm too busy working on this one, trying to figure this one out. All I really know is that I'm right here; that's all I'm sure of. Me and Patrick Carr are right here on this bus, and I'm sure of that—almost."

And since we are after all talking to our guru here and the crowd in the hall is growing impatient, we just have to wrap this up with any thoughts he might have about the condition of the human race, the progress of man. How about it, Dr. Nelson?

"Well," quoth he, "mankind is plodding along. Grazing occasionally and running for cover now and again, but mainly just plodding along. Moves when it has to; just follows the good grazing, like the rest of the herds."

Thanks, Willie. ■

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across the street from Earle.

Now a songwriter's draw of \$150 per week goes a little further in Mexico than in America—Earle enjoyed the services of a maid and yardman, for example—so he spent the next couple of years laying out, returning to Nashville only periodically to pick up his paychecks, and, yes, getting bitter about his state of affairs. Or as he describes it today, "I got my masters degree in tequila and sorta cooled out until it was time to come back."

He did so when the publishing contract finally expired, stopping first in Texas for about three months to decompress and re-Americanize himself. After kicking around Nashville for a while more relearning the ropes there, he sort of stumbled into a fledgling career as a would-be rockabilly singer, fronting a simple trio, in 1982.

"Folksingers are all amateur musicologists, and I got into rockabilly backwards," he admits. "It was sort of the way I got into Kerouac. I got into Kerouac from reading *Electric Koolaid Acid Test*. With rockabilly I heard the Creedence Clearwater covers and the Beatles covers of Carl Perkins songs, and then sought out the original records. I mean, I was born in 1955."

If my memory of that era does him justice, that phase of his career could best be described as promising, but ultimately limited, and smacking too much of bandwagon-hopping in the Stray Cats era. (Earle was hip, not hep, and that's a crucial distinction for rockabillys.) There was a well-received independent album out of that era on his own label, and then a couple of singles for CBS. He cut enough additional sides for an album for CBS, but it was a patchwork effort that the company chose not to release. (Steve worries, and not entirely in jest, that if he becomes much more successful, it will be released now under the title *Early Earle*.) Live shows were rather static. Earle, meanwhile, was getting the songwriter's itch back in a big way, and rockabilly wasn't giving him room to scratch.

"I think that what I was doing sort of limited me as a writer. It wasn't that anybody was forcing me to do it; I was really sucked into it too. I'd never had a record deal, nobody had ever really taken me seriously before that. So I got real hardcore about it," he says. "I guess I was naive enough to think at the time that rockabilly was what I was gonna be doing the rest of my life. But as it wore on, it became obvious there was no room for anything deeper, and I wanted to get back into writing songs that had a little more meat to them." He broke the trio up in 1984.

Though he downplays the situation today, it is probably safe to assume that Steve Earle was definitely at a most crucial crossroads by then. His first publishing deal had gone sour. His first record deal had gone sour: He was without a band or a label or even a style to call his own. But, as it turns out, he knew what he wanted to do.

"When I left CBS, I decided that if I was gonna make records, I was gonna write an album. You put it on the turntable, put the tone arm on, and you know a thread runs through it. In Nashville we're giving people two or three singles and then a lot of filler on an album, and then they're wondering why



Words are what this form of music has always been about."

we don't sell more albums. It's because people are so often disappointed when they do buy them. It was really important to me that it be an album project, because an artist like me is crippled without an album."

What he means is that he's not the kind of writer to sit down and crank out a single, so the typical Nashville deal, whereby a hit single earns new artists the right to try a whole album, would be counterproductive for him. *Guitar Town* confirms just that. While a cut like "Hillbilly Highway" did prove to have some strength as a single, it's much more impressive in context with the other songs.

The first two he wrote were "Guitar Town" and "Down the Road," which became the beginning and the end, the "bookends," of the new album. After those two semi-autobiographical efforts, his writing took a turn, focusing in on blue-collar issues and insecurities. "Good Ol' Boy (Gettin' Tough)" and "Someday," a pair of songs about dead-end country boys, were the first two to deal with "the kind of guys I'd see from the bus. They weren't me. I put myself into that character."

Though he felt all along that he'd finally hit his stride, even Earle was surprised by the way the album was ultimately greeted. It wasn't until he was out on his Hillbilly Highway tour in the spring that he had a chance to think

about it; he was getting a good hand from the hard-country audiences he faced on that brief tour, which was a relief, and he was especially proud of the reviews because, after all, those guys are writers, and praise from other writers is the highest form of all.

"But in the end it's just an Eighties hillbilly record, that's all in the world it is, so there's no point in making too big a deal out of it. I'm getting a lot of rock press and that helps a bit, but I've been assured that the creative base on this project is going to stay in Nashville. And as long as I can do that... it sure is nice that all these Yankees like my record," he chuckles.

"But if there has to be a name for this music, I prefer hillbilly, even if that's considered a derogatory word. There's been a lot of mediocre musicians called country music because they've been trying to make pop records, and they were trying to use a country base to get at pop radio, intentionally. It never worked—every time it ever happened it was an accident, and it *should* be an accident. So to me hillbilly is a better term because it hasn't been abused so much."

Meanwhile, his life is changing again. He has an actual fixed address just outside town, now, even if he's rarely there. He's learning discipline: fewer cigarettes, more workouts, regular trips to the chiropractor. His third marriage looks like the one to last. And it's time to start thinking about that followup album, which will concern itself more with the South and Southwest in general than with small towns specifically. But the songs will be based on the same philosophy as ever:

"The one strength in country music has always been lyrics. We started getting away from that in the last four-five years, and getting too close to what they do in L.A. when they're, you know, 'writing a track,' and words are sorta incidental, like decorations on a cake," Steve Earle explains. "Words are what this form of music has always been about. Not that there haven't been some lightweight country songs all along, because there have, but there's always been great stuff, and I think we're getting back to that."

And having made clear that you can count him in on any such movement, he excuses himself from the table. Later that night, he'll be playing his first concerts in Nashville in a couple years, one industry-only showcase set and one open to the general public, and there's a real buzz going around town about it. So the Hottest-New-Act-in-Country-Music needs to get over to the laundromat just now to wash a shirt, or he won't have anything clean to wear onstage. ■

35mm

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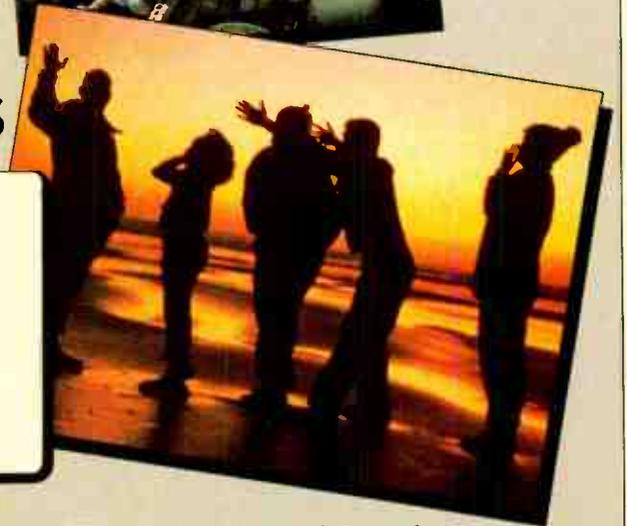
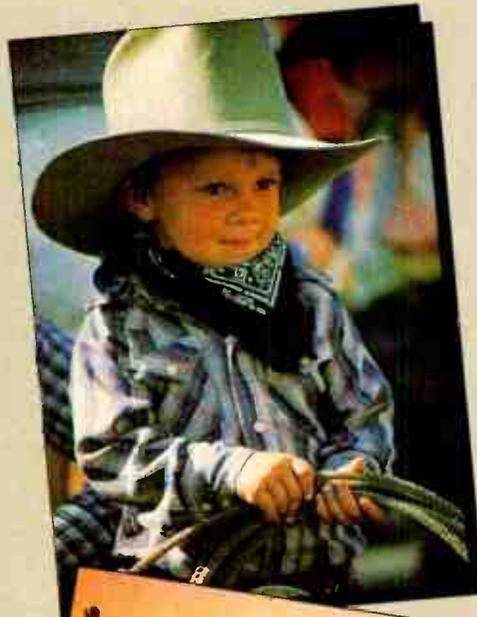
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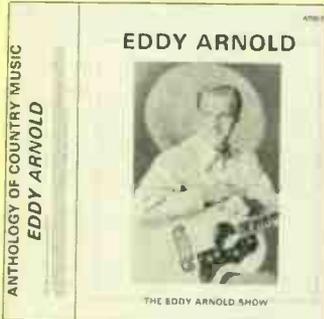
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FOR **CMSA** MEMBERS ONLY



Eddy Arnold Specials

This month's issue of the *CMSA Newsletter* features Eddy Arnold, one of the top-selling country artists of all time—see *Legends of Country Music* on page 34F. In honor of its subject, the *Legends* article runs extra long this time. Don't miss the fine historic photos of Eddy in the days when he was still sitting on bags of Purina chick feed.

Two albums of Arnold material are available at this time: *The Eddy Arnold Show* (ACM 9) and RCA International's *20 of the Best of Eddy Arnold* (NL 89316). To order, see page 34G.

Essential Collector Cassettes

Members are always asking us for more of their favorites. Rich Kienzle has come up with some answers in this month's *Essential Collector* on page 66, all on cassettes so you can listen as you roll. (49% of all CMSA members own/drive a pickup—and who says the family's Honda or Plymouth can't have a cassette player, too.)

Rich covers tapes by **Bob Wills, Johnny Cash, Bill Monroe, The Carter Family, Willie Nelson, Porter Wagoner, Kitty Wells with Johnny and Jack, Jim Reeves and Hank Snow.** Also included in this special offering are **Lynn Anderson, Chet Atkins, Bobby Bare, Skeeter Davis, Tom T. Hall, Johnny Horton, Waylon Jennings, Jim Nabors, Dolly Parton, Elvis Presley, Ray Price, Charley Pride, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, Dottie West, Don Williams and Hank Williams Jr.** For full details, see the "Buy Three

and Pick One Free!" ad on page 42-43.

CMSA member's price on these tapes is \$3.95 each, plus if you buy three, you may pick a fourth one free! To get this special discount, do not use order form on page 43. List cassettes you desire by title and number and follow ordering procedure stated below.

Bargain on Buried Treasures

As if good prices on cassettes are not enough, members may discount prices on all *Buried Treasures* albums on pages 66-67 in this issue by \$2.00. Regular price \$9.98 on the Louvin Brothers and other favorites becomes \$7.98 for members.

Top 25 is Hot

Members support the sounds of Reba McEntire, George Strait, Randy Travis and Dwight Yoakam with their votes, month after month, in the CMSA Poll. Don't forget that these hot current artists are available to you directly from us through the Top 25 on page 68 of this and every issue. No need to rush around town, and the 25% discount doesn't hurt either.

Here's How to Order

To order any album or cassette mentioned here, except Top 25, indicate choice of LP or cassette, add the special low member's rate of \$.95 postage and handling for each item ordered, and send check to *Country Music Society of America*, Dept. 0102M, Suite 2118, 342 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10173. Include membership number with your order: For Top 25, use order blank on page 68.

If You Are Not a Member: You may join and order from this page at the same time at member's prices. Just include a separate check for \$12 (one-year's dues, includes an additional year's subscription to *Country Music*) payable to Country Music Society of America and follow member's ordering procedure above.

MEMBERS POLL/JANUARY 1987

VOTE

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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records or tapes) in the last month?
 Yes No

How many records? _____ How many cassettes? _____

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

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

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

Singles (list 5 numbers)

Albums (list 5 numbers)

Do You Use These Products?

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Check which kinds:

Which brand?

- Cigarettes
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5. Check any of the following beverages used by you or anyone else in your family:

- Bourbon Vodka Brandy (Cognac)
 Scotch Gin Beer
 Blended Rye Tequila Wine
 Blended Canadian Rum Wine Coolers

6. Do you or anyone else in your family own a radar detector? Yes No

If not, do you plan to buy one? Yes No

7. Do you or anyone else in your family have a cassette player in a car or truck? Yes No

Do you plan to buy one? Yes No

Who Can Vote

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

If you are not a member, but want to join and vote immediately, fill out the poll, enclose your check for \$12 for one-year CMSA Membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too).

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

CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1987—HELEN BARNARD, EDITOR

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Radio and the Power of Woman

This *Newsletter* has two main themes. One is radio. The other is the power of woman. Listening to the radio is fun no matter who does it or when. If it's nighttime and it's dark, radio makes a world of its own. If it's during the day and work is being done, it makes an overlay or a ribbon of sound—a little pattern of talk or tones to help keep the beat of whatever it is you're doing going strong. And day or night, it's company when no one else is around.

What people hear on the radio is often a subject of discussion in the CMSA. Harold Swartz of Indiana chimes in with his view

Now for the power of woman. We all know her legendary power to inspire. But in this day and age, women also do their own thing, in every conceivable way, shape and form. Gifted with executive ability, women are also able to understand and to respond. They are great carers and great organizers—and originators—all rolled into one. At California's Mid-State Fair last summer, the most striking performers, according to William Russell, were women. And in the Massey family, the Wisconsin five-some who had to leave their farm last March, the strain of adapting to a new life style is opening vistas of new understanding for the mother, wife, helpmeet and now budding writer, Sue.

Radio Boosts Randy Travis

Finding your favorite singer on the radio can sometimes be a problem, as fan Harold Swartz reports. For more on country radio, see the September/October Newsletter. We plan continuing coverage.

The nomination and subsequent awarding of CMA "Song of the Year" to "On the Other Hand" gives me an excellent opportunity to air one of my favorite gripes: the integrity (lack of it, really) of our so-called country music radio stations.

For about five years, I have been a route driver in the Great Lakes area. During that time, I got a chance to listen to a lot of radio. Established artists had no trouble getting their records played, regardless of whether they were good or bad, regardless of whether they were country or, as was often the case, pop passed off as country.

Very early in 1986, an unknown Randy Travis released "On the Other Hand." Virtually no radio stations in my traveling area played this song (but one did—more about that later). I immediately fell in love with that record. I had to special order it because retailers hadn't



Harold Swartz and Butch Bennett both knew "On the Other Hand" was a hit.

heard of it and had no requests for it. I watched its progress on the *Billboard* charts, for I was certain it was a Number One song. I believe it topped out in the 70's, however.

Later on "1982" was released by Randy. Someone *really* goofed up and played it. It took off. Now the public knew who Randy Travis was. And they wanted more.

Result: listeners request more Randy Travis material. "On the Other Hand" is re-released and goes to the top of the charts. It ultimately becomes CMA "Song of the Year." The same song no one would play is suddenly "song of the year." If I were a radio station programmer who ignored this record, I'd be ashamed to call my station country.

By the way, this station that took the *enormous* risk of playing "On the Other Hand" in our area deserves to be mentioned for its integrity. WLJE (105.5 FM) in Valparaiso, Indiana, knows country music and will play good coun-

try records even if they aren't by big name artists. They even play album cuts overlooked by almost all other country stations.

Incidentally, Butch Bennett, morning man at WLJE, the man who first played the record its first time around, reports that "On the Other Hand" was the station's most requested record for a long time. Other stations, get the message? But, on the other hand, a little egg on the face doesn't look as bad as it sounds.

Harold Swartz
South Bend, Indiana

Women Performers Captivate Crowds—Stars of Paso Robles Mid-State Fair

In the November/December Newsletter we featured summer festivals and concerts. To round out our coverage, here's one of the biggest—California's mid-August Mid-State Fair. William Russell, longtime fan and musician and writer, covers it for us, and notes that women are in the ascendance there. We're grateful for his observations and his many photos.

The Mid-State Fair features a wide variety of music.

Thoroughbred racing horses, beef cattle, Arabian show horses, barley fields and grape vineyards of Paso Robles create an ideal setting for the California Mid-State Fair. Ken Kragen, of "Hands Across America" fame and manager of Kenny Rogers, helped start the 1986

In This Issue

- Calling Randy Travis
- Women on the Rise
- Eddy Arnold—Country Boy in a Black Tuxedo
- Longlost Records and Songs



Gateway to good listening in the West—stars treat fans to top music at the Paso Robles Mid-State Fair.



country music celebration at the Mid-State Fair by welcoming superstar Dolly Parton. “Hey, guys, I really know where Paso Robles is now,” quipped the warm and wide-eyed queen of country music to Kragen and the press.

It was the female stars and their fans who set the tone and spirit musically at the 1986 California Mid-State Fair. Dolly, The Judds and Sandi Powell were the country music charismatics of the nine-day event. Meli’sa Morgan was the trendsetter among the rock music celebs.

From the beginning of the fair,

audience response to the female stars announced that the musical domain once ruled by male performers was history. This seemed especially true of country music, which was dominated by male country music stars for years. The awesome 1986 line-up of male performers included Alabama, Billy Joe Royal, The Oak Ridge Boys, Josh Logan, Ricky Skaggs, Atlanta, Earl Thomas Conley and Southern Pacific—yet even these proved to be no major threat to the dynamic performances of the female stars.

The rock music fans responded as

enthusiastically to the powerful creative voice of Meli’sa Morgan as they did to Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, Kenny Loggins, Billy Ocean and Huey Lewis. The female stars of rock music found their place much earlier than the struggling female country artist of the past. The success of female rock stars, however, has been a sure encouragement for their country music counterparts.

There was a sense that you were a part of music history as the energetic and electric Dolly Parton stepped on stage to a rousing response from a packed-out crowd. Her “Hello... Paso



And here they are (clockwise from top left): Dolly Parton, Earl Thomas Conley, Billy Joe Royal, Alabama's Jeff Cook and Randy Owen, Sandi Powell and The Judds—Wynonna and Naomi. The ladies took the cake, but the men were no slouch, either.

Robles," brought vigorous reply from the crowd. This was the start of an evening filled with the charisma of a superstar and her adulating fans. When Dolly sang "Think About Love," the audience response indicated they cared little about some record reviews which had been somewhat negative towards the RCA album.

This multi-talented 40-year-old performer may be looking at the best ten years of her career coming up. It may not have been easy, but Dolly has blended talent and maturity into a rich and meaningful style. If the response of

an ever-growing host of fans has any meaning at all, she will continue to be a role model for the expanding field of female country music artists.

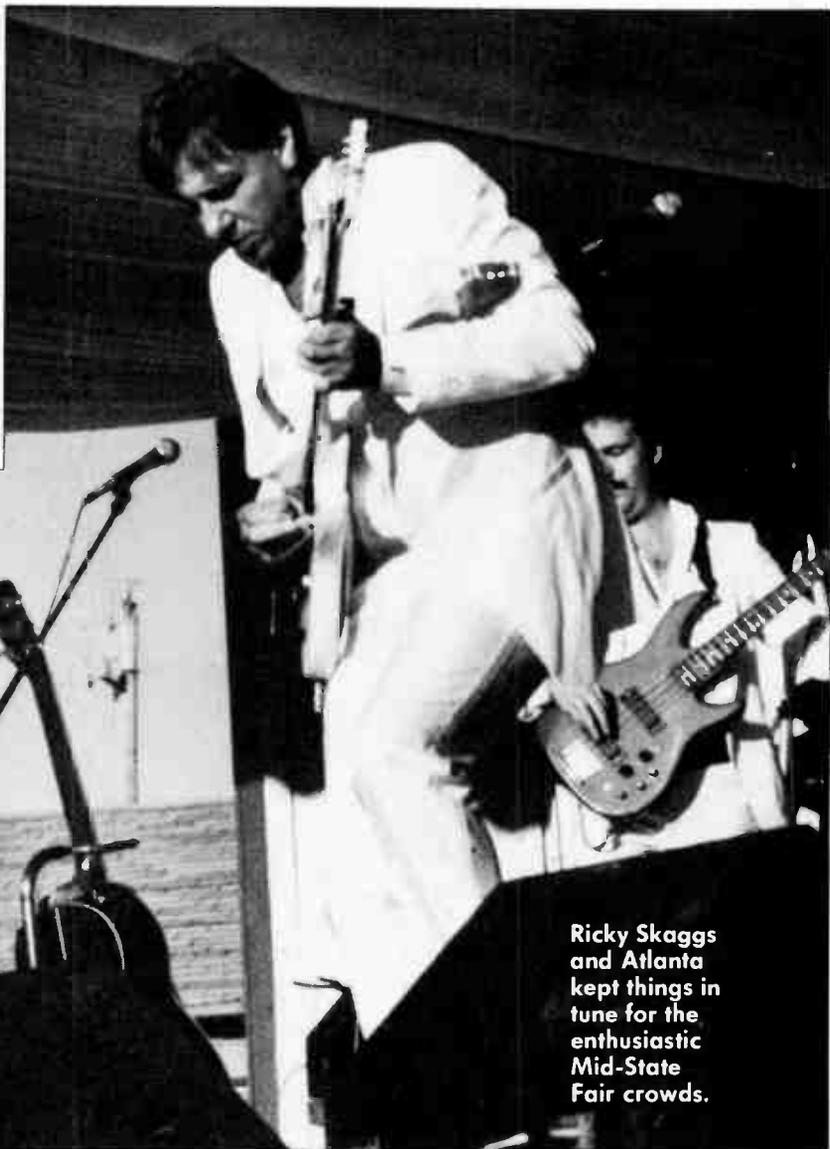
The establishment of a multi-million dollar theme park points to a growing business career for Dolly Parton. Called "Dollywood," this theme park is located near Knoxville at Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The park is a family venture for Dolly and her relatives.

"Next spring I will begin a new movie with Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin again," stated the personable Parton in her backstage press conference. "The set-

ting will be in Washington, D.C., and the story will be a comedy about spies in the nation's capitol." The developing demand for Dolly as an actress holds out the promise of some good years for her.

The most emotionally charged grandstand event of the fair was an evening with The Judds. This mother-daughter team created a show that combined the excitement of a Dallas Cowboy/New York Giant football game with the fervor of a brush-arbor revival. Naomi Judd told their fans, "We want to give God the credit for our success."

Naomi and Wynonna have a warm,



Ricky Skaggs and Atlanta kept things in tune for the enthusiastic Mid-State Fair crowds.

exciting blend of voices and a pure country charm that blows like a breath of fresh spring air across the country music scene. The Judds are fast becoming the top country duet in America. A few years ago such female artists in country music might not have had the opportunity to be what The Judds are becoming today.

Working one of the four free stages at the fair was country music starlet Sandi Powell. She had been signed for a second year at the fair by Mid-State Fair manager Maynard Potter. Her show was both powerful and professional.

This 95 pounds of musical energy has been called the "Tina Turner of country music." Though diminutive in stature, Sandi is tall in talent and is faithfully paying her dues on the road to stardom. Like other female professionals, Sandi

Powell knows it was artists like Patsy Montana, Kitty Wells and Patsy Cline who first opened the door for female entertainers in country music.

Sandi's pop-country style pleased the Mid-State Fair audiences. "I feel the crossover of country music into pop has been a healthy happening," states Powell. "I'm part of that transition."

The success of Dolly Parton, The Judds and the new crop of Sandi Powells seems to say the place of the female country artist is secured. The long journey of the female performer in country music has been a journey shared with those like Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette and Barbara Mandrell and her sisters, who have been part of making country music as a whole what it is today.

William W. Russell
Paso Robles, California

NOVEMBER POLL
Album and Single of Month

Reba McEntire *Whoever's in New England*
Randy Travis "Diggin' Up Bones"

CMSA members can't get enough of Reba, Randy and George... Strait. Album winners are Reba, for the second month in a row; Randy Travis, *Storms of Life*; and George Strait, #7. In singles, winners are Randy Travis, Reba with "Little Rock," and Dwight Yoakam with "Guitars, Cadillacs." Reba, Randy and George Strait were winners last month, and Dwight was a runner-up.

As New Life Takes Hold

In spite of nationwide publicity generated by Alabama at the time of FarmAid I, Ken and Sue Massey had to sell their family farm. They're building a new life now, but Sue was surprised at how long the pain of being displaced lasted. For her story about the sale, see the May/June 1986 issue of the Newsletter.

Ten days after the sale our family moved into a country ranch-style home we had rented within the school district. We were busy packing not only what we had gathered in 11 years in our first home, but also the accumulation of years Ken's family had spent before that on the farm. Trinkets here and trinkets there, but none of it meaningless junk. Friends and neighbors pitched right in to help, though, and within three days we seemed fairly settled in.

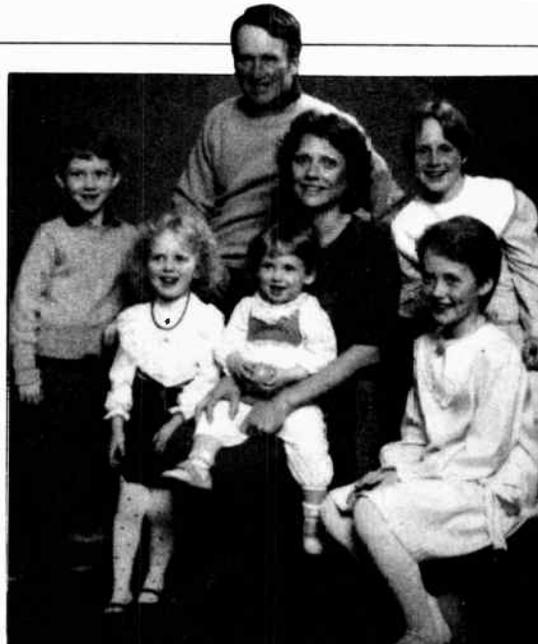
By Monday morning the children were off to school and we were both back to work, Kenny at his farm laborer job with the state and I at the veterinary office. So many times we have been thankful for our jobs as we have thought of many leaving the farm with nowhere else to turn.

The children seemed excited about the move once they discovered they didn't have to change schools. Above all, the ranch house was more spacious than our old home—even had two bathrooms with showers, the showers a convenience they'd hardly known.

The children seemed to adjust well and rather quickly, I might add. Mom and Dad, well, that was an entirely different story. As we each settled back into our routines, we also handled our feelings differently. Kenny, somewhat reserved, seemed to tuck most of the pain inside, though I knew he felt it. As for myself, I was surprised at my own reaction. After having our lives put on hold for so many years, encountering the day-to-day stress, I thought I would feel relief. But the contrary was true.

The comfortably spacious ranch home felt more and more like a motel stay from which, at some point, we would return home. At night I drew nearer to our cozy bedroom than to the huge family room where everyone else seemed to meet after evening supper. The four bedroom walls filled with visions of our land, the trees and hills just as they'd always been. The scene was so visually perfect I'd leave the warm blanket to peer out the star-filled windows.

Again and again the visions resurfaced—I'd see Kenny high up on his combine with our son at his side. I'd see the children building forts between the



Maron Mossey and Randy Owen got acquainted at the Wisconsin State Fair. Sue and Ken also took the kids to FarmAid II at Willie Nelson's expense.

round bales, knees dark with earth and ragged old everyday clothes. I'd question God, "Are you sure? Was this meant to be?"

What hurt the most was seeing someone else turning the ground Kenny knew so well. He used to jump off the 4020 John Deere to catch a drink from the water hydrant. Or he'd stride inside to get a handful of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, his favorite. Within a matter of minutes he'd be off again, placing a greasy but gentle kiss on my cheek. As if to prevent me from taking a single memory for granted, each one appeared over and over again in my mind.

Looking back now, the steps we followed were similar to those of someone losing a close loved one. It's after the death and funeral that the grieving begins. The empty void pangs with endless hurt.

Because of the pain and grief we've encountered, we are filled with understanding and compassion for so many others. When I stare into the Sunday paper at the endless columns of approaching farm auctions listed, I am deeply saddened. My heart goes out to each and every one of them.

Spring grows into summer, and with it comes change. The turning point for me was a Saturday in late April. We had just finished lunch while everyone discussed afternoon play plans. The children were filled with excitement as the warm, sunny day ahead looked forever. Suddenly I felt eyes upon me, questioning my plans for the afternoon. Feeling extremely blue and homesick, I simply replied, "Guess I'll take a nap and see if I

feel better when I get up."

Well, time heals all wounds and it was my time to heal. When I awoke, my eyes fell upon a small piece of paper resting gently on our dresser top. Inquisitively, I reached for it, wondering which one of the children had been up to something.

I doubt I will ever forget the small gift. It was about the size of a white bookmark cut from paper. Half of it was green, as if grass, the other half blue sky. Glued to the center was a fragile spring violet. But two words, hand printed in black crayon against the blue sky will remain etched upon my mind forever. They simply and so eloquently read, "New Life."

Was someone speaking through the eyes of our second daughter, age nine, who had constructed the tiny piece of art?

Yes, we are now building a new life together. We count our many blessings of health, family and faith, looking back only to realize the gift, in itself, of remaining together through the past turmoil.

At times we are still homesick and tears come easy, but with each new day those feelings grow farther and farther away. We build new dreams and live new hopes with each day given us. Someday the pain will dissipate, leaving only the happy memories behind.

**Sue Massey
Barneveld, Wisconsin**

Thanks, Sue, for permission to print this progress report on your family, which appeared in slightly different form in the Wisconsin Agriculturist, July 12, 1986.—Ed.



Carolina Cotton, the Willis Brothers, Kirby Grant, Isabel Randolph, Little Roy Wiggins and Mustard and Gravy starred with Eddy in *Feudin' Rhythm* in the 1950's. Can you spot them? Annie Lou and Danny and the Duke of Paducah joined him on radio. He also toured for Purina.



EDDY ARNOLD

The Tennessee Plowboy

As his groundbreaking career took on different directions, Eddy Arnold garnered fans of all kinds.

by Rich Kienzle

In Paul Hemphill's groundbreaking 1970 book *The Nashville Sound*, he discussed the low opinion many Nashville residents had of the country music industry. A then-prominent local Chamber of Commerce official confided, "I tell my wife I've got two tickets to the Nashville Symphony and suggest that we go... She'll say, 'Is that *Eddy Arnold* going to be there?' And if he is, she won't go."

Strange, isn't it? Eddy Arnold, who

by then performed in a tux and whose crooning helped establish the concept of "crossover," was still considered just another hillbilly by some. Then again, maybe that guy's wife had a good memory. Long before tuxedos and the Nashville Symphony, he was the "Tennessee Plowboy," a rural singer with an uncommonly mellow voice.

As easygoing as his music has always been, it's also often stirred controversy. When he chucked his original sound to

sing ballads with lush orchestrations and vocal choruses in the style of Perry Como, longtime fans and some fellow performers grumbled. Some of the first debates over what was and wasn't country revolved around his music.

Whether Eddy Arnold did the right thing when he changed directions is in the ear of the beholder. The shift doesn't alter the excellence of his older records, and it broadened his appeal immensely. Without him, it's unlikely Ray Price

would have been able to head in a pop direction or that Kenny Rogers or Lee Greenwood would have been accepted by Nashville.

His track record speaks for itself. Few in country music have sold more records. From 1948 to 1984, he had a phenomenal 63 Top Ten records, 15 of them going to Number One. Only George Jones and Merle Haggard can rival that performance. Twenty-three of the 63 country hits crossed over to the pop charts.

But his roots justified the "Plowboy" nickname. Born near Henderson, in West Tennessee, May 15, 1918, both his parents were musical. His mother taught him guitar. As a child, one of his few diversions was cowboy movies. Times turned rough after his dad died in 1929. The Depression was looming, and the Arnold farm was sold. In a humbling twist of fate, he wound up sharecropping on the family farm, his musical efforts supplementing the family's income.

He kept at his music and, by 1936, secured a spot on WJTS Radio in Jackson, Tennessee, then performed briefly on WMPS in Memphis before moving to St. Louis, where he linked up with fiddler Howard McNatt. In December, 1939, he got a major break when he left St. Louis to join Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys on the Grand Ole Opry as vocalist. King's organization, more professionally-run than most, was an outstanding training ground.

The Opry exposure also helped him move into solo performing in 1943, the year he signed with RCA Victor. He would remain with RCA for 29 years. There was nothing cosmopolitan about his first single, "Mommy, Please Stay Home With Me," yet it was extremely important. Recorded in a studio at WSM, it was the first recording session done in any Nashville studio.

Those early records differed from his later hits. "In the very beginning I did three or four morbid things," he explains. "But I didn't like to do morbid songs. And I just stopped doing them and started doing love ballads. It was much easier for me to do those on the television shows later because you're hittin' a universal audience. The lyrics I did could be done anywhere."

His career momentum grew over the next two years, until "That's How Much I Love You" established him firmly in the public eye. Even in those days, the Arnold sound had an intimacy and a smooth flow that sounded as if he were singing for just one person. His only backing was his guitar, McNatt's fiddling and Little Roy Wiggins' distinctive

Hawaiian steel. Wiggins' melodic, chiming style gave him an instantly identifiable sound. "Roy was a stylist," Eddy explains. "He played a style that I asked him to play. I liked that ting-a-ling, so I asked him to play that way."

He enjoyed unbroken success for the next decade with this formula. "It's a Sin" was a substantial hit in 1946; "I'll Hold You in My Heart" and his two classics, "Bouquet of Roses" and "Anytime," were equally big in 1947. In 1948, the year he left the Opry, he had nine Top Ten records and began doing guest spots on mainstream national radio shows.

Even his management was high-powered. Colonel Tom Parker, fresh from the circus world, dreamed up flashy promotional gimmicks that he later adapted for Elvis, such as a circus elephant draped with a banner that read "Never Forget Eddy Arnold."

Initially, Parker was good for Eddy. He kept him touring with a popular package show that included the Willis Brothers, then called the Oklahoma Wranglers. "I used to go out and work

two weeks and stay home two weeks," Eddy says. He also had a daily Mutual Radio Show sponsored by Purina live-stock feed. He was the first country singer to fly to concerts. During this period, he sang on Milton Berle's TV show, the hottest program in America.

As Eddy learned the business, he and Parker grew apart. The Colonel's flamboyance went against his basically conservative grain. Elvis never got up the nerve to fire Parker. Eddy did in 1953.

His musical direction was changing, too, as evidenced by his 1954 hit recording of "I Really Don't Want to Know," recorded in New York, with a bass, two acoustic guitars and choral backing. Then in 1955 he recorded "Cattle Call." Though he'd cut it twice before, the new version, with Hugo Winterhalter's huge orchestra behind him, hit Number One and stayed on the charts for 26 weeks.

Elvis' rise temporarily set Eddy back (Parker's revenge?), and from 1956 through 1959 he enjoyed only five minor hits. The Nashville Sound was the answer, particularly for Eddy. Wiggins' steel disappeared. Under Chet Atkins' guidance, it was replaced by elaborate string sections and voices that established the pattern for what became known as "country-pop" or "country-politan."

Like Dolly Parton's shift to pop in the late 1970's, change stirred up both his fans and friends in the industry. Many preferred the old sound; some insiders in Nashville felt he was selling out and wanted him to go back. "It just wasn't to be," Arnold says today. "The country sound needed broadening to last, otherwise you'd just have a few little guys pickin' over in North Carolina."

Arnold's shift opened up supperclubs and more non-country radio and TV appearances. He was accepted in the mainstream of show business at a time most Nashville singers were wrongly stereotyped as half-bright rubes. His audience expanded to the point where he was the only country singer many pop fans knew.

From 1961 through 1968, his new sound brought him 18 Top Ten singles, seven of them Number One hits, including "What's He Doing in My World" and "Make the World Go Away" in 1965, the latter remaining for 25 weeks on the country charts and climbing to Number Six on the pop charts. Again, he was criticized, but staunchly defends the change.

"All at once I started moving a little bit. I remember in 1965 when I came back with 'What's He Doing in My World,' a lot of what you'd call purists

Albums Available

Someone ought to do an extensive Eddy Arnold collection that shows how his music developed from 1944 on. But for the moment, the British *20 of the Best of Eddy Arnold* (RCA International NL89316) is the closest anyone's come. It brings together 18 hits that reached Number One and two that got to Number Two, including such classics as "Make the World Go Away," "What's He Doing in My World," "Turn the World Around," "I Really Don't Want to Know," "Kentucky Waltz," "Bouquet of Roses" and "I'll Hold You in My Heart." Eddy Arnold's first three decades on RCA.

Another collection of Eddy's songs, *The Eddy Arnold Show* (ACM 9), draws on transcriptions from his 1950's radio shows. The format is simple, just Eddy's clear voice, his brief introductions to the songs, and some background responses by the Tennessee Plowboys. Catch Roy Wiggins' beautiful steel guitar on this one. Songs include: "Columbus Stockade Blues," "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," "Who at the Door Is Standing," "The Lily of the Valley" and more—21 in all, and only two duplications with *20 of the Best*.

These albums sell for \$9.98, CMSA member's price only \$7.98. On *20 of the Best*, specify records or cassettes; *Eddy Arnold Show*, records only. Send check to *Country Music Magazine*, Dept. 0102N, Suite 2118, 342 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10173. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 for each additional.



RCA's peerless artists—Eddy, Little Roy Wiggins and Chet Atkins in the 1950's.

wanted me to stay in that older groove, but I'd already sort of gone dead in that groove. I had to move and do something slightly different in order for the people to pick up on me again."

Inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1966, his last Number One record—up to now—came in 1968, with "Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye." As 1969 drew to a close, he wasn't even hitting the Top 30. Late in 1972 he startled everyone by leaving RCA to sign with MGM. "It was a mistake," he now says of the move. "There was a period where we just felt we weren't gettin' the treatment we should get, and MGM offered me an awful lot of money.

"But sometimes money's not all of it. Mike Curb was running MGM, and as

long as he was there everything was fine. But he sold out and left, and it wasn't the same anymore. So I asked my manager, Jerry Purcell, I said, 'Get me out of that contract. I don't want to be there. I don't care if I make another record.'"

Only one MGM single ever broke the Top Twenty. Arnold was back at RCA by 1976. "Cowboy" made it to Number 13 that year; several others rose into the Top Thirty. But Eddy didn't need to worry about hits anymore. Over the years he'd become wealthy through shrewd business investments, including the lavish Brentwood development outside Nashville where many stars live. He could afford to perform at *his* leisure.

Today, he continues that lifestyle. A

year ago serious back problems flared as he was playing Las Vegas. He went into the hospital in March, then back to work in July—too soon, as it turned out. "I was booked in Reno, and oh, boy, I really had a problem. I thought I was ready... but I wasn't. I had to sit on a stool the whole time. I'd tell the audience the truth. But by the time I went to Lake Tahoe in September, I made it okay.

"I'm comin' along fine now, but it's taken me this long to get back into the swing of things, and I don't have all my strength yet. I'm about 75 percent back. It takes a year. I'm walking about two and a half miles a day now."

As we spoke he was getting ready to play the Westbury Music Fair on Long Island outside New York City. He still thinks of recording though he's not now under contract. "I'll probably record again one of these days. I'm not under contract anymore, but I'm sure someone would release it." A contemporary religious album, he says, is one possibility.

At age 68, it's his choice: he can work or sit back and relax. More than any other performer, he made possible the network TV shows and nightclub appearances that are now routine for country singers. Regardless which of his musical phases you prefer, Eddy Arnold earned his place in the Hall of Fame. ■

COLLECTIONS

Information, Please

Write to these members directly if you have the items they need.

- Where can I get a tape or record of Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman," "Running Scared" and "Cryin'," and a tape of Ronnie Milsap's 50's and 60's? I'd like to buy these if anyone can tell me where to find them. Mrs. V. Keisling, R.R. #2, Aitkin, Minnesota 56431.

If you mean *Lost in the Fifties Tonight* by Ronnie Milsap, you can get it from Top 25 on page 68 in the Nov/Dec issue of *Country Music*. Current albums sold every issue on that page. —Ed.

- I am writing for info on how to contact these artists for their 8×10 pictures: C. W. McCall, Billy Edd Wheeler, Wilma Burgess, Jack Blackard & Misty Margau. The late Wynn Stewart, too. Has any-

body set up a memorial service for him? I wrote to various record companies for these pictures, but no luck. Cora Lowery, 4207 Roselane, Apt. 5, Mt. Vernon, Illinois 62864.

- I note that many people are looking for out of print records. I collect country music records, and in 1978 I bought several thousand new and used country 45-rpm singles from a store that was getting rid of them. If other readers want to send me a note, and enclose an extra stamp, I'll gladly let them know if I have the records they are looking for. But the record must be from before 1978.

If you print this in the fall or winter, it will give me something to do during the winter. Thanks. Karl Davidson, Box 218, Little Rock, Washington 98556.

- I am a member and received the *Country Music Answer Book*. What I was wondering is if anyone knows to whom I

could write concerning movies that were made in the early days. There was one made of this area, and I would love to get a hold of it for local viewing. Adina B. Knutson, P.O. Box 26, Chitina, Alaska 99566-0026.

- Does anyone have the first album of Janie Fricke, *Singer of Songs*, or any of the three Zero label singles by Loretta Lynn for sale? Linda L. Kamp, R.R. 7, Box 197, Rochester, Indiana 46975.

- I have been searching for a record. It came out in the 1950's. I think the name of it is "Mysteries of Life." I don't know who recorded it. If anyone knows who sang it and where I could get a record, please let me know. Josephine Bueil, Hac. Tr. Ct., Box 19, Havre, Montana 59501.

- I am writing this to thank the many people that have been sending the album I asked for in the March/April *Newsletter*. Now I want to especially thank Ron C. Oby-

of Zion, Illinois, for the M.M. Murphy, it's a beautiful album and cover. Also a fan from Harrisburg, Virginia, and the lady from Pennsylvania.

Now I have one more problem. Has anyone ever heard of the song "Bible On the Table, Flag Upon the Wall?" My husband says he heard it back before 1957 when he was in the service overseas. He thinks that Elton Britt sings it and that it might have been Dale Evans and Roy Rogers who wrote it. Maybe Gene Autry had a hand in it. Anyway, that's how long I've been trying to find it. May the good Lord bless all. Mrs. Evelyn A. Campbell, R#2, Box 367H, Fulton, Mississippi 38843.

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EARL THOMAS CONLEY

The Man and the Image

There's more to Earl Thomas Conley than meets the eye. Spicier than anyone might have thought he is, he now has plans for more songwriting and other changes in his music. by Patrick Carr

Well, well; brought up short again. Done in by another vinyl image. I'm not upset that every one in four or five of the country singers I meet keeps turning out to be strangely different from the person who sings to me on my

radio—I'm not even that surprised, really—but I *am* beginning to wonder which way, if any, is up.

Earl Thomas Conley is the latest person to lay this disorientation on me. I mean, from the evidence of his hits—and his photographs—wouldn't *you* be

thinking *Love Balladeer*, *Ladies' Man* and wondering *Sensitive Soul* or *Cynical Sleaze*?

Well, you probably wouldn't be thinking that last bit. That's me talking, casting aspersions on the entire *Love Balladeer* type just because the job's

such an easy ticket to the Mansion on the Hill that it tends to attract more than its share of loot-snakes in love-bunny clothing. See, it's gotten to the point where I personally have grown wary about venturing into the field; it's not at all pleasant to be sitting there listening to some humble, fan-loving, deep-from-the-heart sincerity rap with your conscious mind while your unconscious goes slowly into shock from all that hidden greed and venom.

Shame on me, then—but the fact of the matter is that approaching Earl Thomas Conley, I do have my guard up. You never know; though ETC looks to be of normal adult male stature, he *could* turn out to be a hungry little man, a real snake in the grass.

But no, he isn't. He turns out to be a nice, relatively un-driven man, seemingly devoid of negative intensity. Off with the snake boots, then, and let's take a closer look.

The image problem is apparent immediately. ETC turns out to look considerably more humorous and less intensely soul-romantic than his album cover photographs suggest; he looks in fact a lot more like the early-middle-aged musician he is than the lonely-loverboy lounge lizard those pictures prompt you to expect. He also turns out to be older than his pictures, a veteran of 24 years of happy marriage and the father of an 18-year-old daughter and a 22-year-old son.

We start talking about the new house he's just built in the country south of Nashville, but my mind's not really on that subject. It's trying to come to grips with something he said when we were introduced: that he's fresh from the road, where he's been doing his regular job of opening the show for Hank Williams Jr.

This is the fact which just blows the image entirely. In the universe as anyone I know knows it, it is absolutely impossible for a genuine, card-carrying Love Balladeer to open the show for the Man of Steel. Hank's crowds would hog-tie such a creature, bop him in the brain pan, mince him up real good and put him to work as catfish bait.

“Yeah, the show dances,” says ETC, “but most of the people who are into the albums are into the sentimental side, I think. Usually they think I’m a Don Williams type; they think the show’s gonna be quiet.”

This can cause problems when the show diverts from Hank's bandwagon to play on its own. “I’ll be working with Hank, then all of a sudden I’ll do a club in some little place in the Midwest or somewhere, and won’t think a thing about it until I start hearing people yelling ‘Turn it down!’ and see them filing out the door.

“That worried me at first. It drove me nuts. I thought, ‘Oh my God, I’m gonna have to change all the way back now.’ But you can’t, so I learned to say, ‘Sorry about that, folks.’ I think that’s where Hank got his attitude—*If you don’t like Hank Williams, you can kiss my ass*—because you either make a statement and stand by it, or change your music.”

This gets a little confusing, since as far as ETC's record-listeners can tell, he *is* a Love Balladeer. Only the occasional track goes in another direction or moves to a stronger beat. As ETC tells it, though, those are the tracks he has always cared about most, and they represent the direction taken by the music he is now making, which he will shortly reveal in greater quantity.

“I’m getting ready to go through a tremendous change,” he says. “I’m gettin’ back to doing some real heavy songwriting. Randy Scruggs, my producer, and I have been gettin’ creative

with style and melody and such in the last few years, but now it’s time to *say* some things too. Try to get some power going. Do some message stuff.

“You see, I haven’t been doing that much writing; I haven’t had the time for it. We’ve been able to program ourselves and come up with some good, decent songs and get by for the last three years or so, but I don’t feel like I’ve even come close to writing my best stuff. So hopefully, I can use the solitude of my new country house to inspire some of that. We’ve got a backlog of finished tracks big enough for the next couple of albums, so I won’t have to sweat those; I’ve made the space for new writing.”

Tell me more about the new directions, then, I say.

“Well, the duet I did with Anita Pointer last year, ‘Too Many Times,’ is a good example. So are ‘Crowd Around the Corner’—that was a good little message song—and a song called



ETC filmed a video and duetted with Anita Pointer.



A stint on *Country Clips* teamed Earl with Shotgun Red.



Fans abound—in his booth at Fan Fair and with his mom at home.

'You're as Low as You Can Go' which was on one of my very first albums. That was a statement song about me destroying myself and saving myself. It's those kinds of things I'm after; things that are a little more universal, a little more heavy-duty than 'I love you; you broke my heart.'

Quite apart from the issue of creative satisfaction—self-expression, etc.—there is a philosophy at work here: "You know, a lot of people just want messages which reinforce the life they've already lived, but I don't think that's the way to do things any more. I would like to promote people to live and go forth themselves, and find something new."

Behind that statement lies a restless soul, one of those people who must stay in motion of some sort in order to rest easy.

He comes from the steel country of Ohio—Portsmouth, to be exact—where his father worked as a machinist's helper for the Norfolk and Western Railroad. He was a bright kid, a straight-A student, but itchy even then. He moved away from home to live with his older sister when he was just 14, discovered "a whole new part of myself," and tired of school entirely by the time he was ready to graduate. He loved painting and drawing, and could have accepted a scholarship to art school if he'd wanted to, but he opted to join the Army instead. It was during his time in Germany that the idea of pouring his creative energy into music rather than art first occurred to him; he could see making money in music a lot easier than he could imagine earning a living with a paintbrush.

After the Army he sang gospel in a group with his aunt and uncle for a while, but found that limiting. His solution was to go on writing songs with

Nashville in mind, in the meantime earning a living however he could. By this time he was already married to his high school sweetheart, Sandra Smith, and the two of them (then three, then four, as the kids came along) just went wherever the work was: a Ford carburetor plant here, a pig farm there, a railroad depot somewhere else, and eventually an electroplating shop in Huntsville, Alabama.

All this time the former straight-A student was beating on doors in Nashville with little success and getting more confused with every trip. "I couldn't get anything going," he says. "I didn't have a clue about what they meant when they said, 'Well, I don't know, that's pretty good, but...' All the time I'd think I'd read their minds and found exactly what they were looking for, but I hadn't."

That changed when he met success with his contribution to the song "Smoky Mountain Memories," which he wrote in Huntsville in 1974 purely and simply because he was feeling homesick, missing the hills.

Maybe that should have taught him something right there—that in effective songwriting, second-guessing other people's tastes may not be the best way to go—but the lesson took a while to sink in. For two more years he "dived into other people's personalities and tried to capture something for *them*," until he woke up and told himself, "To hell with this; this isn't getting *me* anywhere as an artist and a creative person."

In 1976, then, he started "meditating, discovering myself, and trying to write songs that didn't make a bit of sense when I first wrote them, but which were really the perfect steppingstones for getting to the point I'm at now."

The change in thinking was not gentle, not just one of those things which

comes to you gradually. "I hyperventilated down in East Texas one day," the subject remembers (by 1976 he had abandoned electroplating in favor of five-piece-band touring work). "My body was stumbling and wobbling around, then fallin' down, and I was standing outside it, lookin' at it fall. I thought 'Whoa! What's goin' on?'"

That event kicked off all kinds of changes, not just shifts in career direction: "From that day on, I said 'I'm goin' to find out what's really happening.' I got into all kinds of different religious philosophies, all sorts of ways of looking at myself and the world, and eventually I learned to accept myself to a certain degree. The things that I don't like about myself, I try to work on.

"See, I was raised up thinking that everything was either God's, the Devil's, or the President's responsibility. I just had to go along with it all and try to fit in somewhere. Like, for a long time I thought I had to be a good ole boy, and I couldn't stand it when people didn't approve of me. But that didn't give me a place to live, to be. So I had to find one."

He did. He doesn't care about being a good ole boy any more. "You just have to get used to the fact that some people are gonna call you an asshole." He meditates daily, he marvels at what strange creatures we mere mortals be, he hunts down his personal squirrels when they start gaining control of him, and strangely enough he finds himself a genuine big-time recording star these days, with control of his own music and, overall, a fully functioning, well-maintained life.

With his music, he says he woke up one day and said to himself, "After all this time, it's worked out, hasn't it? It's gonna be okay. *Now* all you have to do is maintain the intensity."

That, basically, is what ETC's "message" song initiative is about.

"I'm happy, but happiness scares me," he says. "Sometimes it means that you're too comfortable, and therefore you have no reason to create anything. So it's important for me to be scared, to jar myself up off my lazy ass and *do* something. It's important for me to realize that I don't have it made, and I haven't gotten there."

So perhaps the ranks of country's comfortable, full-time, card-carrying Love Balladeers are due to be depleted by one in the near future—though ETC would have to be insane to abandon the field entirely—and those of us who prefer a little spice in our musical diet will have a little more of what we like.

And if we don't get it? "Well, if I *do* get lazy, I hope I'll realize what's happened," says ETC, "and I hope I'll have enough sense to get the hell out of the business." ■

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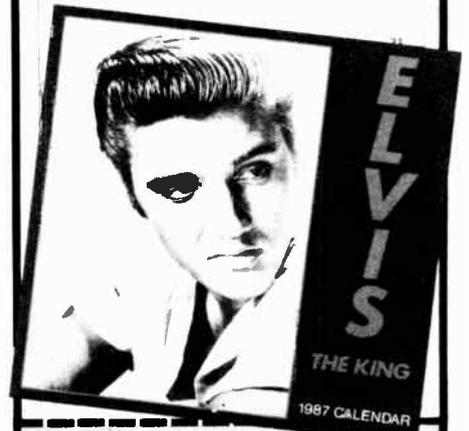
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*Carl Perkins' career is a lesson in life.
From trial and tribulation to resignation to rebirth,
he was the underdog who couldn't win.
But today the gods are smiling on ole Carl.
He planned a fond farewell, but his friends, his fans and his peers
just wouldn't let him go.*

CARL PERKINS

What Goes Around Comes Around

Carl Perkins is sitting hunched forward in the bare-bulb gloom of his beat-up old touring bus, smoking cigarettes and talking about gratitude.

"Everything looks mighty good right now, and I'm very thankful for it," he says, the voice a slow, measured, melodic country baritone. "You're mighty fortunate if you can hang around for 31 years like I have, and have something like this come along. There seems to be a little demand out there for the old man."

He looks around at the dim, shabby walls of the bus. "This bus has been kinda like me—retired for the past couple of years. The ants and the bugs had built 'em a home in it," he says. "A couple of years ago, I was just hoping to take to the fishing lake for a few more years. Now I've got some rods and reels that I've had to put on hold, and they may get a little rusty. It's just unreal; there's probably more interest in me right now than there was back in 1956."

If you had to draw a graph of Carl Perkins' career, it wouldn't look too healthy. The first part would be okay—a few minor elevations representing the honky tonk songs he cut for Sun Records in 1955, then more pronounced peaks as Sam Phillips turned him loose to record the groundbreaking rockabilly material which was his alone, and then, suddenly, a dizzying, almost vertical leap in early 1956, when "Blue



Carl Perkins and brothers launched rockabilly with a roar. George Harrison and Carl carry on the tradition today.

Suede Shoes" catapulted him to the top of the charts and into contention for the top-cat spot with Elvis the Pelvis—but the rest of it, thirty years' worth of it, would look bleak indeed: a descent as abrupt as that ear-popping "Blue Suede Shoes" climb, then a long, long journey, broken by fluctuations so minor as to be almost imperceptible, along the bottom of the success scale.

The story of Carl's abrupt descent from fame and glory is one of those spooky music business legends, a bedtime story to trouble the dreams of aspiring stars for generations to come. On their way to New York to perform "Blue Suede Shoes" for a national TV audience, Carl and his band, including his brothers Clayton and Jay B., were in a car crash which put all of them in the hospital. That's where Carl was while Elvis covered his song on the RCA label; he lay in his hospital bed and watched helplessly as his former Sun-mate, not he himself, performed "Blue Suede Shoes" on national television. There followed several months while the band,

especially the critically injured Jay B., recuperated, and during those months Carl's magic moment evaporated. By the time he was ready to record and perform again, the iron was cold; "Blue Suede Shoes" would be his only national hit record for thirty years.

That headlong fall from the top was tragic, even dramatic in a morbid way. Not so the subsequent years; they were merely frustrating, problematic, painful. Although the Sun Records tracks Carl cut with his brothers—"Matchbox," "Honey, Don't," "Boppin' the Blues," "Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby," the savage "Dixie Fried"—were arguably the strongest, most original, leanest and meanest rockabilly ever recorded, they fell on deaf ears—in the United States, at least; the marketplace had shifted away from Southern-style rock. Although he responded with what seemed like the right move, cutting country music for the Columbia label in the Nashville manner (with session jocks, against the clock), that didn't work either; unlike his buddy and fellow Sun graduate Johnny Cash, Carl never made it as a country singer.

By 1967 he had had enough. He gave up on a career of his own and went to work as a guitar picker for his old friend Johnny Cash, and there he stayed for ten years.

I interviewed him once during those years. He re-told the legend of the dirt-poor back-country boy fevered with the

by Patrick Carr





“There’s probably more interest in me right now than there was back in 1956.”



CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

beat, who rode to the top and then smashed down again. He paid tribute, sincerely, to the smart Sam Phillips and the Sun-given Elvis and the accepting children of the Fifties and the black men who taught sharecroppers’ kids like Carl to play guitar on back porches in the easy, crickets Southern nights, and he explained about how his music was really just Roy Acuff’s country set into a speeded-up version of the black blues beat he heard in the Tennessee cottonfields. He told stories about drummers hired because they had free use of their daddy’s Buick, about the nights when you could see Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley anywhere within 200 miles of Memphis for a buck, and how Elvis would be so wired up and sassy that the other boys sometimes just couldn’t believe it. Wistfulness—real sadness, maybe—crept in around his stories of England, where the kids still went wild for him and the Beatles hung on his every word, but overall he gave the impression of a calm and satisfied man. And a humble man; people other than himself received all the credit in most of his stories, and when the credit was unavoidably his, he had difficulty accepting it. Why on earth would the Beatles—the *Beatles!*—think of him as some sort of guitar God (which they did)?

He seemed to be comfortable in the role of second fiddle to Cash. The flash of life at the top was not for him, he explained, back then. What really mattered was a healthy life among friends, a good home, a little music, and, most of all, a happy family life. The sweetest moments he had ever known came when he could go home from the road, take off his toupe, watch TV with his wife of 25 years, and play some of that good old rock ‘n’ roll music with his fine, loving sons.

The idea that the music of the great

Carl Perkins would henceforth be heard only by his family, inside a house, was almost blasphemous—despite the failure of his star-crossed career the man had, after all, invented half the language of rock ‘n’ roll and the whole of rockabilly guitar style, creating in the process music of raw, rebellious, extraordinary power—but in a way it fit. There was such an air of restraint and humility about the older Carl Perkins that the younger man, that hell-bent rockabilly who almost gave Elvis a hard run for his money seemed like a different character altogether.

“**I**nside myself, I never was very wild, and I never did feel like a star,” says Carl today. “Standing beside superstars, I’ve always felt small. And while I haven’t had that much luck or stardom in this business, what little I’ve had I often feel like I don’t deserve.”

Such feelings have old, old roots. “I started out in life eating free lunches at school and standing in welfare lines with my daddy, and I think that instilled in me something I’ve never outgrown,” he says. “Being so poor. Wearing worn-out shoes to school, being so embarrassed in front of the little girls that I’d give my pencil butts to some other cat to sharpen up at the teacher’s desk because he had better-looking shoes on. I never had a good guitar, either, so when I was asked to bring it to school, I was ashamed of that. I think that’s why I’ve always felt small, why I’ve always been so shy.”

Carl says that he’s always been “scared to death to walk out on that stage.” He also says that right from the

start, back in those Tennessee honky tonks before he got to Sun Records, he used booze to cut that fear.

“It loosened me up, it gave me good feelings about myself and my music, it took some of the stage fright away,” he says. “I could hear people say, ‘Boy, you think he’s playin’ that guitar *now*. Buy him a couple of beers or give him a shot of that white lightnin’, then sit on that amplifier and give him a little time...’ It was the same in the studio, once I got there. There was *always* a fifth of whiskey sittin’ on the floor when I made records at Sun.

“That’s how I got into it so bad. At first I could control it, but it got worse and worse. I’d have to start drinking earlier and earlier in the day to cut that fear. Then after I had my car wreck and couldn’t cash in on my hit record, I used that as an excuse to really get into drinking. When Jay B. died of cancer in 1958, I used that. And I got into it real heavy.

“It just consumed me. I guess in my mind I knew it. I’d hide it in the rose bushes at home. I was paranoid. If I saw a cop car, I’d go twenty miles out of my way to keep him from gettin’ in behind me. I wasn’t breaking the law, but I was guilty; I was a drunk. I’d argue with anybody that I wasn’t, but I was.”

And, he says, the booze which once seemed to spur his creativity ended up destroying it. “There’s no question that alcohol took away some good songs that might have been there in my brain. When I’d sober up and listen to some of the things I’d written when I was drinking—man, I thought I had me a hit song!—they would be so stupid. There was nothing there. It was all false. It was plastic. It wasn’t real.”

Carl’s alcoholism was one of the reasons he went to work for Johnny Cash in 1967. “I was at home with my leg in a cast—I’d had an accident, just about shot my left foot off—and John stopped

by my home. I'd been dragging my cast around the house for weeks, and I think my wife talked to him, told him I needed to get outta there. So I went with him for two days, and on the way back he asked me to join his show.

"He was still well into his little addiction—he weighed about 135 pounds—but he had a great bunch of people around him. The Carter Family, The Statlers; sober people. I felt like that might be the thing I should do. So I did it."

He reached a moment of truth in the back of Johnny Cash's bus, parked on a California beach. "Everybody else was having a picnic, but not Carl Perkins. I'd been on a roarin' high for about three days, and I was so weak I couldn't get up. I lay there, and I got scared. I thought I was going to die away from my wife and children. So I talked to the big man up above. I said, 'Lord, if You just let me get home to see my family one more time before I go, I'll do everything I can to never drink again.'

"The burning desire for alcohol didn't immediately go away, but I was always reminded when the temptation got strong of the deal I had made with God. He got me home that time, so I stuck to my end of the bargain, and together we made it."

He had other help, too. There were all the people around the Cash show, and there was Cash himself; he and Carl decided to abandon their addictions together. "We leaned on each other," says Carl. "Many a night John would be very nervous. He'd say 'You gonna take a drink?' I'd say 'You gonna take a pill?' That worked."

On the road Carl stayed close to Cash and the crew; at home he changed his friends and his lifestyle and not a few of his attitudes; and he stayed sober.

"It'll eat you alive, that alcohol," he says today. "It will *me*, anyway. I'm mighty afraid of it. I wasted a lot of my life with it—at least fifteen good years. I'd have to be crazy to raise that whiskey bottle to my lips."

It was ten years before Carl stepped out from the security of Cash's travelling family—but even then, he didn't go it alone. His decision to hit the road as his own man was based on the fact that he could take his sons Stan and Red with him. He had made his only successful music with his brothers; now perhaps he could do it with his kids.

At first the combination was a thrill. I remember one night at the Lone Star Cafe in New York City when Carl and his boys blew through a set that had everything—joy, soul, energy, technique, the works—but gradually the bright new road turned into another dead-end street. Without a recording

deal the act just died slowly on the road. Sure, they could always cross the big water and make a living in Sun-worshipping Britain, but here at home Carl found himself parking the bus in "the same beer can piles I started out in," the low-rent honky tonk circuit where maybe they'd heard of Carl Perkins, maybe not. That's when he decided to hang it up; quit the road, stay home and write songs, go fishing.

But he also decided to go out with a bang: a TV special, something he'd always wanted but never achieved. He knew there were some musicians out there in the world who looked up to him and owed something to his music, so he decided to send them messages. He stood out on the front lawn of his house and videotaped some personal invitations:

"Hey, George [or Ringo, or Eric], this is Carl Perkins. I know I'm gettin' old and fat, and time has taken its toll, but I got somethin' I wanna do..."

He had the videotapes hand delivered, with a reply card enclosed. George Harrison's card was the first to come back signed. Then the others came: Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, Dave Edmunds, The Stray Cats, Rosanne Cash. He took the cards to HBO—they didn't believe him at first; he had to go back and get official letters of agreement—and he ended up going to England, still not quite believing that it was all real, to record a cable TV special: *Carl Perkins and Friends*.

It was dy-no-mite. Pretty soon, people were recognizing him in airports and he was realizing the power of the tube. He started showing up on other shows.

Then he went to Memphis and recorded *The Class of '55* with Cash and Jerry Lee and Roy Orbison and the gang. Then his "Birth of Rock 'n' Roll" was chosen as the first single from the album, and it climbed the charts, and he had the second hit of his thirty-year-long career.

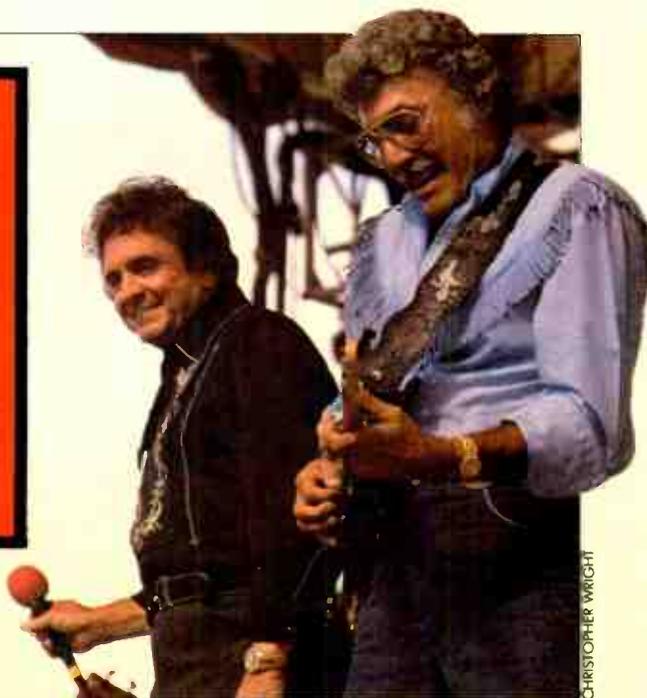
And now the phone is ringing again. He'll make a movie with Faye Dunaway. He'll cut an album of his own new songs with producer Chips Moman, and he'll do it in Memphis with his sons and Ace Cannon and the other pickers in his road band, just like he did at Sun; no session jocks, no eye on that relentless studio clock. He's already hit the road again; he's out there working.

In some ways it's different. "All my life I've had to work around that one song, 'Blue Suede Shoes,'" he says. "Now I can do 'Birth of Rock 'n' Roll' or 'Class of '55' in the middle of my show, and the fans will recognize them. That's a new feeling for me. It feels mighty good to have two barrels on your gun instead of one."

In other ways it doesn't change. "I've learned a lot through the years," says Carl. "and some things I know for sure. I've got to be sober. I've got to give a hundred percent of Carl Perkins when I'm out there on that stage. 'Cause those people, they keep you on the road or they send you back home."

The rewards are also the same. "When we get on stage and it's one of those nights when everything's right, and the audience is excited and I feel that rapport, I'm sixteen again," he says. "I come off and get in the back of this bus and rub the linament on the old sore back and legs, and I'm a happy man." ■

"When everything's right and the audience is excited and I feel that rapport, I'm sixteen again."



CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

Dobie Gray's InWith The 'IN' Crowd... Finally



Singer/songwriter Dobie Gray has survived experiences in the music business that might have turned another man sour. But now he's found his niche in Nashville with good associates and good vibes. / by Patrick Carr

Dobie Gray has a cold, and in a way that's nice. Not the cold itself, but the way he caught it; working on his vegetable garden in the hot Tennessee summer sun, then going back into his air conditioned house. *That's what's nice.*

First there's the fact that he's in Tennessee, which has meant a lot to him these past few years, given him a new lease on his professional life, helped him buckle down to his songwriting, gotten him a new recording contract and status as a genuine Top 10 country recording artist; Tennessee's been good for him, better than Los Angeles had come to be.

Then, going further back and further forward, there's the vegetable garden. It's very real—renders lots of good fresh food—but it's also symbolic, the closing of a circle which began on a black sharecropper's farm outside Houston, Texas, forty-plus years ago. Back then, the hard manual labor of tilling and planting and harvesting was an absolute necessity, something to escape from at the earliest possible opportunity and then forget forever. Now, after certain changes in Dobie, it's something to appreciate, a reminder of the values and virtues which went along with the life of a large, close family working together in the cotton fields; discipline, consideration, competence, continuity, endur-

ance, faith, stability.

"I never really looked at things long range, but now I do," Dobie says. "I guess at some point you realize 'I'm going to live to be 40!' and you think 'Gee, I don't have a home, or this, or that,' and you begin to change. Some of the artistic fervor goes into building a life, building a home. The fact that you're an artist doesn't mean you're never going to need financial security, or a role in life.

"So a few years ago I started from Square One again. I realized I was just a country boy, and I started from there."

That last statement could easily be misinterpreted. It might well be a sure-fire cute quote, the old "Well, folks, I bin out there in the wilderness, but I learned better and now here I am back here singin' for *you*, thank you very much for all your cards and letters, and of course the money helps too" ploy much favored by entertainers from other fields coming back (back?) into country. It isn't, though. Dobie Gray is an honest man, sincere and gentle and thoughtful (and besides, his active romance with Nashville goes back to the late 1960's); he's talking about something else entirely.

"You see," he explains, "back home on the farm I was brought up to trust

everybody. I was taught that it's not natural to distrust your fellow man. But after all I'd been through out in the world, I had gotten to a point where I didn't trust *anyone*. I wasn't down about it; I just didn't trust people, and I wasn't going to trust anyone again, ever. But then Joe turned that around, and I started going back to what I first believed."

Joe is Joe Sullivan of Sound 70, the Nashville-based management concern built around the Charlie Daniels Band. It was he who first acquainted Dobie with the possibility that show business personnel engaged in contractual relationships with musicians could be something other than confused, conflicted, crooked, or simply incompetent. Joe now manages Dobie, and has connected him with another paragon of clear thought and honest dealing, Mr. Jim Fogelsong of Capitol/E.M.I. Records. The result is that Dobie now finds himself admitting that "the sun is shining bright. And even when it rains, it doesn't bother me much."

Which is wonderful, because Dobie has had one of those music business careers which make you wince. They don't exactly reduce you to tears—like many another victim of misjudgment and missed timing and downright farce, Dobie has managed to make a relatively

decent living at his craft and is, after all, still among us—but they are frustrating, and they can even piss you off a bit; there's no telling how much great music you, the consumer, might have missed because of all that foolishness.

You might be tempted to make the argument that with Dobie, confusion begins at home—he is after all a black man who has spent his career singing in a predominantly white (and, in country, almost exclusively white) market—but that again is not the case; Dobie's voice is not identifiably “black,” he possesses musical instincts which veer naturally towards pop and country as opposed to R&B and blues, and country audiences have shown little resistance to the idea of black pop-country entertainers since the late 1960's. No; the pratfalls in Dobie's career have had many other causes.

There's the fact that he never received royalties for his writing and recording of “The In Crowd,” his first hit, for instance; that was just a straight rip, exploitation of an unsophisticated young man eager to break into the business.

Then there's the fact that “Drift Away,” his second (much bigger) hit, also got away from him. That piece of business was not quite so blatant, but the result was the same: he didn't get the money. Neither did he see any income from his first three MCA albums recorded in Nashville in the early 1970's. Maybe that was because nobody in charge could figure out whether to promote them “country” or “pop” and solved the dilemma by not promoting them at all, or maybe something a little more tricky in the expenses/income equation went on somewhere along the line, or both things happened, but whatever: for Dobie those albums were a dead-end street in terms of both income and career advancement. (That, by the way, really *is* a shame; they were great albums, full of soul and musicianship and originality—they foreshadowed and surpassed a lot of the better country/pop work happening successfully today—and if you're into musical archeology, you might consider adding them to your digging list.)

The MCA work was part of the long engagement which preceded Dobie's final move to Nashville in 1978. He lived in Los Angeles, the city to which he had flown as soon as he could from Texas and the place where he held down a long-running role in the 1960's musical *Hair* as well as involvements with bands such as Pollution and White Whale, but he did most of his musical work and a lot of his socializing in Music City; beginning in the early 1970's, he became part of a highly talented, very smart crew of songwriter/musicians who are still in the center of the business today: Troy

Seals, Mentor Williams, Will Jennings, Reggie Young, David Briggs. But despite all that, the magic recording connection just never got made. There were many efforts, many records on many labels, but no banana.

Ideally, he figured, he should live in both L.A. and Nashville, but being as how he liked to live on the beach in real-estate-crazy L.A. and he wasn't Michael Jackson or a drug dealer or an oil sheik, the choice eventually came down to either/or, and he chose Nashville.

It was the right choice. It led him to more disciplined and productive song-

“The fact that you're an artist doesn't mean you're never going to need financial security, or a role in life.”

writing, to some very nicely paying commercial work (yes, there's a real good reason why that Miller Beer singer sounds a lot like Dobie Gray), to some personal reflections and realizations, and to Joe Sullivan.

Dobie Gray is a large, impressive, good-humored gentleman, quick to laugh but also considerate and thoughtful and basically open-minded about himself and others. He is sensitive in the true sense of that overloaded word, he has a good heart, and he is interested in spreading a little of his personal sunshine around the place.

You can hear that in his old work—“Drift Away” was perhaps the most effective example of music's healing powers ever recorded, celebrating the benevolence of the beat while it also demonstrated it to lovely effect—and you can hear it today in his recent *From Where I Stand* album; framed by some cleverly country-conventional problems-of-love songs (notably the very real “House Divided By Two”) are other equally realistic gems of optimism and close-to-home sincerity: “That's One to Grow On,” “From Where I Stand,” “In the Family,” “A Night in the Life of a Country Boy.” Good feelings, good intentions; good songs, all plainly personal.

Talking to him about this and that,

you get a sense of how his benevolence developed. When he speaks of his childhood (he was raised by his aunt and uncle, a sharecropper/preacher, after his mother died and his father remarried), it is with an obvious affection for the people which transcends his memories of their economic circumstances, and he caps his account by quoting his song, “In the Family”: “Yeah—we *didn't* have much, but we *did* have love... and y'know, everything I've done in music, all the songs I've written and sung, my uncle has always figured in it. I never felt comfortable doing anything he'd have trouble with.”

This subject drifts naturally into that of the growing-up process today (relevant to Dobie personally; he has a teenage daughter in Los Angeles with whom he is in constant communication), and Dobie gets pained. He hired a local teenager to do some yard work the other day, and had to teach the kid how to rake leaves; the boy didn't know, his parents had never taught him; he knew all about how to play video games and probably had a thorough knowledge of optimum delivery procedures for a dazzling variety of drugs, but little matters like how to rake leaves and otherwise get by in the real world had not been part of his education.

Dobie figures that this syndrome—parental neglect, when you get right down to it—has a lot to do with the horrifying national teenage suicide statistics. He can't do much about it all, of course, but he *can* write songs like “In the Family,” put a little pro-life propaganda out there.

He knows, you see, that active parental love and a practical education work. He had love, and he's chopped cotton and shined shoes and worked in laundries and cooked for a living; he's done all sorts of things because he had to, and he's learned the basic, most valuable lesson of all: “I can *survive*. Everything could come apart tomorrow, and I could get by. Everyday living doesn't bother me; the only thing I'm scared of is a gun in my face. I'm not afraid of the big bad world.”

So all those years in which he failed to make a major wave in the music business didn't drive him into deep depression, towards emotional or physical suicide fast or slow; he closed up some, got too cautious with his fellow man, but he always got by and he didn't check out.

Now he's opened up again, and he's successful, and he's happy. He's also wised up a bit (with help). “My copyrights are pretty good these days,” he says. “They're going to be hard to steal, so what I'm doing now will stay with me in the future. That's a pretty good feeling, knowing your work isn't going to go down the tubes.” ■



Record Reviews

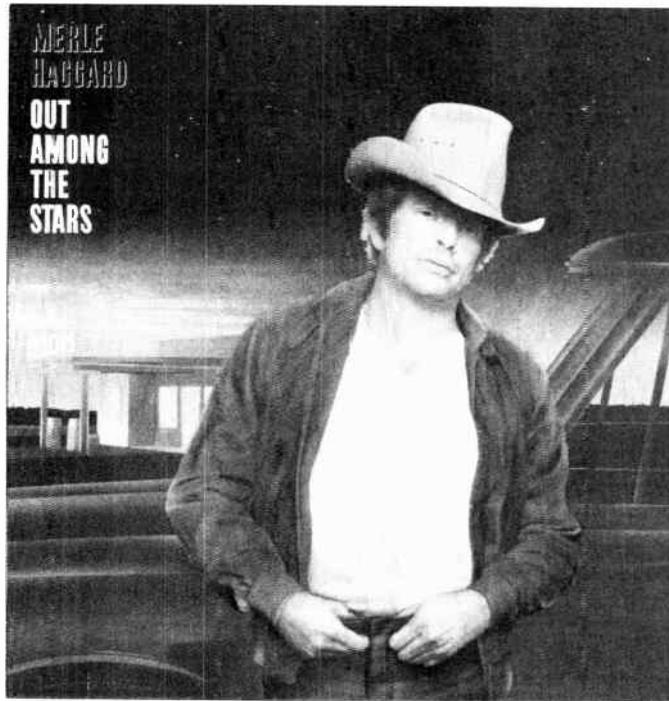
Merle Haggard

Out Among the Stars
Epic FET 40107

Sometimes, in the past, it's been hard to tell where Merle Haggard turned for inspiration. Aside from the tributes to his forerunners, his best work was so obviously a product of his personal pain. When he tried to express satisfaction, the result often rang hollow, and the rest of his music usually seemed just plain complacent, or indifferent. But with this album, all that has changed. This may be the first time Haggard has mastered the knack for expressing contentedness as credibly and as soulfully as he has in the past expressed adversity.

Not that the entire album is carefree and contented. The title tune is one of the better hard-time songs in a year that's seen plenty of them from both rock and country singers, and it puts across all its uneasiness and ambiguity implicitly as much as explicitly. "Tell Me Something Bad About Tulsa" has the kind of urgency and desperation of some of his most bitter hurting songs, with Haggard breaking his voice as brilliantly as anyone this side of George Jones. He then turns around and tops himself in that department with the next cut, "The Show's Almost Over."

But this album's version of "My Life's Been Grand" is a model of contentedness from a mellow Merle Haggard than we're used to, and with "Love Keeps Hanging On," it's hard not to conclude that this man is now more or less



at peace with himself and able to focus in on that feeling without laying it on so thick. "Why Can't I Cry" offers up some admissions about manhood that are downright bold for a country singer, not at all the kinds of things one can say unless one feels basically secure about such matters, while "Love Don't Hurt Everytime" is yet another successful love song, this one carried by delicately understated guitar/steel exchanges.

As usual, the Strangers reinforce Haggard's moods and sentiments effortlessly, from the acoustic intro of the opening "Out Among the Stars" to the last notes of "Almost Persuaded." And make no mistake—despite a couple of limp string arrangements, this is strictly a hard-country album. At a time when such music is on the rise due to new blood, it takes an

old master like Merle Haggard to show how it's really done. With the exception of the overwrought sports metaphors of "The Bleachers," this is, cut-for-cut, his most solid piece of work since 1983's tortured *That's the Way Love Goes*. It is also that album's mirror opposite.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Ricky Skaggs

Love's Gonna Get Ya!
Epic FE 40309

This isn't the same Ricky Skaggs. Wait a minute—don't panic. It makes sense that after five years Skaggs would need to experiment, and it's not like he hired the Nashville Symphony to back him on a bunch of comatose pop songs. Experimenting is

essential; artists have to grow. They only fail when they go off half-cocked or stand still. You can hear boredom in music easier than a sour note.

The differences are subtle. The only traditional song is a gospel number; he uses more Nashville studio musicians and less of his own band. All but two songs are contemporary, the rockers rocking just a little more and the ballads a bit more plaintive and modern. Yet otherwise, it's the same sound.

The title track is an explosive, dynamic boogie (*real* boogie, not the musical sludge Heavy Metal kids refer to as "boogie"). "A Hard Row to Hoe," co-written by Skaggs, serves as his statement on behalf of the farmers, to whom the album is dedicated. While it's not as tough as some other songs on the subject, the understatement makes it all the more effective.

"Love Can't Ever Get Better Than This," a duet with his wife Sharon, has the best of both worlds. It's traditional yet commercial enough to hit the Top Ten tomorrow. "New Star Shining," an excellent modern Christmas number, is fine, though James Taylor's harmonies are expendable. The instrumental "Raisin' the Dickens," written in the mid-1950's by steel guitarist Buddy Emmons when he worked with Little Jimmy Dickens' Country Boys (it's still Emmons' theme song), gets a supercharged 1980's treatment featuring Skaggs' steel player Terry Crisp. The gospel classic "Walkin' in Jerusalem" gives the lie to anyone who says rockabilly and gospel don't mix.

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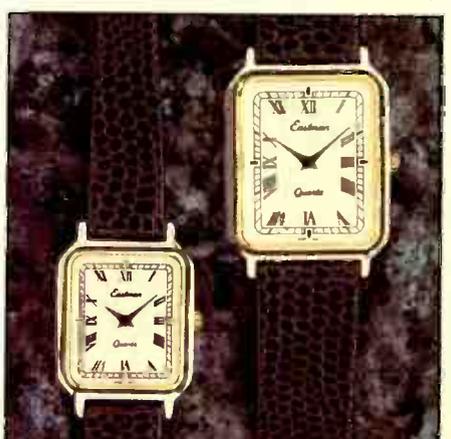
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Record Reviews

one of Skaggs' finest recordings ever, is a perfect rendition of Don Everly's brilliant "I Wonder If I Care As Much." So dainty and beautifully crafted is it that Skaggs not only does the lyrics justice, he gives it a timeless quality that makes it sound like those beautiful old Louvin Brothers numbers Emmylou Harris dug up a few years ago.

Of course, experimenters risk mistakes here and there. There are only three clinkers, but two of them are royal ones. The terminally coy "Artificial Heart" is annoying, and I dislike it so much it'll probably hit Number One if released as a single. "Daddy Was a Hardworking, Honest Man" takes the sentiments of paternal love into overwrought mawkishness. "Don't Stop, Gypsy," laden with pointless cliches, is beyond help.

Nonetheless, Skaggs is proving that his need to grow and develop his music need not mean the sort of sickening sellouts so many others have participated in. This is the way to spread your musical wings, and the best performances on *Love's Gonna Get Ya!* are among his finest.

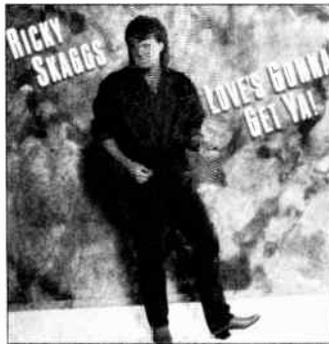
—RICH KIENZLE

John Anderson *Countrified*

Warner Bros. 25373-1

Don't get me wrong: I love the cracking, trembling, tear-stained, vibrato-laden voice as much as the next true country fan. That is, after all, one of the key factors that makes this music unique and real and from the heart, and for a while there, it appeared to be in danger of extinction. But sometimes—just sometimes—while listening to the newest John Anderson release, I get to feeling as though what I'm really hearing are vocal exercises.

As he has evolved as a singer, John has developed



more and more of a high, keening whine, and he hasn't always done right by it. To oversimplify, he sounds less than ever like Lefty Frizzell; at the same time, he's working a number of George Jones-like vocal fillips into his delivery. But he often overdoes them, showing them off like a kid does a new toy, without regard for how they function emotionally. On "Countrified," for example, he impressively negotiates a rather tricky melody only to draw attention away from his feat by overemphasizing particular words and phrases, making them count more than they should. Ditto on "What's So Different About You," where his acrobatics actually negate the meaning of the lyrics. When you use a special effect repeatedly, it ceases to be special.

But note that qualifying word "sometimes," too, because there are enough instances here where Anderson reins himself in and delivers hard country with grace and assurance. "Peace in the Valley," the timeless spiritual, would seem to be precisely the kind of song to bring out the worst in him, but he understates it nicely. And on "Honky Tonk Crowd," he makes every nuance work for him.

Just as there are other fine moments, there are also other problems evident on this album, which is a little more country and a little less rock (even on the rockers) than prior Anderson efforts. His remake of Merle Haggard's "The Fightin' Side of Me" period piece is com-



pletely out of touch and tone with the rest of the set, and by missing the self-mockery so abundant in Tony Joe White's "Do You Have a Garter Belt" and playing it as strictly a cutesy novelty song, Anderson comes off like a common panter. But except for those two and the pair mentioned earlier, he has turned in the kind of album that should meet no opposition from the keep-it-country crowd. He has always walked a thin line, and that line is perhaps getting even thinner, but for now he continues to pull it off.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

New Grass Revival *New Grass Revival* EMI America ST-17216

The New Grass Revival group brings a long history and some impressive credentials to its first major-label mainstream country album. For fifteen-plus years this radical outfit has worked the club/college/bluegrass circuit, opened shows for an astonishing variety of big-time pop/rock/country acts, and made many, many very interesting minor-label albums for a devoted and not inconsiderable body of fans. At times the row has been tough to hoe—flak from bluegrass traditionalists about amplification and material in the beginning, discouragement when the novelty of their approach wore off during the middle years—but the group has survived. Now

only its founder/leader, Sam Bush, remains from the original cast, but the three other members share his vision of bluegrass instrumentation and harmony technique applied to whatever material feels right, and are well up to snuff; in intent and execution, the band is not compromised at all. You've got some hot, energetic, serious pickers here.

Why, then, does this album—the first salvo in a campaign to introduce a great idea and a very dynamic, attractive group of individuals to a large and probably very willing new audience—feel somehow tired, sort of half-baked, a bit wimpy?

A tough question, that, but after far too much thinking I have come to a simple conclusion: it's the material. At one point in the process, I found myself playing with the discouraging thought that perhaps the band's reliance on lots of banjo picking, combined with the light, tenor quality of singer Pat Flynn's pipes, botched the whole project from the get-go—but then I backed up. I had to realize that my personal dislike of the banjo (a horrid, insubstantial, irritating little instrument which often seems to have been created just so it can be over-played) was just that, a personal prejudice, and I also had to remind myself that when the boys hooked into a song with genuine substance, they sounded a lot more than averagely good. Thus the success of "Sweet Release," a lovely, slow, harmony-perfect love song, and the reggae-touched "Revival," and the hook-laden "Lonesome Rider"; and thus the failure of other songs—"What You Do to Me," "In the Middle of the Night," etc.—which to my ear dance dangerously along the line between competent pop and commercial fluff.

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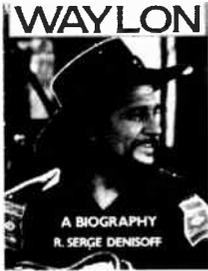
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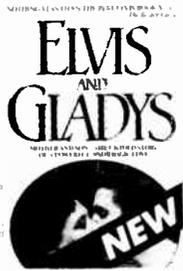
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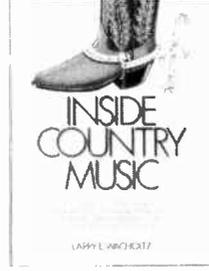
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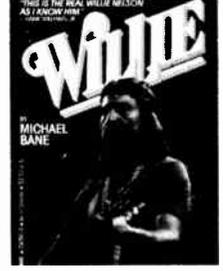
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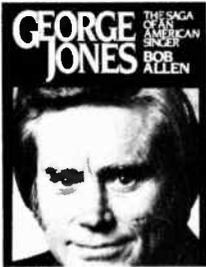
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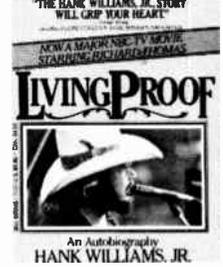
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the business of recording cute, upbeat country versions of deep-funk R&B originals has achieved a certain commercial attractiveness in modern Nashville (remember The Judds' dreadful squealy-bop take on Lee Dorsey's mournfully sensuous "Working in a Coal Mine"?), but really now! The Revival's "Peculiar" might well be a hit—it's *really* cute, wonderfully fluffy—but I'm changing stations when it hits the radio. I'll wait for *The New Chipmunks Sing Ray Charles* and get it all over with in one vile session.

But yes, the point. The point is that while *New Grass Revival* is a greatly talented, original, and interesting outfit, their chosen approach to music is too specific to allow a lot of leeway in their choice of material. Given the limits—and the possibilities—of the instrumentation with which they have chosen to work, they have to be much more careful than conventional bands. Numbers which are effective onstage, where the band's instrumental virtuosity and personal energy tend to make just about any material sound good, might not come across so well on records; choosing songs because they seem to represent the kind of thing a conventional mainstream country audience expects to hear might be a mistake; maybe *New Grass Revival* should look for material which *emphasizes* its uniqueness. Maybe it should really cut loose in its groove rather than expose itself with caution; and so on.

These points are very specific to the group and its choices, though; there is also the broader front. On that front, the question of how this album stacks up in the context of many other albums by many other artists—and particularly other bands—my answer is that it does well. There *is* something new and interesting here, something which could break a few over-moldy molds, and there are



some very nice moments. There are high-quality hits—"Sweet Release," "Revival," maybe "Lonely Rider"—and there is a *lot* of potential.

—PATRICK CARR

Willie Nelson *Partners* Columbia C39894

Remember when Willie Nelson seemed so good because he had the undeniable ability to surprise and delight? Even when he didn't actually do so, you always had the feeling that he might, and that's part of what kept you listening. There are a few glaring weaknesses in *Partners*, but I can't say that's what does the album in. No, what does the album in is its utter predictability. *Partners* may be to some extent the sound of a savvy old pro, but it's the sound of a savvy old pro in a rut.

Even the collaboration with producer Chips Moman, a partnership which promised and often delivered new country-pop possibilities, has become rather *pro forma*, cut and dried. Moman's and Willie's most ambitious efforts manage to come off grandiose and flat at the same time. "Partners After All," for example, is overproduced to the point where Willie must strain his vocals to match the swelling arrangement. "Hello Love, Goodbye," similarly leaves you remembering not the desired mood, but the extent to which everyone overreaches in an attempt to



get that mood. Willie used to handle this stuff effortlessly.

Still, I don't want to imply that the album is a disaster. Some of the songs—Sandy Mason's "When I Dream"—are awfully good, and some—James Taylor's "Something in the Way She Moves"—are not. "My Own Peculiar Way," a peculiar remake that adds nothing to the original, doesn't detract from it either; one just wonders why Willie redid it at all. On the up side, Mickey Raphael plays sweetly on "Heart of Gold."

Anyone who likes the schmaltzier pop side of Willie will probably like *all* of this stuff about the same. No, there's not a whole lot to complain about here. But *Partners* still works best as background music. I expect more than that from as unique a singer as Willie Nelson.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Dan Seals *On the Front Line* EMI America PW-17231

Well, ole Farmer Dan got himself a couple of CMA Awards for his first year in the country music market, and it's not too hard to figure out why. Apart from having earned them, success-wise, he just *wanted* them so bad, and wanted them for the right reasons, and just as importantly could plainly be seen to be doing so. Genuinely tickled pink to be certified country after all those lonely years being England Dan out

among the hipsters, the big feller has spent the last year or so giving off rays of humble home-at-last happiness guaranteed to melt the heart of even the hardest-bitten Music Row mover.

So that's great. Dan's awards are truly right and fitting. But the album which spawned them is history, and now it's that weird and queasy time, the arrival of the new artist's second album.

This is when spectacularly successful neophytes often blow it—get all mixed up about what people are expecting from them, or find themselves with a bunch of also-ran songs because they've spent every waking moment since the first album stoking the fire on the road and taking care of all the brand-new-star business, or whatever—so because I like Dan so much personally, I sort of edged towards *On the Front Line* the way I'd approach a hand grenade with the pin half drawn; ready for, and half expecting, the worst.

Sometimes I'm pretty stupid. I really should have known better. I should have remembered that Dan, a veteran of twenty years in the big time and just about every form of disaster and foolishness known to modern Showbiz Man, is as likely to make a mistake that elementary as he is to stick his finger in a Veg-O-Matic. Also, I should have known beyond a shadow of a doubt that even if the singer *had* experienced brain fade, the producer would have pulled it all together; Kyle Lehning's recently and wonderfully matured instinct for both style and substance is about as perfect as it gets. Unsurprisingly, then, *On the Front Line* is a beaut.

It's so nice, in fact, that it trashes some of my most stubborn prejudices. I am not a fan of the musical regions in which Dan and many, many of his contemporaries do most of their work—the none-too-country, none-too-rock, slightly soggy middle modern

Record Reviews

ground—but man, he and Lehning have done such a sweet job here that I just don't care, I love it anyway.

Partly it's the songs, all of which are smart and some of which are actually beautiful, and partly it's the production—so subtle, so nicely and feelingly and flexibly fit to each song—and partly it's Dan's singing.

I've never really thought of him as a brilliant vocalist, but now I do: range, control, and feeling are all right there where they need to be. He's his own man, of course, but here and there he sounds a little like a more supple, more passionate Don Williams or even another Billy Swan—though maybe that's just the sound of sincerity—and all over the album he sounds alive, like he really cares about what he's singing. You can hear this quality in Dan's sad “You Still Move Me” and his electric-excited “Guitar Man Out of Control” and the gorgeous “While I'm Here,” but the peak of it all is “Lullaby,” written with Rafe Vanhoy and sung with Emmylou Harris. It's got it all—it's gentle, moving, lovely in every way—and it says it all. Apart from everything else it proves, it shows how good a singer Dan really is: you don't sound perfect with Emmylou—and Emmylou doesn't sound perfect with you—unless you *really* know your way around your tonsils.

“Lullaby” raises another point about Dan's second album. The song and its performance are streets ahead of “Meet Me in Montana,” the duet with Marie Osmond which won him one of his 1986 CMA Awards, in style, substance, and feeling, and in a way that is also true of the whole record. It's not radically different from *Won't Be Blue Anymore*, or even noticeably “better.” It just sounds deeper somehow, more moving, clearer in its communication of the benevolent and thoughtful spirit behind it. That's a difficult and unusual achievement; it's



real progress, and it's real nice.

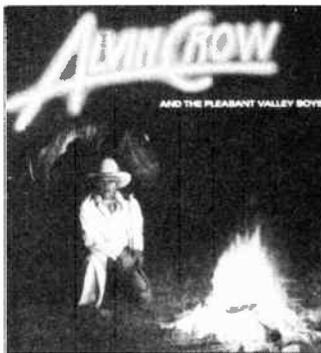
—PATRICK CARR

Alvin Crow and The Pleasant Valley Boys *Long Texas Nights* Auster ATX 003

After I praised Alvin Crow's first album in 1976, when he emerged as part of the “Austin Sound,” his then-manager started producing records and sent me every one, regardless of who sang it. They were awful. But Crow wasn't a fluke; his second album also won well-deserved praise. He even quit handleading for a time and joined Doug Sahm's band. Of course, things have changed since the mid-1970's, and Western swing and honky tonk, then thought to be Lost Arts, have returned with a vengeance.

What's the decade done to Crow? Well, the Western element is there, the swing is gone and none of the original band members are around. Those aren't the problems. The problem is that Crow's voice has lost some of its power; much of the time he sounds hoarse and his delivery is so bland you barely notice him at times. To put across good honky tonk, you gotta *mean* it. Crow may mean it, but he doesn't put it across like he did.

Eight of the ten numbers are Crow originals. All are so



laid back that, combined with the dull music, it's tough to distinguish this record from plenty of others recorded by mid-level Texas artists. He nearly takes off with Kenneth Threadgill's “Comin' Back to Texas,” the only impressive moment. Otherwise it's standard generic Texas material, lacking in fire or wit. Crow's strengths were always as a performer, and his songwriting, unfortunately, drives that point home.

“Brown Eyes Waltz” sounds like most Texas waltzes and even Joe Hudgins' “Where'd You Stay Last Night,” the obligatory rockabilly number, never gets off the ground. “Love Played a Joke” is basic honky tonk; “Underneath the Texas Sky” is so cut-and-dried it's downright annoying.

Perhaps Crow sees this effort as a comeback. I hope not for his sake. The hype-laden liner notes written by his drummer/manager state, “As a songwriter, performer and a recording artist, Crow pulls no punches!” Wrong. He pulls every one, and the results are disappointing.

—RICH KIENZLE

Lyle Lovett *Lyle Lovett* MCA/Curb 5748

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, Texas produced its own largely self-contained movement of native-born, or at least native-raised songwriters.

These were lyrically sophisticated and socially informed figures like Jerry Jeff Walker, “Mr. Bojangles”; Guy Clark, “Desperados Waiting for a Train”; Billy Joe Shaver, “Old Five and Dimers Like Me”; and Townes Van Zandt, “Pancho and Lefty.” All were artists whose music rang with a distinctly regional flavor and whose lyrics were unusually strong. Yet their work helped shape country music's mainstream.

Though the rush of Texas songwriters into country music's mainstream via the Nashville recording industry has—largely due to Nashville's lack of interest—recently slowed to a trickle, it has never quite dried up. Now, the faucet is slowly being turned back on again.

One of the most impressive singer/songwriters to emerge with a current major-label deal is Lyle Lovett, a fourth-generation Texan and lifelong resident of the Houston area, who came of age learning to finger-pick guitar while listening to Guy Clark records. His debut album, *Lyle Lovett*, brings to the fore a musically sophisticated and perceptive new Texas songpoet whose artistic sensibilities and understated singing style encompass an unusually wide range of rural and urban influences. If you listen closely, you can hear elements of all the aforementioned 1960's and 1970's-generation Texas singer/writers echoing around, as well as traces of more far-afield rock, pop and folk stylists such as Jesse Winchester, Tom Waits and Eric Anderson.

Lovett, who holds a degree in journalism from Texas A&M University, grew up in a south Texas farming community that was gradually engulfed by the ever-expanding Houston suburbs. Consequently, his music is very much a product of both the old Texas of popular imagination and the newer Texas whose wide-open spaces of legend have become encircled by freeways, shopping malls

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and well-heeled oil money suburbs.

"This Old Porch," for instance, written by Lovett, along with Robert Keen, is a remarkably moving statement of someone who has watched the gradual and sometimes uneasy collision of these divergent rural and urban Lone Star states of mind.

Lovett possesses a free-flowing, at times stunning way with words. He proves capable of dealing as a songwriter with everything from romantic despair to off-hand social satire. His throaty, relaxed vocal inflections, his informal approach to melody and his delightfully eccentric views on love and heart-break—as in "God Will, But I Won't" or "If I Were the Man You Wanted, I Would Not Be the Man That I Am" and on after-hours high life and low life—as in "Why I Don't Know" and "Closing Time" remind me of a down-by-the Brazos Tom Waites.

Considerable credit must go to producer Tony Brown for the fluid, yet unobtrusive sound mix on the largely acoustic-oriented arrangements, which enhance but never overwhelm Lovett's laid-back, occasionally growling vocal style. But the lion's share of credit must go to Lovett himself, who recorded this album on his own (a few vocals and instrumental parts were later overdubbed in Nashville), with his own band and using his own money, in a small Arizona studio. In turning in such a thoroughly impressive debut effort, he has proven to us once again, that *less* is indeed sometimes more.

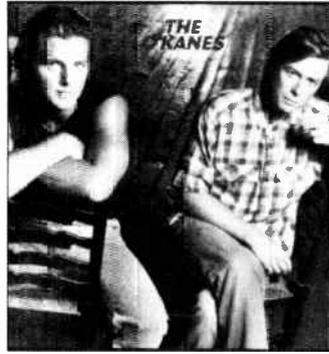
—BOB ALLEN

The O'Kanes

The O'Kanes

Columbia BC6 40469

When I opened up the promo package, the group's name didn't register.



Kieran Kane I knew—he wrote "Grandpa (Tell Me 'Bout the Good Old Days)" for The Judds; Jamie O'Hara I never heard of. But damned if this doesn't cap a phenomenal year for new talent. If I'd heard this album sight unseen, in mono, I'd have wanted to review it in *Buried Treasures*.

The O'Kanes are an acoustic band, except for electric guitar here and there. They have bluegrass instrumentation, even an accordion. That's okay, fans, even Bill Monroe used one for awhile in the 1940's. But The O'Kanes aren't bluegrass. Nor do they follow the paths of current greats like Steve Earle or Randy Travis or pay self-conscious homage to legends of the past. They are so fresh, so delightfully free of pretense as to be one of a kind.

The album, recorded live in the studio with few technical gimmicks sounds as durable and loose as if the band were playing on somebody's porch. Like Sam Phillips, Kane and O'Hara know that the feel is the thing, and the feel comes through on every single track, loud and clear.

As for musicianship, the big band sound on "Can't Stop My Heart from Loving You," generated by Kieran Kane's guitar and Jay Spell's accordion, is as effective as any synthesizer, pedal steel or the Nashville String Machine.

Even the songs are what intellectuals call "minimalist," stripped to the bare bones with no frills. "Oh Darlin'" is the most basic lost



love number I've heard in years, garnished with a dry humor that enhances most of The O'Kanes' compositions. "Gonna Walk That Line" skewers those love songs about settling down to please your woman by mixing every stupid cliché on the subject into a devastating spoof.

Even the more serious numbers are unpretentious. "Daddies Need to Grow Up, Too," has a syrupy title, yet the genuine contrition expressed in the lyrics is anything but cute. And "Oh, Lonesome You" twists the sentiments of Don Gibson's classic right around from a lament into a warning. Even "Bluegrass Blues," a ballad light years from Flatt and Scruggs, is as chilling and eerie as an October night. The beauty of "When We're Gone, Long Gone" is not in its achingly traditional flavor, but in the sweet, pure sentiments of love after death.

It's ironic that the only failure is a tepid version of "That's All Right, Mama," Elvis' first Sun recording and the album's only non-original number. There's nothing new in their treatment, and it simply isn't needed with material as good as their own.

One thing people liked about Ernest Tubb and Buck Owens was that their music was accessible to everyone. You could hum it, sing it, or if you were musically inclined, play it, and you didn't even have to be a virtuoso. Believe it: if the Delmore Brothers were alive today, they'd be the O'Kanes.

—RICH KIENZLE

Kathy Mattea

Walk the Way the Wind Blows

Mercury 830-405 M-1

Let me say up front that this is a very well made album (uh-oh, oh-boy, here it comes), and that I like "Love at the Five and Dime" as much as the next guy. I even liked it after the radio played it every third song for about six weeks. Allen Reynolds knows more about producing women singers than any three or four guys knocking around Nashville these days. I mean, hell, Crystal Gayle never sounded so good as when Allen Reynolds did her records.

I'd also like to go right on record by saying that Kathy Mattea can sing right up there with the best of them. Her voice has got some juice to it, a good bottom end, as we used to say. You get the feeling that she believes this stuff, is real—emotes, as it were.

Songs are good; a couple, including Rodney Crowell's "Song For the Life," are as good as "Love at the Five and Dime," which is good indeed.

Okay, here it comes—where is it written that girl singers can't sing uptempo songs? Especially a good singer like Kathy Mattea? Come on, Allen, lighten up. One or two uptempo songs—or one or two songs with more of the airy, lighthearted spirit that characterizes "Love at the Five and Dime." It's hard to explain, really. "Love at the Five and Dime" has an almost bemused touch, a human touch that I really love. "Back Up Grinnin' Again" comes close—plus, I'm a sucker for Cajun accordion.

Still, complaints aside, this is an excellent album.

I love Ms. Mattea's voice, but I'd love it even more uptempo, I'll bet.

—MICHAEL BANE

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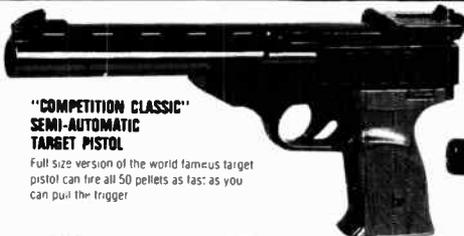
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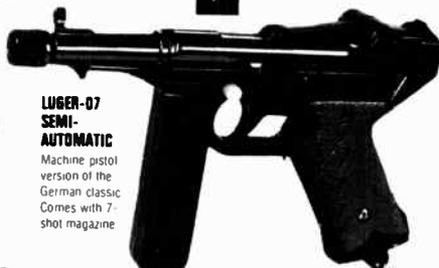
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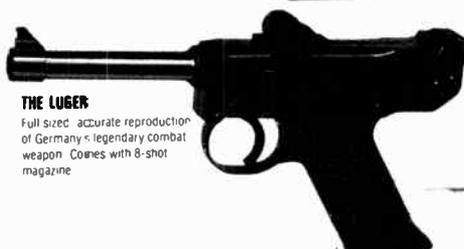
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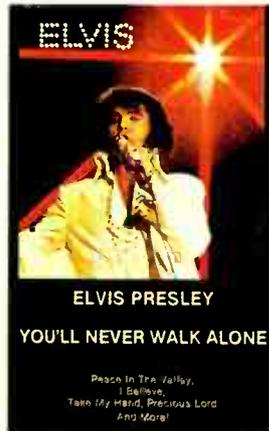
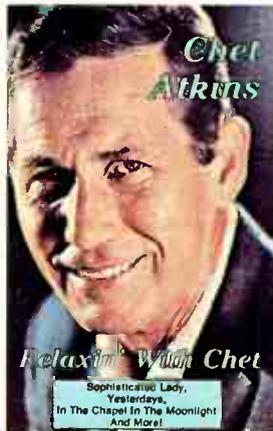
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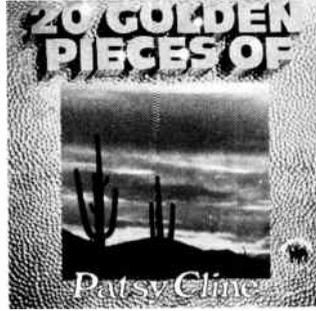
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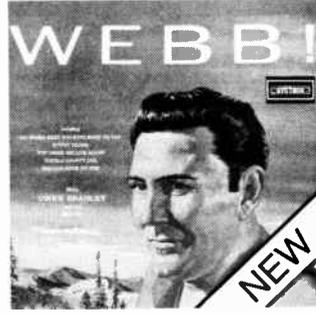
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Hank Locklin: From Here To There To You—Let Me Be The One/Please Help Me I'm Falling/Geisha Girl/Happy Birthday To Me/Send Me The Pillow That You Dream On/These Arms You Push Away/It's A Little More Like Heaven Where You Are, more! LP No. BDL 1033/Cass. No. BDLC 1033



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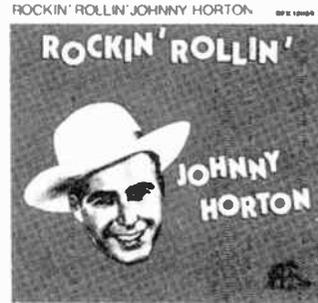
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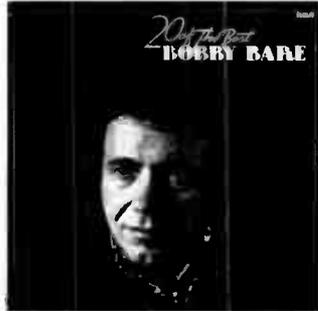
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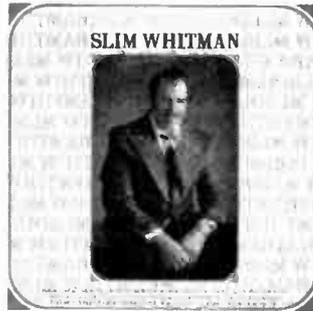
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Buried Treasures

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

The Louvin Brothers: Ira and Charlie, the Louvin Brothers, hold a special place in the hearts and minds of traditional artists and fans, and, due to exposure of their songs by Gram Parsons and later Emmylou Harris, they are also known by the younger generation. Though Rounder and Gusto have done fine reissues, no one covered the Louvin Brothers' outstanding 1955-1958 Capitol sides until Rebel Records compiled 12 masterpieces for *The Best of the Early Louvin Brothers* (REB 852).

The brothers' dignity and exquisite, keening harmonies distinguished them in an era of honky tonk and rockabilly,

the guitar/mandolin combination harkening back to earlier "brother acts" like the Blue Sky Boys and the Monroe Brothers. "You're Running Wild," an example included here, drips with hurt and indignation, as do "Memories and Tears" and "Don't Laugh."

"When I Stop Dreaming," their first hit, remains a love song of singular beauty. The roots of Charlie's later solo work can be heard in "Plenty of Everything But You," while Ira shines on "Cash on the Barrelhead," a bow to rockabilly. Stetson at long last also has a Louvins Capitol album that we'll look at next issue.

Webb Pierce: Disgraceful as it is that you can't find Webb Pierce's best work on domestic MCA, Stetson is doing something about it by reissuing *Webb!* (HAT 3019). This 1959 album, recorded at Webb's peak, includes two 1958 hits, "Tupelo County Jail" and his movingly simple "Falling Back to You."

Even his covers of other artists' songs, such as his chilling version of Stonewall Jackson's hit "Life to Go," Ray Price's "My Shoes Keep Waling Back to You" or his "Crazy Arms," and Charlie Walker's "Pick Me Up on Your Way Down," are masterful, and the awful paint-by-numbers original album cover and

dumb liner notes are great.

The Carter Family: Students of The Carter Family believe that some of The Carter Family's best work was done during their 1936-38 stint with Decca Records. Maybelle was playing better guitar than than at any time previously, and her close-harmony vocals with Sara were far more cohesive. Their musical growth was reflected in both traditional and more modern-sounding numbers.

A Collection of Favorites by The Carter Family (HAT 3022) a long-extinct 1963 Decca album of their 1930's material, runs the gamut from gospel ("Sweet Heaven in My View" and "The Way-

Essential Collector

If you believe the hype, compact discs (CD's) will snuff records any day. Maybe someday, but for now, compact discs cost three to five dollars more than records; only a few inexpensive disc players (under \$300) exist today.

Cassettes have many of the same advantages as compact discs at a far lower price, and, happily, The Special Music Company has been leasing prime material from RCA and CBS and putting it out on eight to twelve-song cassettes. I won't even have to describe most of the material here. You'll know it. Fans of older music haven't always been well-served by cassette offerings. However, since these make available some long-unavailable favorites, they're tremendous bargains.

Bob Wills: *The Best of Bob Wills* (CBK 3203) consists of eight of Wills' greatest 1930's and 1940's numbers from



Columbia: "San Antonio Rose," "New San Antonio Rose," "Big Beaver," "The Convict and the Rose" and "Trouble in Mind."

Johnny Cash: *This is Johnny Cash* (CBK 3014) brings us his best eight from the 1950's through the 1970's: "Folsom Prison Blues," "A Boy Named Sue," "If I Were a Carpenter" with June, "Frankie's Man Johnny,"

"One Piece at a Time," "Five Feet High and Risin'," "Man in Black" and "Understand Your Man."

Bill Monroe: *The Best of Bill Monroe* (CBK 3021) contains eight Columbia sides, including "Blue Grass Special," "Goodbye, Old Pal," and "True Life Blues." "Blue Yodel #4," "Toy Heart," "The Old Cross Road (Is Waiting)," "Mansions For Me" and

"Summertime Is Past and Gone" feature Flatt and Scruggs with Monroe.

The Carter Family: *The Original and Great Carter Family* (CAK-586) brings twelve RCA sides back to the consumer, including "Wildwood Flower," "Wabash Cannonball," "Diamonds in the Rough," "Lulu Walls," "Forsaken Love," "Little Moses" and six other gems from their earliest sessions.

Willie Nelson: *Columbus Stockade Blues* (CAK-2444) is short version of the 1965 RCA album, *Country Favorites—Willie Nelson Style*, recorded with fiddler Wade Ray and Ernest Tubb's Texas Troubadours. These ten Texas honky tonk chestnuts range from the swinging title track to "Heartaches By the Number," "San Antonio Rose," "Fraulein," Ernest Tubb's "Go On Home," "Seasons of My Heart" and four others that add up to a fine exploration of Willie's roots.

Porter Wagoner: *A Satisfied Mind* (CAK-769)—this one's truly welcome considering

worn Traveler") to such surprisingly funky numbers as "Jealous Hearted Me" and the classic "Coal Miner's Blues." "Stern Old Bachelor" is slyly satirical and "Hello, Stranger," with Sara and Maybelle trading vocals, is both clever and entertaining. And be forewarned: "Little Joe," a 1930's dying-child number, may be the most morbid song you'll ever hear.

Bob Wills: Texas-based Delta Records began a promising reissue series of vintage Bob Wills transcriptions in 1985, just before the company folded. They released two more volumes, but the company's demise made them hard to find. The remaining stock is now available, and once they're gone, there'll be no more.

Right or Wrong (DLP-1181) brings together two complete 1945-1946 Bob Wills Roundup



shows, done when the band was based in Fresno, California. The Playboys had a three-fiddle lineup, Wills, Louis Tierney and Joe Holley, along with Millard Kelso's inventive piano, Junior Barnard's roaring guitar and Tommy Duncan's voice.

Such talent made the band musically fertile, and it's clear they also had a good time recording these. Duncan nearly busts out laughing at

times. His vocals on "Right or Wrong" and "Basin Street Blues" are robust and animated. "Jesse Polka," "Twinkle Star," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Seven Come Eleven" are hot instrumentals where Barnard truly tears it up, and it's great to hear Alex Brashear's hot trumpet in the middle of the old square dance number, "Get Along Home, Cindy."

For Collectors, Volume 2

(DLP-1182) catches the 1949 Playboys in their Presto transcriptions. By then, the band members were dividing up the vocals, as Tommy Duncan had been fired the year before. Electric mandolinist Tiny Moore capably tackles "Blues For Dixie," Shamblin sings a stomping version of "There'll Be Some Changes Made" and Bob sings one of his few vocal spotlights, the old blues, "Sittin' on Top of the World."

The electric string ensemble of Tiny, guitarist Eldon Shamblin and steel player Herb Remington shines on white-hot versions of "Take the 'A' Train," "Tuxedo Junction," "Sunrise Serenade" and the Wills standard, "Twin Guitar Special." The sound is rough at times on both albums, since this music was recorded on discs, not tape.

—RICH KIENZLE

how little of Porter's early work is available today. It's loaded with his earliest RCA recordings, including his first and second hits from 1955, "Satisfied Mind" and "Eat, Drink and Be Merry." The other material's not bad, either: fine covers of "Born to Lose" and "Settin' the Woods on Fire," "I Like Girls," "I Can't Live Without You" and six more.

Kitty Wells with Johnny and Jack: *Inspirational Songs* (CAK-620). In the late 1940's, before she ever had a hit of her own, Kitty recorded sacred material with Johnny and Jack (Johnny being her husband). If you like raw country gospel, this qualifies, and Kitty's vocals are, if anything, stronger than on some of her later hits, particularly on "How Far Is Heaven" and the eloquent "A Flower for the Master's Bouquet."

Jim Reeves: Three excellent Jim Reeves cassettes cover both his pre-RCA days and afterwards. The mix of material on these albums shows that though the sound of his records changed greatly, the

quality of his music never faltered—he sounded great either way. The ten numbers on *Young & Country* (CAK 2532) all come from his early Fifties records for Abbott, and though his biggest Abbott hit, "Mexican Joe," isn't included, numbers like "Hillbilly Waltz," "Spanish Violins" and "Wagon Load of Love" all helped to establish him as a favorite on *The Louisiana Hayride*.

According to My Heart (CAK-583) covers 10 early RCA numbers, before Reeves started recording with more muted Nashville Sound

accompaniments, without fiddles and steel. The quality remains high. On "Don't Tell Me" and "According to My Heart," he still sounds "country," while on "You'll Never Be Mine Again" the intimate vocal sound that he used so well on "Four Walls" is clearly forming.

The Country Side of Jim Reeves (CAK-686) mixes his first RCA hit, the 1955 "Yonder Comes a Sucker," and other early material like "A Railroad Bum," a rough-edged version of Jimmie Rodgers' "Waitin' For a Train," with later material

like the plaintive "Blue Side of Lonesome" and "When Two Worlds Collide," both hits after he died. Chet Atkins fans will love his playing on Reeves' 1956 hit, "My Lips Are Sealed," the first Reeves record with the Nashville Sound.

Hank Snow: Aside from British RCA's *20 of the Best of Hank Snow* and the Detour album, *Just Keep A-Movin'*, there's precious little of Hank Snow's early 1950's material to be found. The 12 songs on *The Singing Ranger* (CAK 514), originally released in 1959, coinstitute a worthwhile exception to that rule. There are plenty of hits: the 1952 "I Went to Your Wedding," the surrealistic 1953 "Honeymoon on a Rocket Ship" and 1955's "Born to Be Happy." Two are Jimmie Rodgers standards, "Ben Dewberry's Final Run" and "Mississippi River Blues." Also included are such older, sentimental tunes as "The Engineer's Child." If you have the other Snow albums, this one's a worthy companion.

—RICH KIENZLE

How to Order These Treasures

The following are all \$9.98. Specify record or cassette: **The Best of the Early Louvin Brothers** (REB 852); **A Collection of Favorites by The Carter Family** (HAT 3022); **Bob Wills' Right or Wrong** (DLP 1181) and **For Collectors, Volume 2** (DLP 1182).

Send check to **Country Music Magazine**, Dept. 0102, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Add \$1.95 postage for first item ordered, \$.95 for each additional.

All cassettes covered in *Essential Collector* are \$4.95 each. To order, see Nashville Warehouse "Buy Three and Pick One Free" ad elsewhere in this issue. CMSA members, see special members' discounts on *For Members Only* page 34 in this issue.

TOP 25

Albums

1. Alabama *The Touch*
2. Randy Travis *Storms of Life*
3. Earl Thomas Conley..... *Too Many Times*
4. Reba McEntire *What Am I Gonna Do About You*
5. Ricky Skaggs..... *Love's Gonna Get Ya*
6. Dwight Yoakam *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.*
7. Steve Earle..... *Guitar Town*
8. George Strait *#7*
9. George Jones *Wine Colored Roses*
10. Hank Williams Jr..... *Montana Cafe*
11. Sawyer Brown..... *Out Goin' Cattin'*
12. Gary Morris..... *Plain Brown Wrapper*
13. The Judds..... *Rockin' With the Rhythm*
14. Dan Seals..... *On the Front Line*
15. Merle Haggard..... *Out Among the Stars*
16. Ray Stevens..... *Surely You Joust*
17. Alabama *Greatest Hits*
18. John Schneider..... *Take the Long Way Home*
19. Exile..... *Greatest Hits*
20. Willie Nelson..... *Partners*
21. Lee Greenwood *Love Will Find Its Way To You*
22. T Graham Brown *I Tell It Like It Used To Be*
23. Marie Osmond..... *I Only Wanted You*
24. Larry Gatlin and
The Gatlin Bros..... *Partners*
25. Billy Joe Royal..... *Looking Ahead*

Singles

1. Alabama *Touch Me When We're Dancing*
2. Larry, Steve, Rudy:
The Gatlin Brothers *Baby*
3. George Strait *It Ain't Cool To Be Crazy About You*
4. T Graham Brown *Hell and High Water*
5. The Bellamy Brothers with
The Forester Sisters *Too Much Is Not Enough*
6. Hank Williams Jr..... *Mind Your Own Business*
7. Holly Dunn..... *Daddy's Hands*
8. Michael Johnson *Give Me Wings*
9. Ricky Skaggs..... *Love's Gonna Get You Someday*
10. George Jones *Wine Colored Roses*
11. Sawyer Brown With
"Cat" Joe Bonsall *Out Goin' Cattin'*
12. Reba McEntire *What Am I Gonna Do About You*
13. Waylon Jennings *What You'll Do When I'm Gone*
14. Billy Joe Royal..... *I Miss You Already*
15. The Judds..... *Cry Myself To Sleep*
16. Marie Osmond With
Paul Davis *You're Still New To Me*
17. John Schneider..... *At the Sound of the Tone*
18. Don Williams..... *Then It's Love*
19. Mel McDaniel..... *Stand On It*
20. Kathy Mattea *Walk the Way the Wind Blows*
21. Conway Twitty *Fallin' For You For Years*
22. T.G. Sheppard *Half Past Forever*
23. Pake McEntire..... *Bad Love*
24. Judy Rodman..... *She Thinks That She'll Marry*
25. The O'Kanes *Oh, Darlin'*

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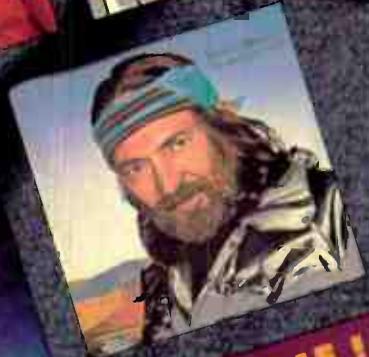
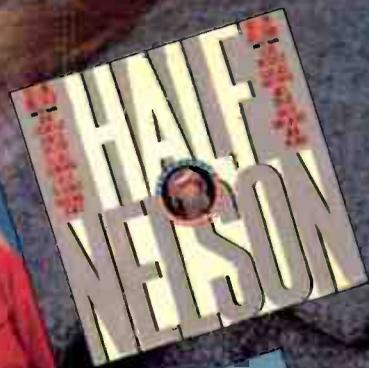
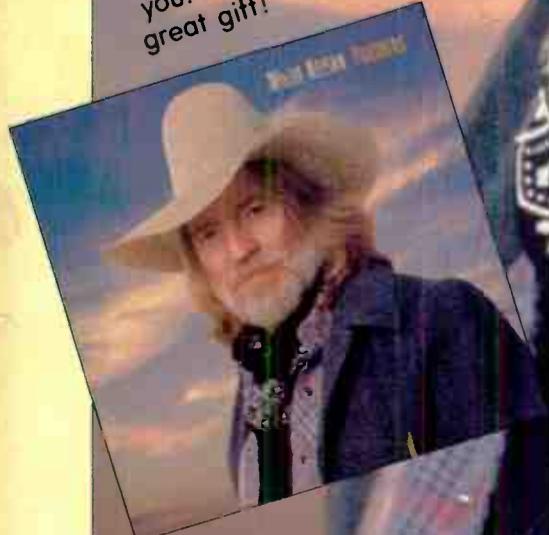
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