

## COUNTRY MUSIC IN CANADA

by  
GORD  
SYMONDS

The music business is a changing business. The musical fads of yesterday are commercially dead and no one knows for sure how long the cash registers will continue singing to today's tunes. That's why many people in the industry looked with skepticism at CFGM's switch to an all-country format more than two years ago. "Sure country music is hot now," they said, "But how long will it last?" To add impressive muscles to their logic they pointed to the legion of stations which had hitched their formula-wagons to musical stars. "How long", they asked, "Had singalong music lasted?" And even while CFGM was making the change to country a host of stations were abandoning the folk music format.

It's evident now that CFGM's wagon is tied to the music phenomena of the century. Country music has proved as durable as Berlin's "White Christmas". What's more, it's continuing growth in the past year indicates the peak is still ahead. Here are some suggestions why.

### MORE STATIONS ARE PLAYING COUNTRY MUSIC

More stations continue to play more country music every month. Though country stations were once confined to secondary markets, the trend is to larger metro stations taking the plunge into the all-country pool. Doing exceptionally well are country stations in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Seattle. In many cases country stations have made such inroads into the market that the pop stations have begun to sprinkle country music liberally over their formula. (It does this old hillbilly heart good to hear CFGM blasting away on such items as Little Jimmie Dickens' "May the Bird of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose.")

Television, too, has tossed a couple of grapping hooks at the fast-moving country bandwagon. The Jimmy Dean Show below and the Tommy Hunter Show here are two examples of programs with a country music foundation. Dozens of others, though not using it in the cellar, have been wise enough to strengthen their structure against the ratings storms by adding country music above the frost line. (Shindig, Hullabaloo, Steve Lawrence, Lloyd Thaxton, Johnny Carson, etc.)

### COUNTRY ARTISTS HAVE GONE MODERN

Without losing the basic qualities which make country music unique, country record producers are currently creating magnificent

# INTERNATIONAL COUNTRY MUSIC MONTH



sounds, acceptable to a far larger segment of the buying public than ever before. Listen to Eddy Arnold's "Make the World Go Away" or Leroy Van Dyke's "Just a State of Mind" and you'll see what I mean. The days of the fruit jar and the washboard, the wailing fiddle and the off-key singer are gone.

### POP ARTISTS HAVE GONE COUNTRY

Country music has been exposed to the world by such giants as Dean Martin, Brenda Lee, Johnny Tillotson and, yes, the Beatles. You can hear country music instrumentally on new albums by Frank Chacksfield, Henry Jerome, The Three Suns, Billy Liebert and Jan Garber. If these people think country music is worth singing and playing and collecting royalties from, who are we to argue?

### COUNTRY STATIONS ARE GROWING UP

Rapidly disappearing (Thank God!) are the stations who take an artificial cowboy, hand him a random armful of records and a batch of three minute commercials. The successful country stations of today have a select list of the best music currently available, tight production, first class broadcast personalities, and excellent jingles. They promote shrewdly. They are

giving increasing attention to news, sports, public service presentations and other features of high listener interest. Wherever a station has switched to country music and done it in such a way that everyone connected with the operation could be proud of what they were doing, a sizeable rating increase has followed.

More and more we are moving into an age of specialization. The secret is to find a speciality format which will not be obsolete in twelve months. I predict that hundreds of stations in Canada and the U.S. will "discover" country music very shortly.

# THE GRAND OLE OPRY

by Brian Chalker

## The Ryman Auditorium and the W.S.M. Barn Dance



The Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, provides the right setting and atmosphere for the world famed Grand Ole Opry. Captain Tom Ryman was the owner of a

fleet of pleasure boats on the Cumberland River during the last 19th century. Ryman's boats featured gambling rooms, and saloons all luxuriously equipped, which were considered immoral by Sam Jones, a noted revivalist. Jones, who was then holding meetings and services on the Union Gospel grounds, challenged Ryman to attend one of his meetings. Ryman accepted and brought along his crew of riverboat ruffians. They seated themselves in the front row with the sole intention of heckling Jones, but Tom Ryman was touched when Jones chose as his subject for speech, 'Mother'. Ryman was converted that very night. It was then that he decided that Jones was too good a preacher to be confined to a humble tent. Realizing that something had to be done, Ryman started a fund to build a tabernacle for all revivalists, regardless of creed. The Ryman Auditorium was completed in 1892.

George D. Hay, 'The Solemn Old Judge', a newspaper man from Memphis, arrived in Nashville and noticed the tremendous wealth of hillbilly talent in and around the hills of Tennessee. Hay's love of folk music set him on the prospecting road.

On Saturday, November 28th, 1925, George D. Hay launched the W S M Barn Dance. W S M being the radio station that had Hay as its first director.

The first performer on that historic night was an old man of over 80, Uncle Jimmy Thompson, who boasted that he knew a thousand fiddle tunes.

### The Groups, growing pains and The Opry.

In those days, singers took second place to fiddlers, banjoists and guitarists, who poured into W S M for auditions, following the success of Uncle Jimmy Thompson. Larger groups followed on, led by a Dr. Humphrey Bates who played the harmonica, and brought along six neighbours, all of whom played other instruments. Bates and Hay named the group, 'The Possum Hunters'. It is still part of the show to this day, even sporting two of its original members.

Next came groups such as the Crook Brothers, the Gully Jumpers and The Fruit Jar Drinkers. They also remained in the Opry, although the personnel have changed.

The show was now approaching growing pains. The fiddlers and groups had got the show going, but the time had come to im-

prove the props.

The first singing star to appear under the spotlight was 'The Dixie Dewdrop', — Uncle Dave Macon. During the first 15 years of the show, Macon was the biggest single attraction.

During its primary stages, the show was broadcast from the fifth floor at the National Life Building. But, with the additions to the cast, newer and larger quarters were built on the same floor. With the new studios in operation, listeners were able to watch the performance.

W S M Barn Dance remained as such until 1927, when it received a new title, quite accidentally. On that particular day, George D. Hay was given the signal that the Music appreciation hour had ended and that the Barn Dance was on the air. He began the programme by stating that the programme preceding the Barn Dance, was devoted to the classics — music taken largely from Grand Opera. But from then on, he would present "The Grand Ole Opry". The name caught on and the show increased in popularity.

### The Opry moves home.

#### Country music becomes world favourite.

Forced to move once more, due this time to a ban on 'live' audiences, W S M rented the Hillsboro Theatre in the southwest part of the city. It became so popular that on Saturday nights crowds were being turned away. A tabernacle across the Cumberland River in east Nashville was then leased, but being in a bad location, this was abandoned. The Opry then moved to the War Memorial Auditorium in the shopping area. Prior to this move entry to the Opry had been free, but it was decided to charge 25 cents admission.

The Grand Ole Opry had now been on the air for fourteen uninterrupted years. In 1941, the final move was made to the Ryman Auditorium, where it has been ever since.

The appeal of the Grand Ole Opry is universal. Its audience is largely comprised of people from all over the United States, and even foreign countries. In October, 1963, a group of thirty three enthusiasts from England, (including myself) visited the Opry. The Ryman Auditorium has seating capacity for 3,574 people.

During the years following 1940, country

music became a world favourite, thanks largely to the development of the country and western vocalist.

Although Uncle Dave Macon had for 15 years been the Opry's singing star, the basic talent was the band.

Macon's part was more that of a featured vocalist in a present day dance band.

**Roy Acuff, Pee Wee King, Eddy Arnold, Red Foley, etc..**

Roy Acuff, changed this, he reversed the procedure, around 1938. Opry acts of those days included Pee Wee King and his Golden West Cowboys. One instrumentalist, come singer, in the band, Eddy Arnold, sang a song entitled 'Mommy, please stay home with me'. It suited him so well that he was lifted from his sub-ordinate position with the band.

Others soon followed suit, Red Foley, with 'Smoke on the water', Ernest Tubb, with, 'Walkin' the floor over you', Hank Williams, with, 'Your cheatin' heart' etc ... Here then was the birth of the country singer. Added to this came a vast increase in listeners.

Today, the Grand Ole Opry is famous as the oldest continuous commercial radio show — 40 uninterrupted years. Variety has been introduced — gay songs, gags, hymns, ballads, instrumentals, etc.

Throughout its history, the Opry has seen many greats on its ancient stage, Hank Williams, Rod Brasefield, Uncle Dave Macon, Hawkshaw Hawkins, and Cowboy Copas, all of whom have passed on. Others include Chet Atkins, Pete Drake, Johnny Cash, Skeeter Davis, Jimmie Driftwood, Flat & Scruggs, Marty Robbins, Jim Reeves, Tex Ritter, Hank Snow, Ferlin Husky, The Jordanaires, Stringbean, Grandpa Jones, Bill Monroe, George Jones, Johnny and Jack, Kitty Wells, Jimmy Newman, Stonewall Jackson, Porter Wagoner, Loretta Lynn, The Carter Family, The Louvin Brothers and others far too numerous to mention here.

The Grand Ole Opry is the proving ground for country singers. Despite the fact they receive little or no fees, the prestige value of having appeared on the stage at the Ryman Auditorium is enormous.

It can be safely said that the ultimate ambition of all country performers is to appear on the fabulous Grand Ole Opry.

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According to Arc President, Phil Anderson, country music has a widely varying meaning for each area in Canada and throughout the world but it is basically the music that appeals to run the factories that grow the food, transport our goods, harvest our timber and in general the down-to-earth adult population.

In the Maritimes one type of country music is particularly strong which is generally referred to as "down east" style country music, whereas in the prairie provinces the "western" style country music is most popular. Ontario is a melting pot of all types of country music. Of course recognition must be given to the astute businessmen who made Nashville the centre of international country music and its influence is felt in all parts of Canada. At the same time our country music has a very strong tradition and in fact the current popular Nashville type country music originated in Canada — the original music of the southern states being "hill-billy" or bluegrass" style country music. The country music promoters still look to Canada as a major source of songs and performers. While in the past country performers have had to go outside the country for recognition, Arc is proud to have been able to take the leadership in getting these artists and writers recognition in their own country so that eventually they may become recognized as international performers without becoming citizens of another country.

**ARTIE AND THE MUSTANGS** — Artie and the Mustangs have six more songs in the can soon to be released on the ARC label to follow up their last big one, "THE RACE IS ON". The new Mustang guitar sound on these new ones is something to watch for.

**BERT CUFF** — "SEVEN DAYS A WEEK" and "ISLAND OF NEWFOUNDLAND" by Bert Cuff have been getting very good airplay during the last few weeks and Bert, who now makes his home in Tennessee, is planning on returning to Canada to promote his latest record.

**ROYCE RIEHL AND THE COUNTRY COUSINS** — Cookstown Old Tyme Orchestra contest winners, The Country Cousins have just released an album on the ARC label. Included on the LP are the numbers that won them the contest in 1965, making it a total of three times they have won this competition before capacity crowds.

**JIMMY JAMES** — Jimmy James has recently released his newest collection of senti-

In Canada

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mental favourites on "I REMEMBER YOU" (A643), his second LP on the ARC wax. Included in this LP are two of his own compositions, "Everybody's Laughing At My Heartache" and "Bottoms Up". Looks like another good one for ARC Records and Jimmy James!

**NED LANDRY** — Canada's all-time fiddle champion has recorded exclusively for Arc for two years now and has two steady selling albums to his credit. He is appearing steadily at night clubs throughout Ontario and the Maritimes.

**BILL LONG** — The M.C. and star of Channel 11 TV Jamboree, has just signed an exclusive recording contract with Arc and the first album is scheduled for release in November.

**LONNIE AND LOTTIE** — Another popular duo from Hamilton, whose album has sold well. Arc second album release being prepared now. Expect to see a lot of them on Channel 11 TV in the near future.

**MICKEY MCGIVERN** — This top "guitar picker" has been featured on lead guitar in most of our country sessions as well as being leader of the "Mustangs". He has just completed his new album titled "The Ring of the Twelve String".

**DICK NOLAN** — The man with a big voice who can sing anything from Railroad and Trucking songs to Atlantic Lullaby, has three album releases on Arc. He is a steady performer at the Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto and hails from Newfoundland.

## COUNTRY



## MUSIC

### COUNTRY MUSIC 1965 BY FRED ROY

Like all other kinds of music, Canadian country music has witnessed a tremendous upsurge in 1965 and the end of this growth in popularity is nowhere in sight. Much has happened during the year and much more is yet to come. This year has seen the long awaited breakthrough for Canadian talent and country music has had its share of the resulting gains.

Let us pause a moment and look back to the early days of 1965. As the new year was ushered in, Alberta's Dick Damron was enjoying great success in a self-penned RCA Victor disc called "Hitchhiking" and Ron McLeod of Hamilton, Ontario has a hit, "Don't Come Crying To Me" on Quality. Quality came up with another Canadian C & W hit a month later with Myrna Lorrie's "Do You Wish You Were Free", while at the same time Sparton had three hits on their hands by Gary Buck, Donn Reynolds and the Howard Sisters. Most of these went on to attain popularity in other countries as well as Canada. Around this time, RPM Music Weekly initiated its Canadian Country Music chart, the first and only such chart listing the hits of Canadian country music talent, on a national basis. This in itself was a tremendous step forward for the country artist in Canada. Never before had these artists and their respective labels had a showboard for their successes.

As the months progressed, Canadian country music hits continued to grow, such as the Canadian Sweethearts with "We're Gonna Stand Upon A Mountain". Bob King's "Texas Leather And Mexican Lace" and Sandy Selsie with "I Wish That I Could Fall In Love Today". In June, Myrna Lorrie repeated her earlier success, this time on Sparton, with "Can't Live With Him", Diane Leigh had her initial Capitol release "Won't Be A Lonely Summer" and Debbie Lori Kaye of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario hit with "Picking Up My Hat" on Columbia. Other Canadian country artists like Dick Nolan, Jimmy James and Dusty King also made some chart noise. A glance at the current RPM chart will verify the top Canadian country hits as we move on into the fall.

Canada produced a bumper crop of home-grown hits too in the composing field. Most of the songs mentioned above are Canadian compositions by Canadian writers, in many cases written by the artist performing the song. We must also stop to recognize such writing talents as Ron Kitson who hit with "Happy Birthday" by Loretta Lynn and later with "Cadillac Jack" by Doc Williams. Also, as both a writer and artist, Gordon Lightfoot must rate 1965 as his biggest year with hits by Peter, Paul and Mary, Marty Robbins and his own recording of "I'm Not Saying". Edmonton's Ray Griff, Hamilton's Rudy Rivers and Toronto



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JEAN SHEPARD - SECOND FIDDLE ◊ HANK THOMPSON - THE BLACKBOARD OF MY HEART  
WANDA JACKSON - MY BABY'S GONE ◊ CHARLIE LOUVIN - I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE  
TEX RITTER - I DREAMED OF A HILL-BILLY HEAVEN ◊ ROSE MADDOX - TIA LISA LYNN  
FARON YOUNG - HELLO WALLS ◊ GLEN CAMPBELL - SUMMER, WINTER, SPRING, AND FALL  
RED JOHNSON - THERE'S A GRAND OLE OPRY SHOW PLAYING SOMEWHERE  
WYNN STEWART - HALF OF THIS, HALF OF THAT ◊ BOBBY DURHAM - MY PAST IS PRESENT  
TOMMY COLLINS - ALL OF THE MONKEYS AIN'T IN THE ZOO  
LEON MCAULIFFE - I DON'T LOVE NOBODY ◊ IRA LOUVIN - YODEL, SWEET MOLLY  
MERLE TRAVIS - SWEET TEMPTATION ◊ WALTER HENSLEY - KICKIN' MULE  
MARY TAYLOR - HE BELIEVES ME ◊ RAY PILLOW - TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF MY HEART  
NEAL MERRITT - YOUR NAME'S BECOME A HOUSEHOLD WORD  
MAC WISEMAN - WHEN THE MOON COMES OVER THE MOUNTAIN

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artist-composer Ian Tyson had chart listings of their songs in the country field. Canadians Hal and Ginger Willis had their biggest success in 1965 with "The Lumberjack", "Klondike Mike" and "Nopper The Topper", all original compositions.

July of 1965 saw the first FM radio station switch when CJOB-FM in Winnipeg changed its format to full-time country music programming, thus becoming the first such station in Canada and the seventh station to program country music on full scale. In similarity, the 1966 "Country Music Who's Who" (Released October 1965), a widely read annual yearbook, carries an 8-page pictorial history on Canadian country music from 1920 to 1965, compiled by the writer of this article.

Regretfully, the Canadian country music field also had its grief with the passing of three great men of the industry. Bob Burton, president of BMI was not a Canadian, but his interest in Canadian music was great and in country music, both Canadian and American much greater. He died in Vancouver in March. In May, another great Canadian, Gordon V. Thompson, head of the publishing firm which bears his name, died in New York. He did much for Canadian country music, among them the "discovery" of Wilf Carter in 1927 and the publication of most of Carter's musical writings. The first week of August saw the passing of Ward Allen of Ottawa, longtime master of the fiddle, a Sparton recording

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**GEORGE AND JUNE PASHER** - George and June Pasher are getting good play on their latest album with the ARC people, and are currently touring the Ontario area. Included in their plans is a Canadian tour to promote their "ARE YOU MINE" LP. **ROY PENNEY** - Roy is the other King of Country Guitar in Canada. He does a masterful job on "Shotgun" guitar and is featured on Dick Nolan's album "Truck Driving Man". His own album "Boss Guitar in Teensville" featuring pop-country tunes will be released soon.

**DONN REYNOLDS** - Donn Reynolds, champion yodeller, has just released an album on the ARC label containing his most requested number. He will take his LP on his tour of Europe in December.

**SHARON STRONG** - The young fifteen year old girl with the big voice everybody is talking about is Miss Sharon Strong. Although Sharon has been singing on radio and TV for about ten years, this is her first endeavour on record and from all indications we've got a hit. Watch for these two - "NUMBER FIVE" and "WHEN YOU NEED A LAUGH".



THIS WEEK, I graciously relinquish my column for the Canadian cowboys. (Henry Snow has always been one of my very favourites!) (Hi Ho Silver!!! Till next week) . . . and have I got an item for you. The BBG has (Ed: Relinquish Miss C. Relinquish!!!)



Spartan recording artist Myrna Lorrie makes her home in Fort William, Ontario.

**ALBUM REVIEW**

"Bluegrass Cannonball" Banff RBS 1197 A good album from Canada's Ron McMunn and His Country Cousins. I'll go as far as to say that this is as good as we've heard anywhere. I feel however that I must comment upon the jacket design. Jackets are a selling facet. If good live drawings cannot be used then attractive photographs

**A GREAT NAME IN COUNTRY MUSIC  
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C&W RELEASES**

- |         |   |                                    |
|---------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1342    | That's What Hurts Me So   | Myrna Lorrie                       |
| 1353R   | Can't Live With Him<br>Badger Bodine                                | Lennie Siebert                     |
| 1355R   | Come On In Mr. Heartache  | Danny Coughlan                     |
| 1356R   | What Will Tomorrow Bring<br>Just Outside The Door                   | Aubrey Hanson                      |
| 1357R   | Green Hills and Blue Rivers<br>The Wilf Carter Song                 | Willis Brothers                    |
| 1358R   | Strange Old Town<br>A Six Foot Two By Four                          | Phil Bauch                         |
| 1360    | Country Guitar<br>Chatanooga  | Patsy Cline                        |
| 1364    | Walking After Midnight<br>Lovesick Blues                            | Gary Buck                          |
| 1365    | Break The News To Lisa<br>Just Look Behind You                      | Jim Kandy                          |
| 1371R   | I'm The Man<br>Angelville-Sky                                       | Tex Williams                       |
| 1373    | Big Tennessee<br>My Last Two Tens                                   | Bonnie Owens                       |
| 1374    | The Longer You Wait<br>Number One Heel                              | Merle Haggard                      |
| 1375R   | I'm Gonna Break Every Heart I Can<br>Falling For You                | Nancy Ryan                         |
| 1376R   | I Told Her<br>The Trouble   | Johnny Bond                        |
| 1377R   | The Great Figure 8 Race<br>Sadie Was A Lady                         | Willis Brothers                    |
| 1381R   | When I Come Driving Thru<br>Pinball Anonymous                       | Mac Wiseman                        |
| 1382R   | Bringing Mary Home<br>Maple Sugar Sweetheart                        | Gwen Collins                       |
| 1384R   | Beneath (The Green Green Grass Of Home)<br>Before I Learned To Live | Dottie West                        |
| 1386R   | I'd Be Lying<br>Walking In The Dark                                 | Phil Baugh                         |
| 1388R   | One Man Band<br>Live Wire   | Mary Taylor                        |
| 1389R   | Before He Was Yours, He Was Mine<br>Finders Keepers                 | The Shackelfords                   |
| 1396    | Five Feet High And Rising<br>One                                    | Lamar Morris                       |
| 1397    | May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose<br>Bank For The Lonely    | Dottie West                        |
|         | I Fall To Pieces<br>Crazy   |                                    |
| Oct 25  | Christmas Roses   | Earl Roach & The Canadian Ramblers |
| Release | You Can Stop Me   |                                    |

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should be used. Canadian Bluegrass fans will be pleased to know that the dobro guitar is featured on this album, played by Gamy Scheels. - Brian Chalker.

**RPM MUSIC WEEKLY**  
Editor and Publisher

**WALT GREALIS**

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Continued from page 4.

artist, and composer of many fiddle tunes which have become standards in the country music instrumental field.

Canadian country music has, indeed, let itself be known and heard in 1965, and we can surely look forward to 1966 with the feeling and anticipation that it will have many more successes. Perhaps by the centennial year (1967) Canada will be, at long last, recognized as a world leader in musical talents.

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September 17, 1965

Mr. Walt Grellis  
 RPM MUSIC WEEKLY  
 1940 Yonge Street  
 Toronto 7, Ontario

Dear Mr. Grellis:

This is to thank you for continuing to send us RPM each week. We enjoyed reading your editorial view point in your September 13th issue and I know that RPM has played a great role in helping get the Canadian Broadcasters expose more Canadian products. Certainly Canada has a lot of good talent and deserves the utmost in exposure.

As you know, October is Country Music Month and I hope that if space will permit you will do something special on Country Music Month in your fine publication. In the meantime we extend our very best wishes.

Sincerely,

COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

(Mrs.) Jo Walker

JW:cc



**BRIAN CHALKER** — Former policeman, commercial artist and freelance journalist, Chalker was acknowledged by the London Evening News as a leading authority on American folk and country music. He possesses the largest private comprehensive collection of country music in the British Isles.

In 1963 he visited Nashville gathering material on the DJ convention and the Grand Ole Opry for New Record Mirror and Decca Records of England.

He has written on the subject of country music for the past six years. Illustrates own articles. Material published in Country and Western Record Review, Country Music Review, Portsmouth Evening News, Teen-Life Magazine, Police Review, Sydenham and Peuge Gazette, Country and Western Express, The British Archer, New Record Mirror, Police World and now RPM Music Weekly.

Plays banjo, guitar and harmonica. Appeared on three occasions on English Southern Television and on WSM Radio, Nashville, Tennessee.

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