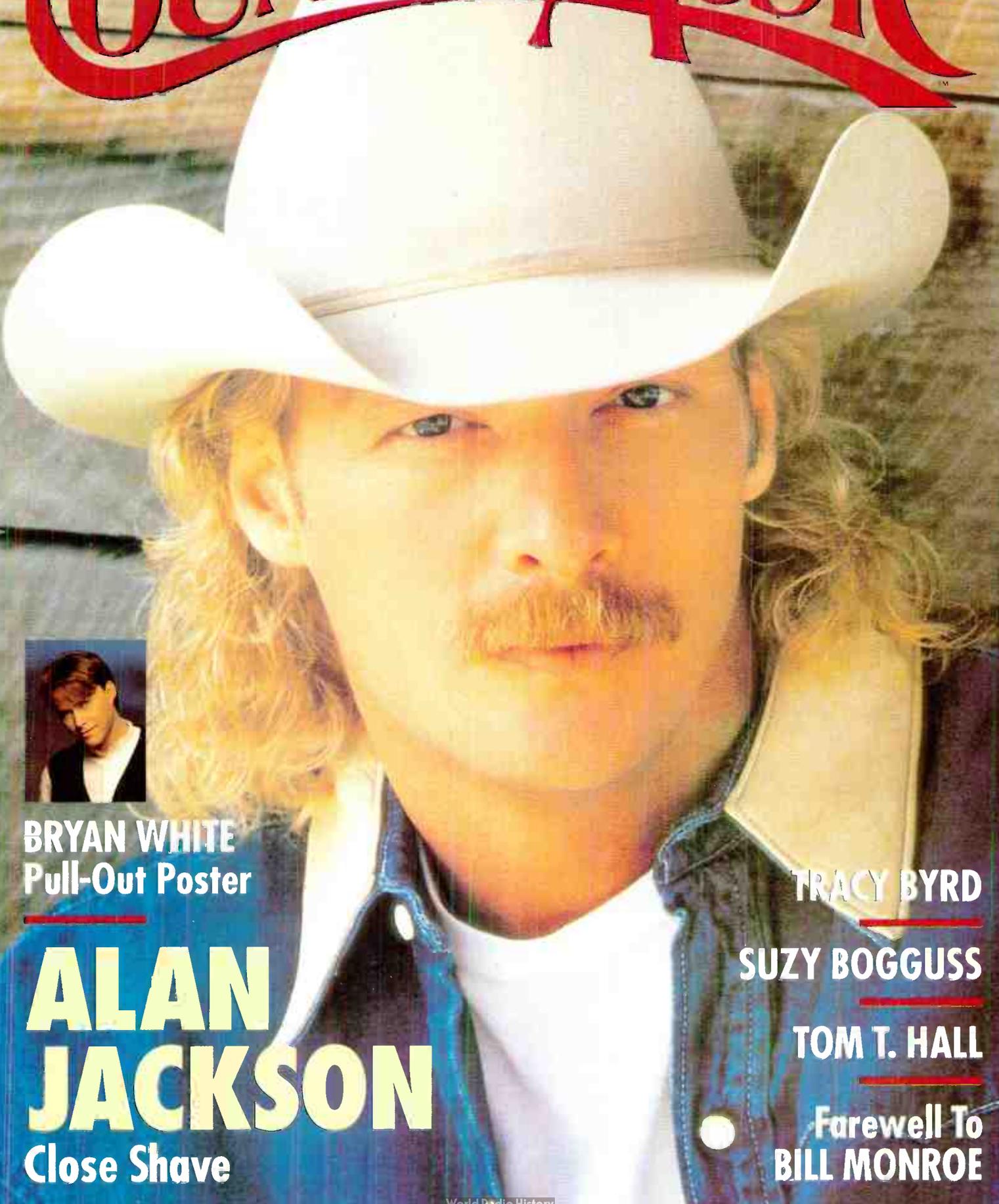


COUNTRYMUSIC



BRYAN WHITE
Pull-Out Poster

ALAN JACKSON
Close Shave

TRACY BYRD

SUZY BOGGUSS

TOM T. HALL

Farewell To
BILL MONROE



*Based on an average of consumer-reported problems at 3-months' ownership in a survey of Ford and competitive models designed and built in North America. Sales leadership based on Divisional Sales.

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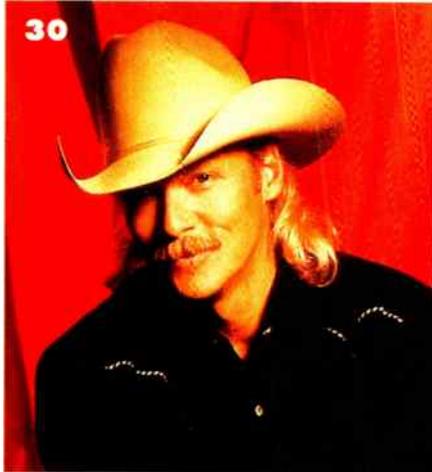


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COUNTRY MUSIC



30

FEATURES

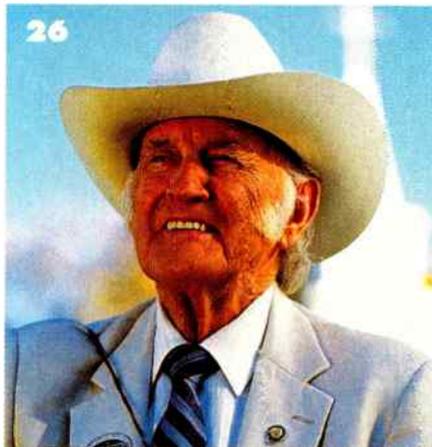
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How can you say goodbye to a legend? To a man who created a whole genre of music? To a man who was respected in all walks of life, without whom many would not have accomplished their own goals? It's hard.

36 Bryan White Pull-Out Centerfold
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40 Suzy Bogguss: Ready to Roll *by Bob Allen*
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46 Tracy Byrd: Honky Tonk in a New Package *by Bob Allen*
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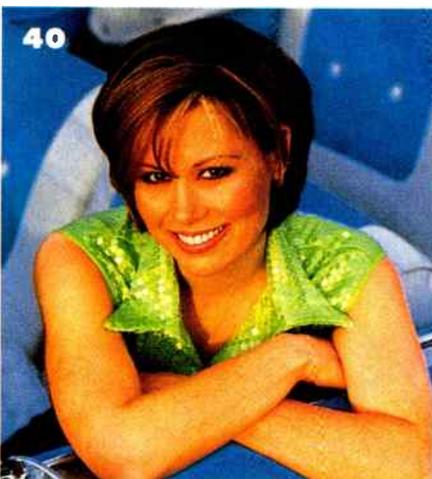
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World Radio History

People

THE BILL I LOVED

I told **George Fletcher** I could not write an obit for **Bill Monroe**. It hurts too much. Let me share a few personal incidents. I recall a time when it snowed 18 inches deep. We lived in a three-room shack in the middle of a cow pasture on Dickerson Road. It was so cold, and I was sick in bed with the flu and had a 104 temperature. Here Bill comes up that steep hill driving that old blue Chevrolet station wagon with groceries for my eight-year old son, **Terry**, and myself, went in the kitchen and cooked our supper of roast, baked beans and fried potatoes and made a salad. Another time I remember he and Terry went to town and bought me a makeup mirror for Mother's Day.

When my sons were 14 and 17, they began working on Bill's Goodlettsville farm. The stories they have from that time would fill a book. One Thanksgiving the Monroe brothers (Bill and **Birch**) and my two sons, **Billy** and **Terry**, came in from working the farm. They had me sit in the living room while they harmonized a hymn a capella before they ate lunch. When my first grandchild, **Adam**, was born, Bill got to the hospital with flowers for Billy's wife, **Takaka**, before anyone else. Billy asked Bill to be Adam's godfather. Bill was honored.

Once I fell on ice at Christmas and almost broke my leg off on mama's steps in North Carolina. After surgery, my leg wasn't healing, my temperature was dangerously high and so was my blood pressure. Bill called. I explained to him the diagnosis and told him I was going to die if something wasn't done, and asked him to pray for me. When I heard his knees hit the floor and heard the prayer he was praying, begging the Lord to heal me, I had no doubt in my mind what the outcome would be. Sure enough, when a shocked doctor came into the room the next morning, my brother **Henry** and **Terry** were there. The doctor came in shaking his head. "It's amazing," he said. "Your temp is normal, your blood pressure is down, and let me look at that leg." I told him there was no use to look, it was scabbed over. Of course it was. The doctor didn't understand when I flat told him I had a



Bill Monroe and Hazel Smith in 1976.

miracle healing. When I finally flew home from the hospital, I'd sit in the living room in my recliner and stare out the storm door at the snow. Every day I'd see that big white hat walking up the hill I live on in Madison, and it would be Bill with a plate of food for me from a restaurant.

Then there was the time 30 Japanese bluegrass students and their escort were at my house. I secretly called Bill. He came with his mandolin, walked around to the back door and knocked. When he walked in, they screamed in excitement as he took out his mandolin, and played and sang. There wasn't a dry eye in the room. Another time he stopped on I-65 to help this couple with three kids in an old car that had a flat tire. Bill had the poor, sunburned farmer and his family get in his car. He drove them to a filling station and paid for having the tire patched. He let them out of his car and watched the man put the tire on, then he told him to meet him in an hour at the filling station. He took that family backstage at the Opry that night. That day I'd watched as a big shot with a big mouth, driving a shiny new Cadillac, was bragging about his Texas oil wells and all his money. He got in Bill's face and asked him how to get in the Opry. Bill looked the other way with that look he could have, and said he

didn't know anything about it. To Bill, it was the little man that mattered.

Both Bill and my son Billy went to Holiday Heights Baptist church, and many times on Sunday night the two of them would sing from the same hymn book. This meant a lot to Bill, and he'd always call and tell me about it. He always had quarters for the kids at church. There's no telling how many quarters he's given children through the years, including my grandsons **Adam** and **Jeremy**.

After getting permission from MCA, the boys and I drove out to Bill's log cabin and told him that K-tel wanted Billy and Terry to record a tribute album to him. Bill was thrilled and asked if they'd "let" him play and sing on it. On February 21st, just weeks before his stroke, I drove Bill to the studio. I've never seen him happier. Bill said it was like old times being with Billy and Terry and me. As it turned out, Bill's last recording was done in my presence and with my sons. Bill played mandolin and sang "Blue Moon of Kentucky," played the mandolin riff on the beginning of "Mule Skinner Blues," and played mandolin and sang harmony on the last verse of "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine." Then he asked to hear the entire album.

"That's fine right there," Bill allowed. "Billy, you and Terry should be on the Opry. You done it the way it's supposed to be," he concluded. Inside the CD is a priceless photograph, taken in the studio that day by Terry's wife, **Sharon**, of Bill with Billy and Terry. And wouldn't you know Bill gave **Tyler** and **Tara** (Terry and Sharon's kids) each a quarter that day.

Bill Monroe is the ONLY person who created his own music in the 20th century. Even **Bab Dylan** told Bill this when he came to see him perform at the Troubadour in Los Angeles some years back. The music speaks for itself.

I will let writers with minds greater than mine tell the story of bluegrass and how an almost-blind-from-birth, uneducated genius created this marvelous music. Tonight, the night of his death, I can only speak from my heart and share with you these personal moments I spent with the Bill I loved...times like these, when I would forget he was a legend and in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People

Objibway Indians from Winnipeg. These "new friends" knew my name from *Country Music Magazine* and shared their outdoor meal cooked in a huge fry pan over an open fire. Walleye, walleye cheeks (a delicacy), wild rice, pickled green beans and beets and fried wheat bread. Mmmm good.

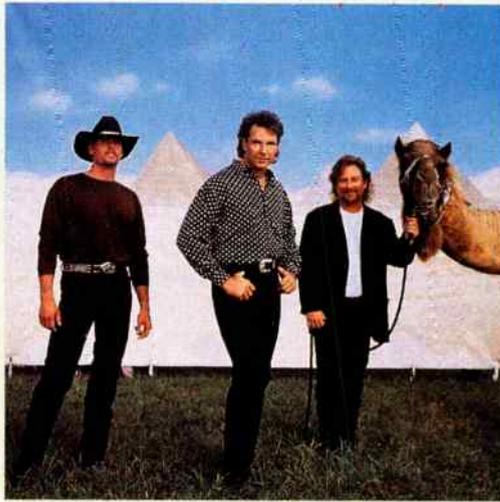
When Martina saw me, she was shocked! "What are you doing way up here," she asked. Her daughter, **Delaney**, travels with her mom, so after the show Martina asked that I come on the bus and visit and see the baby, but she was asleep.

"Is that you," screamed Marty Stuart, as he left the crowd surrounding him, ran and gave me a hug. "I love this woman," he said as fans were snapping away those cameras. Marty is just a doll.

Sunday the crowd went ballistic. Thousands turned out in the rain to see fabo **BR5-49**, who generally blew them away. This band is so exciting. Wait until you hear their album. I wanted to follow **Gary Bennet** (singer/rhythm) to the bus, but I couldn't recollect why. "BR" was followed by the "Cat in the Hat" a/k/a **Terri Clark**, who looked marvelous and sang better than she looked, if that's possible, wearing a smile and her cowgirl hat, jeans, boots and T-shirt.

Dressed out in a burgundy cowboy shirt and matching pants designed by **Manuel**, the svelte **Pam Tillis**, who has

CHRISTMAS TALE



When Christmas comes around, if you expect a card from **BlackHawk**, I have the scoop on what their season's greeting will look like. There will be three camels from **Kokomo** on the cover of the card. Photo is already shot. The camels—**Peaches**, **Holly** and **Lawrence**—did a "double take" while in **Twang Town**: they will also be on the cover of **Arista Records** own Christmas CD featuring all their marvelous artists. Think of all the stuff you'd miss if you didn't read my column. Left, **BlackHawk** and friend **Peaches**.

taken off weight, looked every inch the superstar she has become. That girl earned the encore she received.

Mary Chapin Carpenter always does a superb show and that night was no different. Her hits are so different but so good. She has added a few pounds.

From the time the long-legged wonder **Alan Jackson** walked onstage until he walked off, the crowd was on its feet, for two solid hours, digging that pretty Geor-

gia hillbilly. WE had to have a second helping of Jackson.

"You're here!" the five **BR5-49** guys said almost in unison as they gave me a smooch. "There you are," said **Terri Clark** who'd heard from **Greg**, her guitarist, that I was coming. The 5-foot-11 star bent down and gave me a hug. "Oh my goodness, it's **Hazel**," shrieked **Pam Tillis** as she jumped a mud hole. We embraced as fans took tons of photos. Before **Alan** (pant-pant) went onstage, I talked with him. He said when he saw me walking around from his bus window, he said to his band, "Wonder what is **Hazel** doing way up here." I told him that one of the owners of the **WE Fest**, **Chryll Sparks**, invited me. "It's great up here," **Alan** said, as he placed his hands in concrete. All the performers did the hand print thing, which will be on display there forever, except **Travis Tritt**, who refused, and refused to do press as well.

I went on **KFGO Fargo**, **Moose Country Live**, the largest radio station there, with that cute **Brad Rivers**. Those smart folks hired me on the spot to flap my mouth once a week in Fargo with news hot off the streets of Music Town. **Chryll** asked if I'd go onstage Sunday with **John Hines** from **K-102**, the huge station in **Minneapolis**. I did and flapped my mouth about the goings on again. They must've liked me for when I left the stage, about half of the audience gave me a standing ovation and applauded a long time. I want to thank **Chryll** for inviting me, and thank her and her partners for taking care of me. The festival was the best organized event of its kind that I've ever seen what with 150,000 paying fans in three days. The stars took away a lot of money.

35 YEARS



Steve Wariner surprised **Opry** stalwart **Bill Anderson** on his 35th anniversary as a member of the world famous radio show. Steve took the mike from host **Bill** and interviewed him. Wariner will produce an album on **Anderson** for **Warner Bros**.

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People

Proving Music City cares ore Kathy Mattea, K.T. Oslin and Pom Tillis. The five-year-old organization that raises money for AIDS service and prevention has done well so far. With help like this, who's surprised?



NASHVILLE STILL CARES

October brought about the annual MUSICITY CARES concert and walkathon to raise money for AIDS service and prevention in Tennessee. This year's concert at the War Memorial Auditorium included **Kathy Mattea, K.T. Oslin, Pam Tillis, Mandy Barnett** and more. To date, the five-year-old organization has raised \$500,000.

LORRIE WILL WRITE

Lord, I hope she tells all! **Lorrie Morgan** has plans to do an autobiography. My understanding is that she plans to write about her marriage to the late **Keith Whitley** and his problem with alcoholism that led to his untimely death at 32. Wonder if she'll write about her romance with Dallas footballer, **Troy Aikman**, or her latest ex-boyfriend, U.S. Senator **Fred Thompson**, or her current main squeeze, the real cute **Jon Randall**. I couldn't help but giggle as Senator Fred was nominating **Bob Dole** for the presidency. All I could think of was, "Wonder if ole Fred ever hums Lorrie's hit 'Something in Red'?"

SYMPATHY TO LORETTA LYNN

Following an almost three-year illness, O.V. "**Mooney**" **Lynn** passed away at the Hurricane Mills home he shared with his superstar wife, **Loretta Lynn**. At 17, Mooney married the 13-year-old Loretta Webb in Butcher Hollow, Kentucky. By the time she was 18, Loretta had four children. Their twins, **Patsy and Peggy**, were born later. It was Mooney who "pushed" Loretta into a singing career in 1960.

Looking back in this day of modern technology, I think of Mooney driving Loretta from station to station in a 1955 Ford that they slept in, as he tried to con-

been sick for quite a while. At one time Loretta, Jay Lee and their sisters, **Peggy Sue** and **Crystal Gayle**, were all signed to Decca Records at the same time.

WISH YOU WERE HERE

I wish everyone who reads this column could have been in Music City the Saturday night that **BR5-49** made their marvelous debut on the Grand Ole Opry. Friends, they tore it up out there, winning the hearts of the fans. They also stole the hearts of the Opry cast. Grizzly and loveable **Grandpa Jones**, watching from the wings, grimming from ear to ear, said, as the guys left the stage, "Sign 'em up! Sign 'em up." The young people who call the group "cool" were screaming and hollering. **Skeeter Davis**, on chemotherapy to hopefully combat bone cancer, had doctor's orders to do one song, go home and rest two hours, come back and sing her last song. She'd seen the band perform at Robert's Western Wear on Lower Broadway and did not obey the doctor. Jumping up and down she was, and never went home until after their last show near midnight. One woman onstage screamed so shamefully loud that people had to put fingers in ears. Guess who?

1996 CMA AWARD WINNERS

Entertainer of the Year	Brooks & Dunn
Song of the Year	"Go Rest High on That Mountain"
Songwriter	Vince Gill
Single of the Year	"Check Yes or No"
Artist and record company	George Strait/MCA
Album of the Year	<i>Blue Clear Sky</i>
Artist and record company	George Strait/MCA
Female Vocalist of the Year	Patty Loveless
Male Vocalist of the Year	George Strait
Vocal Duo of the Year	Brooks & Dunn
Vocal Group of the Year	The Mavericks
Vocal Event of the Year	Dolly Parton with Vince Gill
	"I Will Always Love You"
Musician of the Year	Mark O'Connor
Horizon Award	Bryan White
Music Video of the Year	"My Wife Thinks You're Dead"
Artist and director	Junior Brown/Michael McNamara
Hall of Fame	Patsy Montana
	Buck Owens
	Ray Price

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People



The gang's all here for Joe Galante's 25-year do. Joe's in the middle, looking sharp.

25 YEARS FOR GALANTE

Celebrating Chairman **Joe Galante's** 25 years with the company were all of the folks at the RCA Label Group (RLG). Senior VP's **Randy Goodman** and **Thom Schuyler** held a surprise dinner for their chief, with attendance by the label's top stars and bigwigs from parent company BMG's New York headquarters. Among those on hand to congratulate Galante on

the milestone were **Eddy Arnold**, **K.T. Oslin**, **Martina McBride**, **Mindy McCready**, **Aaron Tippin**, **Kenny Chesney** and many more.

D-I-V-O-R-C-E

While he and his wife have filed for divorce, **Billy Dean** denied having an affair with **Crystal Barnard**, star of the TV show, *Wings*. The rumor apparently started after Billy penned three songs for Crystal's up and coming *River North* album, and

sang a duet with her as well. There was talk that Billy and his wife had different philosophies on the raising of their two children, **Eli**, who is three, and one-year-old **Hannah**. The reason for the divorce is irreconcilable differences, they say, whatever the heck that means.

LEANN RIMES CHATTER

LeAnn Rimes just turned 14, finally. Boy, she sure is filled out good to only be 14. Regardless of age, that little gal can sing and proved it with her first single, "Blue" (second single didn't do as well—song wasn't as good). Entering the album charts as high as it can go at Number One with her same-titled CD, she became the first female in country music to accomplish this. LeAnn is also the youngest female to receive a CMA nomination. But she isn't the first 13-year-old female that label owner Mike Curb brought to stardom. We must remember that **Marie Osmond** was 13 when she had her hit with "Paper Roses." When **Tanya Tucker** recorded "Delta Dawn" for CBS, she was also 13, but turned 14 as the song topped out at Number Six.

OPRY STILL A FAMILY AFFAIR

Recently when **Alan Jackson** performed on the Opry, he brought wife, **Denise**, and his two daughters, **Mattie** and **Ali**. **Martina McBride** brought her little **Delaney** the same night. The Opry has always been a family affair and hopefully will always be. So load up your kids and come to see us. By the way, when Martina appeared at Nashville Onstage, she received two standing ovations. Gets better and better, that girl does.

MOVIE TALES

Must've been 15 years ago, give or take a few either way, when **Waylon Jennings** introduced me to Academy Award winning actor, **Robert Duvall**. Duvall was in town hanging around with Waylon and his wife, **Jessi Colter**, and **Johnny** and **June Carter Cash**, gathering material for a movie, *The Apostle*. June and Jessi accompanied Robert to several Pentecostal churches in the surrounding area. My sons, **Billy** and **Terry**, took their guitars and sang old-time gospel a couple places for Bob, including at a church that had a female preacher. They had all-day preaching with shouting, singing and dinner on the ground. Later I learned that Duvall had hoped to find funding for the flick, but failed to do so. Now, a decade and a half later, I learn Duvall is funding the film himself. You know, I hope it wins an Academy Award

SHOOTER SIGNS



Proud papa, **Waylon Jennings**, points at his son, **Shooter Jennings**, and BMI associate director, **Mark Mason**. The occasion—Shooter signed as a songwriter with BMI. Shooter's mother is forever young/forever beautiful, **Jessi Colter**.

People

and makes millions for the very nice Mr. Duvall. By the way June Carter Cash has a speaking role. Wonder if she'll play the role of the female preacher.

25 BIG ONES

The woman our illustrious leader sees in his dreams, the beautiful **Emmylou Harris**, turned up at the Country Music Hall of Fame to help **Bill Ivey** celebrate his 25th anniversary as Director of the Country Music Foundation. **Kathy Mattea**, who once gave tours at the Hall of Fame, sent congrats to her former boss.

FABO VINCE

You don't have to con-Vince me he's perfect. I can see that for myself. Once again, **Vince Gill** gives of himself for almost a week when he hosted the Vinny, his pet project that benefits junior golfers in Tennessee. And once again, the same week, he gave a concert at Starwood for a sell-out crowd that lasted two-plus hours, singing all his hits. He's involved with the kidney foundation, T.J. Martell, and with Belmont University, aiding young people who come to town needing financial help to learn about the biz of music. Belmont alums include **Trisha Yearwood**, **Gary Chapman** (who is the new host of TNN's *Prime Time Country*), ASCAP's Director of Membership **Shelby Kennedy**, Arista VP of Artist Development **Fletcher Foster**, **Ricky Van Shelton**'s manager **Michael Campbell** and many more. This is worth his time. It's like, ask Vince and he will.

One of the golfers who played in the Vinny was the dimpled one, **John Michael Montgomery**. This was like hours before his baby was born in Lexington, Kentucky. John Michael had a new toy; a lime green beeper that kept going off. He'd jump every time it rang. "Mostly it's her calling," he said referring to his very pregnant wife. "She's asking why I ain't home yet." Later that day he was seen in a stretch limo wearing a ball cap heading north on I-65 to Nicholasville, Kentucky.

DWIGHT'S LEATHER BRITCHES

Did I go to Starwood to see **Dwight Yoakam** in his skin-tight leather britches. Has a cat got a tail? Did I go to see him twist, grind, turn and pose like rock 'n' rollers? You bet your booty! Did I go to see the glitter, glitz and glimmer?

Amazingly, yes, and I don't want no letters about my hormones...at least they still work! I also went to see one of the sexiest men in show biz sing his marvelous hillbilly songs. An hour and 40 min-

BEFORE THE JAM



Actress **Susan Anton** is shown with country favorite **Neal McCoy**. Neal headed the second annual celeb jam at the **Michael Jordan Celebrity Golf Classic** in Greenville, North Carolina. The two posed during the reception before the jam.

utes, start to finish, Dwight sang all his hits and did some **Elvis**, some **Buck** and some **Hank**. He brilliantly reached back to the 40's, dusted off **Bill Monroe**'s "Rocky Road Blues" and blistered it. On a scale of one to 10, I have to give Dwight 11. Even guitarist/producer **Pete Anderson** strutted his stuff, as did opening act **David Ball**.

MORE OPRY TALES

All her family traveled up from Star, Mississippi, when **Faith Hill** did a guest appearance on the Opry; however, main squeeze, **Tim McGraw**, was not there. According to sources, Tim sent Faith fifteen (15!) flower arrangements. One at a time they were delivered backstage. Reportedly the couple deny all rumors of Faith being pregnant or an upcoming marriage. They only say they are "dating." Just so you will know that I know, Faith and her family had supper at Bob Evans between Opry shows, and the next day they traveled back to Star in time for the dedication of the new church building.

YOU WON'T SEE HIM WALKING

With his major success, the long-legged wonder, Mr. **Alan Jackson**, is driving a brand spanking new yellow Porsche around town. Traveling to show dates, Alan has his driver take his bus to the first gig of a tour. Then he and the band fly in his brand spanking new airplane, a size up from a Lear, that no one can tell me what it's called. When the last leg of the journey is over, the plane awaits Alan and the band at the nearest airport, and they jet on home to Dixie. Action Jackson is first class...you won't see him walking.

MORE MAVERICK GOLD



Music for All Occasions is the title of the latest **Mavericks** album, and **Gold** is the status of said album. So **MCA** and **BMI** cranked up the party machine, and the boys and labelmate/pal **Wynonna** celebrated. Left to right: **Raul Malo**, **Paul Deakin**, **Nick Kane**, **Wy**, **Robert Reynolds** and **Jerry Dale McFadden**.

Record Reviews

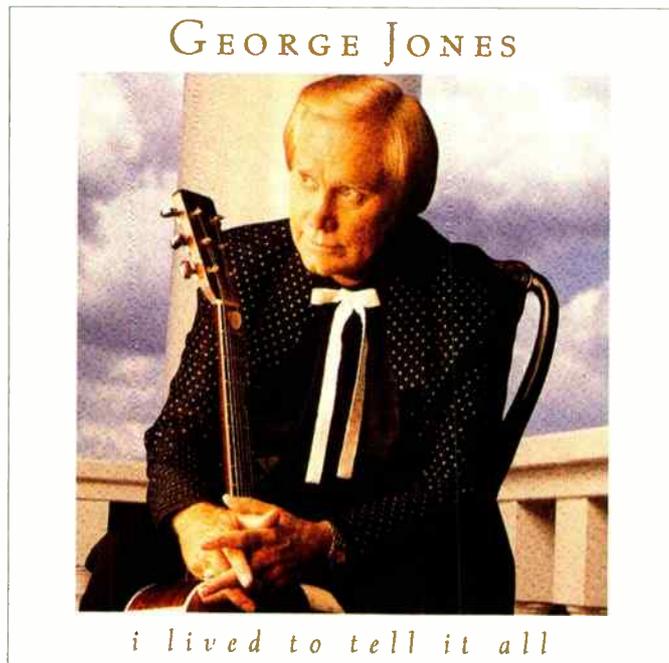
George Jones

I Lived to Tell It All
MCA MCAD-11478

God bless George Jones. It has been several years since the Ol' Possum lived the life he always sang about, but it has also been years since he sang about it with such obvious relish and unabashed humor and directness.

George opens up with "Honky Tonk Song," a danceable number telling of his infamous riding-mower trip to a bar years ago. More than that, the album invokes a powerful yearning for the kind of low-budget roadhouse honky tonks that didn't need smoke machines to create a hazy atmosphere. Jones takes a humorous shot at label-made "country sex symbol" hat acts in "Billy Be Bad," very loosely a take-off on "Johnny Be Good." All too aware that radio doesn't want *him*, Jones nonetheless laughs at this soulless, country-rootless Strait imitator, son of "a white bread mama and a rock 'n' roll dad," being over the hill at 28. "He's not that young and he's not that handsome/He just tested positive for Branson." There's lots of humor here; nearly everything uptempo has a delightful, humorous edge.

Then there's the blues. Sober, Jones still has "hundred-proof mem'ries," the kind that used to drive us all to drink. He decided that there just might be an audience out here for the real thing, too. One of my very favorites here is a plaintive, twin-fiddled, whining pedal steel, waltz-time, pained drinkin' song called "Back Down to Hung Up on You." "Feelin' nothin' at all for a while/Sure feels better than the hurtin' you're putting me through..." There simply isn't anything like this kind of



heart-string pulling in all of the 90's slick, young, pretty boys' repertoires.

If the country record-buyer is currently perceived by marketing aces as barely post-adolescent, rapidly middle class and romantically on a level with Hallmark cards, MCA is to be lauded for offering an artist and a 10-pack of songs that speak to a blue collar country aesthetic and an emotional reality of proven depth made of such strong, plain-woven fabric.

I guess my point here is that whether the ex-rock programmers who control the narrowing playlists of country radio reporting stations today like it or not, George Jones is still the most potent, evocative country blues singer alive. These songs are from his roots, red meat tossed into George Jones' cage. By doing what he has always done best here, Jones is giving us a shot of something that time can't disprove. No two ways about it; if you hear it, you'll feel it.

—BOB MILLARD

K.T. Oslin

My Roots Are Showing
BNA 66920

K.T. Oslin was always someone I could take or leave. Her big hits never impressed me, though as is often the case, plenty of others felt differently. I wondered how much of her talents, like those of so many other artists, were reshaped by producers trying to shove her into the trend of the moment. Her track record through the late 1980's spoke for itself, but I often wondered how much it satisfied Oslin, who largely drifted from music in the early 90's, making a return to acting.

She's dealt with major change in the past year. Her 1995 coronary bypass surgery led her to take stock and reorder her priorities. She returned to performing and the studio, but this time her recording was different. She began a program of musical time travel, immersing herself in not only contem-

porary pop, but older songs, including ancient pop tunes, traditional folksongs, bluegrass and classic country. Moreover, she took control of arrangements, co-producing the album with rock producer Rick Will. And all of her past experience came together, in surprising ways.

To say these songs are performed differently is an understatement. Oslin turns them upside down and inside out, adding unexpected instruments and rearranging them in radically unconventional ways. The first track, the rocking "Silver Tongue and Goldplated Lies," originally recorded by the 1970's hippie bluegrass act The Hotmud Family, is a strong hint of what's to come. She adds contemporary flavor to The Delmore Brothers' oldie, "Sand Mountain Blues," and supercharges bluegrasser Jimmy Martin's "Hold Whatcha Got." This free-wheeling flight continues with the remarkable "(I'll See You in) C.U.B.A." This 1920 period piece, a hit for three different singers that year, sings of pre-Castro Cuba's days as a U.S. resort, a haven of liquor when America had banned booze in the mistaken legislation known as Prohibition. Oslin adds bluegrass instrumentation to her explosive vocal, at the end turning the number into a delightful sing-along that helps it transcend its dated message.

She continues overturning convention with a rocked-up version of The Louvin Brothers' "My Baby Came Back" and The Osborne Brothers' "Pathway of Teardrops," the fresh, percussive Caribbean beat and electric organ light years away from the hills of Kentucky. Jimmie Rodgers' "Miss the Mississippi and You" receives a restrained, yet

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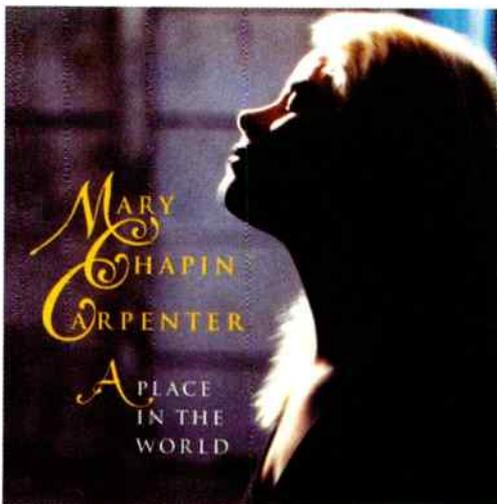
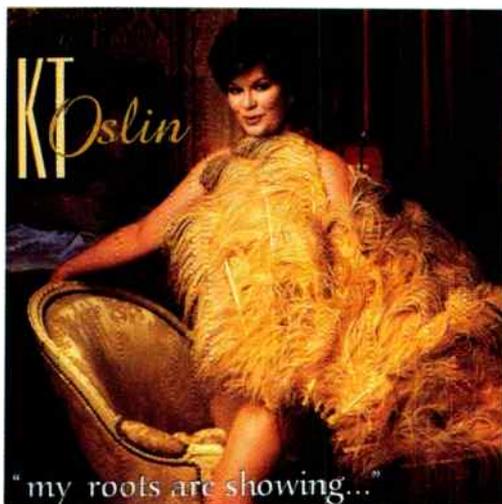
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contemporary, reworking, and the traditional folk tune, "Down in the Valley," becomes a movingly intense, gospel-flavored experience. Even the album's two most "conventional" performances (with arrangements typical to the music) are spectacular, most notably her searing version of Wilma Burgess' obscure 1967 ballad, "Tear Time," and Richard Thompson's contemporary ballad, "A Heart Needs a Home."

Perhaps nowhere is Oslin's spirit more apparent than when she sings the line from The Louvins' "My Baby Came Back" that goes "Now my heart is beatin' with ease." It's a song of love renewed, and it serves as a benediction to this remarkable odyssey, which ranks with the most outstanding musical comebacks in recent history. One can only wonder why she didn't take charge long ago.

—RICH KIENZLE

Mary Chapin Carpenter *A Place in the World* Columbia CK 67501

As the title implies, Mary Chapin is considering things: her generation, romance (whether on the line or water under the bridge), life and where she fits in it, the big stuff. Whereas most country

albums put their pleasure points on the surface, I found myself listening to this album over and over, gleaning deeper appreciation and better understanding each time. Some of this is a challenge, and I'm thankful that at least a few country artists are taking the trouble to challenge us.

The music is a pastiche—fine, intricately-crafted and a little on the gourmet side. Early on, Mary Chapin waxes nostalgic about her generation in "Hero." Boomers—myself included—grew up in the heady environment of a very big, very bad war, "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," "After Bathing at Baxter's," "Are You Experienced?" and other very exciting developments in pop music, \$15-per-ounce pot, the mini-skirt and the birth control pill. Exposed to more cultural revolutions than possibly any other generation in America since the post-World War I "Lost Generation," we imagined ourselves heroes just because we were young and discovering things; it's harder to hold that self-image now that damn near everything has been discovered, experienced and discounted. "A Place in the World" admits that life's answers are still just on the other side of tomorrow, "but to be alive is to know your purpose." She's reaching for some pretty heady themes here, and making her points.

Of course, there is some musical fun, too. Fans of 70's subterranean pop sensation Marshall Crenshaw will be delighted to recognize that sprightly jangle and staccato, bass-thumping bridge work in "I Want to Be Your Girlfriend." Carpenter hauls out Major Lance ("Monkey Time") Motown riffs, Stax drum thumps and Memphis horns for a terrific combination in "Let Me Into Your Heart." And the sparse, soft, acoustic "What If We Went to Italy" is complex, substantial and satisfying, the farthest thing from either visceral honky tonk lust or the sterile, insipid, middle-class romantic tease and denial of the typical uptempo-positive country lyric—like chateaubriand after a diet of popcorn. In this song, Mary Chapin has a just-maturing love, still exquisite, that recommends going where she and her lover can indulge in subtleties, "a nod and a sigh and a wish to be always like this."

Ethereal as it is, "Ideas Are Like Stars" is an engaging story song of very concrete imagery, though certainly a more existential than hormonal approach to the affection connection. "That's Real" is the thinking-gal's plea for solid ground in a relationship: "I want something that not only feels right, something that's based on a real life, one thing that's worth every page of the deal..." Many of these

songs manage to be quite sensual, reminding us that the mind is really the most important erogenous zone.

At a generous 12 songs, this CD is an extra value for Mary Chapin fans. It tends toward the poetic, as in "Naked to the Eye," "Sudden Gift of Fate" and the title song, and veers afield from easy video concepts. This collection, nevertheless, is a first-rate realization of a rare talent and ambition.

—BOB MILLARD

Travis Tritt *The Restless Kind* Warner Bros. 9 46304

I don't think I ever really appreciated what a great singer Travis Tritt was until I heard—and saw—him duet with rhythm & blues great Patti LaBelle a few years back on the *Rhythm, Country & Blues* album and the accompanying TV special. Tritt more than held his own, going toe to toe with LaBelle. And that's saying a lot.

Superstar producer Don Was (Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, etc.) produced *Rhythm, Country & Blues*. He was obviously mightily impressed, as he makes clear in the liner notes for *The Restless Kind*, Tritt's fifth and latest studio album, which Was also produced. Don Was, in fact, deserves a great deal of credit on *The Restless Kind* for not only bringing Tritt's vocal power and stylistic versatility to the forefront, but also for subtly repositioning him in a country market that seems to have gone a little cool on him.

If you've ever seen Tritt in concert, then you know what a big impact the 70's Southern rock of Marshall Tucker, Lynyrd Skynyrd and even Hank Williams Jr. has had on his style. Indeed, in his live shows Tritt often comes off as a swaggering, hairy-chested, guitar-wielding successor to Hank Junior. But what's apparent on *The Restless Kind* is

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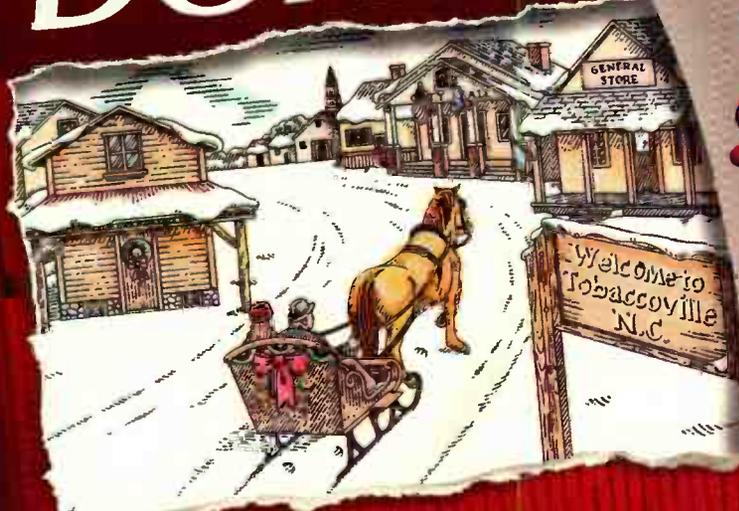
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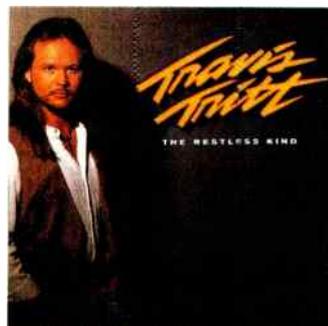
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how far Tritt has backed off this influence and opted instead for a variety of more organic, finely nuanced and soulful country grooves.

Almost every one of these 11 cuts (seven of which Tritt wrote or co-wrote with pals like Marty Stuart, Paul Kennerley and Troy Seals) showcases his voice in a slightly different gradation of country, R&B and occasional rock shadings. On a hillbilly shuffle like "Still in Love With You" (a Tritt original) or a drawing, honky tonk plaint like "Draggin' My Heart Around" (co-written by Marty Stuart and Paul Kennerley) or the mournful "Sack Full of Stones" (one of two Tritt-Stuart collaborations), Tritt evokes a compelling junkyard dog sincerity. Yet on somewhat more contemporary-sounding ballads like "More Than You'll Ever Know" (a soulful Tritt original about an insecure man who has fallen way too quickly and way too deeply in love) and "Helping Me Get Over You," he's no less convincing. The latter song is a smashing heartbreak lament co-written and sung with Lari White. Together, the two of them sound like a second-generation George and Tammy.

And there are other high points, as well, like the riveting title tune, which is a Mike Henderson composition, previously recorded by Trisha Yearwood. Another particular favorite of mine is the utterly moving remake of the laconic Waylon Jennings hit of yesterday, "Where Corn Don't Grow" (co-written by Roger Murrah and Mark Alan Springer). Tritt does an almost perfect job of drawing out this nostalgic vignette, a gentle tale of longing and the ties that bind the generations. Tritt does allow himself one Skynyrd- and Tucker-influenced tip of the hat to his Southern rockin' roots, and he's seldom sounded grittier than he does on "Back Up Against the Wall" (J.R. Cobb and Buddy Buie), an urgent, musically supercharged tale of



a man on the run from a jailbreak. Predictably, there's even a fun but forgettable male-bonding duet with "Marty Party" Stuart called "Double Trouble" (Tritt, Stuart, Kennerley) in which a couple of guys belatedly discover just how much they have in common—including a shared girlfriend.

All in all, it's hard for me to imagine Tritt sounding better or more inspired than he does on *The Restless Kind*. He's clearly back in command and at the peak of his form.

—BOB ALLEN

Shaver

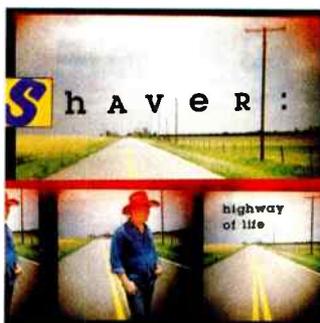
Highway of Life
Justice JR 2301

The first time someone described the band Shaver to me, I said, man, that'll never work. No way you can have Billy Joe Shaver mumble-singing his cosmic-cowboy poetry while his son Eddy is playing loud, hard-rock guitar. You might as well put Paul Simon and Jimmy Page in the same band. But then I heard *Tramp on Your Street*, and damn if it didn't work, mainly because Eddy knew when to step up and when to step back and never got in his daddy's way. That was followed by *Unshaven: Shaver Live at Smith's Olde Bar*, as incendiary a live country album as you'll ever hear. Now the Shaver papa and son are back with a new rhythm section and another surprise in the form of a second studio album, *Highway of Life*.

The surprise this time is the laid-back, semi-acoustic ar-

rangements. It's as if Billy Joe proved he could play on Eddy's turf on the first two albums, so Eddy is now proving he can play on Billy Joe's. When the son picks his acoustic guitar or dobro, he surrounds his father with folk and bluegrass licks; when Eddy picks up an electric guitar, he turns not to rock riffs but to blues and honky tonk. By playing with finesse rather than power, Eddy not only shows a new side of his own skills but allows Billy Joe's lyrics to take over the foreground.

As usual, they're terrific lyr-



ics, coming from both old catalogue tunes and a batch of strong new numbers. In the liner notes, producer Randall Jamail claims the songs form an autobiographical suite about Billy Joe's journey down the "Highway of Life." Eight of the 11 tracks focus on one particular stretch of that road—a relationship with a woman the singer can't live with and can't live without. They met in a barroom, Billy Joe sings, while the jukebox played the "West Texas Waltz," and he provides a sample of that romantic music. He had a habit, though, of coming home days late, looking "like somethin' the barnyard cats drug in," and Eddy's slide guitar illustrates the feeling of these "Blue Blue Blues."

Over the pow-wow beat of "Moonshine and Indian Blood," Billy Joe recalls that when they "started drinkin' fire water, the reason and rhyme left the tune." These fights inevitably led to separation, and he bids "Goodbye Yesterday" to all the dreams that have turned into memo-

ries. On the Tex-Mex ballad, "Tomorrow's Goodbye," he admits, "There's no use pretending I won't miss her at all; with springtime and summer, I've accepted the fall." Acceptance only lasts so long, it seems, for he soon declares that his love for her is once again "Comin' on Strong," and she had better "Look for Me When You See Me Comin'." In a starkly confessional, solo-acoustic performance recorded in his Nashville kitchen, however, he claims he experienced true love for "The First and Last Time" with her.

Most of us have one or two love affairs that, successful or not, obsess us for the rest of our lives, but few of us have faced up to that obsession with the courage and honesty Billy Joe displays here. It's a landmark story in song, and the words are fleshed out not only by Eddy's guitars but also by the fiddles of Dwight Yoakam's old sideman, Brantley Kearns.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

BR5-49

BR5-49

Arista 07882-18818

Last year, based on their gigs at Robert's Western World, a downtown Nashville honky tonk/boot shop, the local country intelligentsia clasped this neo-honky tonk quintet to its collective bosom. Seen as a homegrown alternative to the arid musical climate there, the group attracted additional hype from various journalists, both old Nashville hands who know the music and younger wanna-be scribes who understand the differences between Pearl Jam and R.E.M. better than those between Hank Williams Sr. and Jr. The band name, if you don't know, comes from the late Junior Samples' "Used Cars" skits on *Hee Haw*, portraying ol' Junior as a moronic car salesman holding up a sign (often upside down) emblazoned with the fictitious phone number "BR-549" (the

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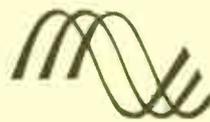
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band moved the hyphen).

I was impressed that Arista signed BR5-49, remaining openminded even when friends who saw them in Austin were underwhelmed. But an ominous sign came with their *Live at Robert's* EP, the disc and press kit packaged by Arista in a burlap sack (hillbilly, y'know). Dumb originals like "Bettie, Bettie," celebrating 50's pinup girl Bettie Page, and "Me 'N Opie Down by the Duck Pond," a witless tale of TV's *Andy Griffith Show* gang getting high, might be a barrel of fun at Robert's. But building an entire act based on 50's iconography, *Andy Griffith* reruns and oldies seems a pretty shaky premise. Several 5-49 boosters, aware of my misgivings, counseled me to judge them not by the EP, but by their forthcoming studio album. And that's what I've done.

It's true that the 5-49ers sincerely love the old stuff, but the problems begin on track one, on "Even If It's Wrong," where someone got the dumb idea to remind everyone of that fact by including four seconds of the scratchy surface noise heard on old 45's or 78's. That's not all. For a seemingly non-mainstream act, they're quite willing to follow certain Music Row dictums. Consider singer-guitarist Chuck Mead's original "Little Ramona (Gone Hillbilly Nuts)." Its lyrics may jab line dancers, but the song percolates with boot-scooting rhythms that could still land it on *Club Dance*. Those same beats drive Moon Mullican's "Cherokee Boogie" (based on Johnny Horton's 1959 version) and their chugging, but ill-sung versions of two Webb Pierce standards: "Honky Tonk Song" and "I Ain't Never."

Over 20 years ago, Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen and Asleep at the Wheel created memorable music from older styles and placed their own stamp on various oldies. 5-49 hasn't done that. Sure, they capably re-create Ray Price's "Crazy Arms" and Gram Parsons' "Hickory Wind," but add nothing new or

fresh. Even on singer Gary Bennett's original "Even If It's Wrong," the guitar break recycles part of Paul Burlison's famous solo on Johnny Burnette's rockabilly classic, "The Train Kept a-Rollin'." Studio musicians re-create country and rock oldies for Karaoke albums all the time, but no one calls that artistry.

As for other originals, Mead's ballad, "Lifetime to Prove," could be filler on a Billy Ray Cyrus album, and the Latin beat of "Chains of This Town" falls flat. If the shallow rockabilly posturing of "One Long Saturday Night" isn't bad enough, "Baby Are You Gettin' Tired of Me" sounds like Lester "Roadhog" Moran with the guitars in tune. "Little Ramona," a tale of a punk rocker turned country, might apply to certain of their



boosters, given its shallow, name-dropping focus ("ol' Hank," "Manuel suits," etc.). Even their musicianship would win few awards, particularly Don Herron's hyperactive steel and fiddle and "Hawk" Shaw Wilson's mechanical drumming.

According to the August 29th *USA Today*, 1996 has seen flat country record sales and declining concert revenues. The troubling question: are we so Garthed, Shaniaed, McGrawed and Faithed out that we'll embrace anything that sounds different? Perhaps a drastic change is due, one that will sweep aside the worst of today's prepackaged crap as New Traditionalism vanquished Urban Cowboy ten years ago. But are new ideas, true creativity and musical excellence so scarce that people

who should know better will champion this very ordinary retro act as the next new thing? If so, perhaps things, as George Jones once sang, have truly gone to pieces.

—RICH KIENZLE



Sweethearts of the Rodeo

Beautiful Lies
Sugar Hill SHCD-3857

Until I slapped this delightful album on the CD tray and was swept up by the first exhilarating bars of "When Love Comes Around the Bend," I didn't realize how much I'd missed the delicious harmonies of *The Sweethearts of the Rodeo*.

Despite a half-dozen or so albums for Columbia back in the 1980's and early 90's and a handful of Top Five hits ("Midnight Girl/Sunset Town," "Chains of Gold," "Satisfy You," "Blue to the Bone"), *The Sweethearts* never really caught hold in the country format in a big way. Listening to this mostly acoustic, independent label release (their first record in several years), it's a little easier to understand why. The mainstream country market was maybe just a little too narrow for the sort of inspired eclecticism that this sister duet team brings to bear so beautifully on *Beautiful Lies*.

The musical setting that Kristine Arnold and her sister Janis Gill (Vince's wife) have chosen for this album (which Janis produced) is a bluegrass one, furnished by superstar newgrass players like Brent Truitt (mandolin, bazouki, gui-

tar), Stuart Duncan (fiddle), Mark Schatz (banjo) and Roy Huskey Jr. (acoustic bass), with some drums, electric guitar and accordion thrown in for good measure. With its lean, bluegrass-driven vitality, seamless musicianship and sterling harmonies, *Beautiful Lies*, in fact, reminds me of other similarly minimalist masterpieces—like *The O'Kanes'* self-titled debut album, or Steve Earle's more recent acoustic outing on *Train A-Comin'*.

The song choices, like Janis and Kristine's duets, are, for the most part, impeccable. There's evocative material from writers like Jim Lauderdale, Jon Leventhal, Pam Tillis, Don Schlitz, Paul Kennerley and Vince Gill. And there are also several cuts co-written by Janis with some of the above-mentioned writers. Additionally there are lovely covers of predictable songs like Bob Dylan's "One More Night" and Jimmie Rodgers' "Muleskinner Blues" (which Kristine and Janis enliven so beautifully with their yips and yelps that you might imagine the song was written last week instead of nearly three-quarters of a century ago). And there are also a couple of left field surprises—like their tender cover of Donovan Leitch's "Catch the Wind" and Ralph Burke's gospel chestnut, "I'll Pass Over Thee."

Granted there are a couple of cuts, like the Celtic romp called "The Inn at Innisfree," that simply meander along without going anywhere. But that said, it's hard to find much else to dislike about this fabulous little album.

—BOB ALLEN

Randy Travis

Full Circle
Warner Bros. 9 46328

Hard as it is to believe, a decade's passed since the *Storms of Life* album helped New Traditionalism establish a beachhead. Through that passageway came Yoakam, Strait, Shelton and others who

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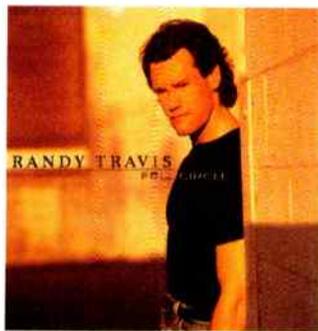
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yanked the music from its early 80's road to pop oblivion and re-established its ties to the past, pleasing older fans and grabbing younger listeners. It's a different world today, not necessarily a better one. With the millennium barely three years away, Travis is now the older singer, role model to a generation of younger vocalists in an era of heavy beats and the pre-packaged Non-Entity of the Month.

For any singer who made his or her name in an earlier era, recording today isn't easy, with the hype machines in overdrive and the drum machines far louder than anyone would prefer. Is it smarter to hold fast to the sound that made the artist's reputation? Or should the artist deny the past, the better to appear totally contemporary, or even walk a thin line between the two? Travis, producer Kyle Lehning and Martha Sharp, who's picked songs for so many of Travis' albums (with varying degrees of success), have opted for the latter direction.

Things begin well enough with "Highway Junkie," a respectable if not memorable opener, and the quintessential Travis ballad, "Price to Pay." Two exquisite Travis originals—"Future Mister Me," a number written with John Lindley, and "I Wish It Would Rain" (co-authored with Ron Avis)—serve as powerful reminders of his still-under-rated gifts as a composer. Fitting this pattern just as nicely are guitarist Mark Knopfler's ballad, "Are We in Trouble Now," a song custom-tailored for Randy, and "I Can Almost Hear Her Wings," a Travis collaboration with Buck Moore and Eddie Lee. Both feature low-keyed arrangements that slip glove-like around his voice.

Unfortunately, not everything succeeds that well, resulting in way too much filler. Probably to satisfy the ayatollahs of line dance, "Would I" gets a lockstep arrangement that fits Travis about as well as gansta rap would suit Hal



Ketchum. The same 90% rhythm and 10% by-the-numbers vocal syndrome pervades both the trivial "Don't Take Your Love Away from Me" and "If It Ain't One Thing, It's Another." Though his note-for-note homage to Roger Miller's immortal "King of the Road" is affectionate enough, the strength of Miller's original makes it a nearly impossible song for any artist to reinterpret. Oddly enough, he succeeds far better in resurrecting Miller's spirit on the excellent "Ants on a Log," a Skip Ewing number that captures the eccentric feel of Miller at his best.

Without question, *Storms of Life* will remain the standard by which all Randy Travis albums will (and should) be judged. Few, if any, throwaways marred that record. By the same token, there are far too many here.

—RICH KIENZLE

Trisha Yearwood *Everybody Knows* MCA MCAD 11477

The problem with most country-pop hybrids is they blend the worst of both genres—the most predictable rhythms and melodies of country and the most overblown sentimentality of pop. It is possible, however, to combine the best of both worlds—the conversational storytelling of country with the emphatic beat and hypnotic hooks of pop. That's what Trisha Yearwood has been doing in recent years, and on *Everybody Knows* she proves once again that commercial coun-

try-pop can be done with integrity.

The advantages of shoving Loretta Lynn and Carole King together can be heard on a song such as Kevin Welch's "Hello, I'm Gone." The verses tell the story of a woman driving a pick-up away from a bad marriage in Dallas, and Yearwood delivers Welch's visual details with a Loretta-like naturalness, as if she were talking to her best friend in a diner booth. When she gets to the big, melodic chorus, however, she belts it out with the pop grandeur of King on a good day. It's this ability to switch back and forth that makes Yearwood such a special singer and such a meaningful figure for a country audience that's moving from farms and small towns into the suburbs.



Those roots are reflected in the title track, a song about a town so small that a woman can't break up with her boyfriend without getting advice, sympathy and phone numbers from everyone from the preacher to the girls at work to neighbors on the street. In mock exasperation, Yearwood wails on the hooky chorus that "everybody knows what to do about my misery, yeah, everybody but me."

The newest generation of female country fans aren't small-town housewives, though; they're suburban working women who run themselves ragged between overtime at the job, children's soccer games and late-night house-keeping. Their dilemma is captured in the album's centerpiece, Craig Carothers' "Little Hercules," which glows with sympathy for women who "feel the weight of the world."

Yearwood's nicely understated vocal not only echoes the strain of the woman in question (there's a heart-pulling ache in the way she asks "Does anyone really go home at five?") but also offers reassuring comfort (there's a teasing smile as she sings, "No one's gonna get you fired if you'd just give yourself a break"). And if "Little Hercules" would just relax a little, she'd discover the modest pleasures of life "Under the Rainbow," as the follow-up song by Matraca Berg and Randy Scruggs has it, where sitting on a porch swing in the rain is reward enough.

Yearwood isn't always so serious. On the album's first single, "Believe Me Baby (I Lied)," she delivers the comic contradiction of the title with real gusto. And the lead-off track, "I Want to Live Again," is a sequel to "I Want to Go Too Far" and is knocked out with the same country-rock energy. Some of the positive love songs, such as "It's Alright," "I Need You" and "Maybe It's Love" are rather ordinary and prevent *Everybody Knows* from being as brilliant as last year's *Thinkin' About You*. But the new album does end strongly with "A Lover Is Forever," a jazz-flavored ballad by Fred Knobloch and the late Steve Goodman. It receives an unusual arrangement—acoustic guitar, harmonica and string quartet—and Yearwood handles the Billie Holiday-like melody so assuredly that she might have a whole new direction to pursue in the future.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

Billy Ray Cyrus *Trail of Tears* Mercury 314-532 829

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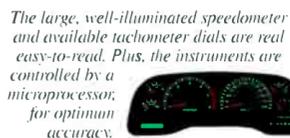
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2.5L I-4 H.P. 120 @ 5200 rpm Torque 145 @ 3250 rpm	2.3L I-4 H.P. 112 @ 4800 rpm Torque 135 @ 2400 rpm	2.2L I-4 H.P. 118 @ 5200 rpm Torque 130 @ 3200 rpm
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Dodge Dakota	Ford Ranger	Chevrolet S-10
84.7 cu. ft. 56.4 cu. ft. 40/20/40 split bench	66.3 cu. ft. 52.5 cu. ft. Not available	65.0 cu. ft. 55.6 cu. ft. Not available
Standard dual airbags Available 50.0 sq. in.	Optional dual airbags Not available 31.5 sq. in.	Driver's airbag only Not available 41.0 sq. in.

Dodge Dakota	Ford Ranger	Chevrolet S-10
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Long Bed Length: 96.4" Width: 57.8" Depth: 17.5" Volume: 56.4 cu. ft.	Long Bed Length: 83.8" Width: 54.4" Depth: 16.5" Volume: 43.5 cu. ft.	Long Bed Length: 88.8" Width: 54.9" Depth: 17.1" Volume: 48.1 cu. ft.

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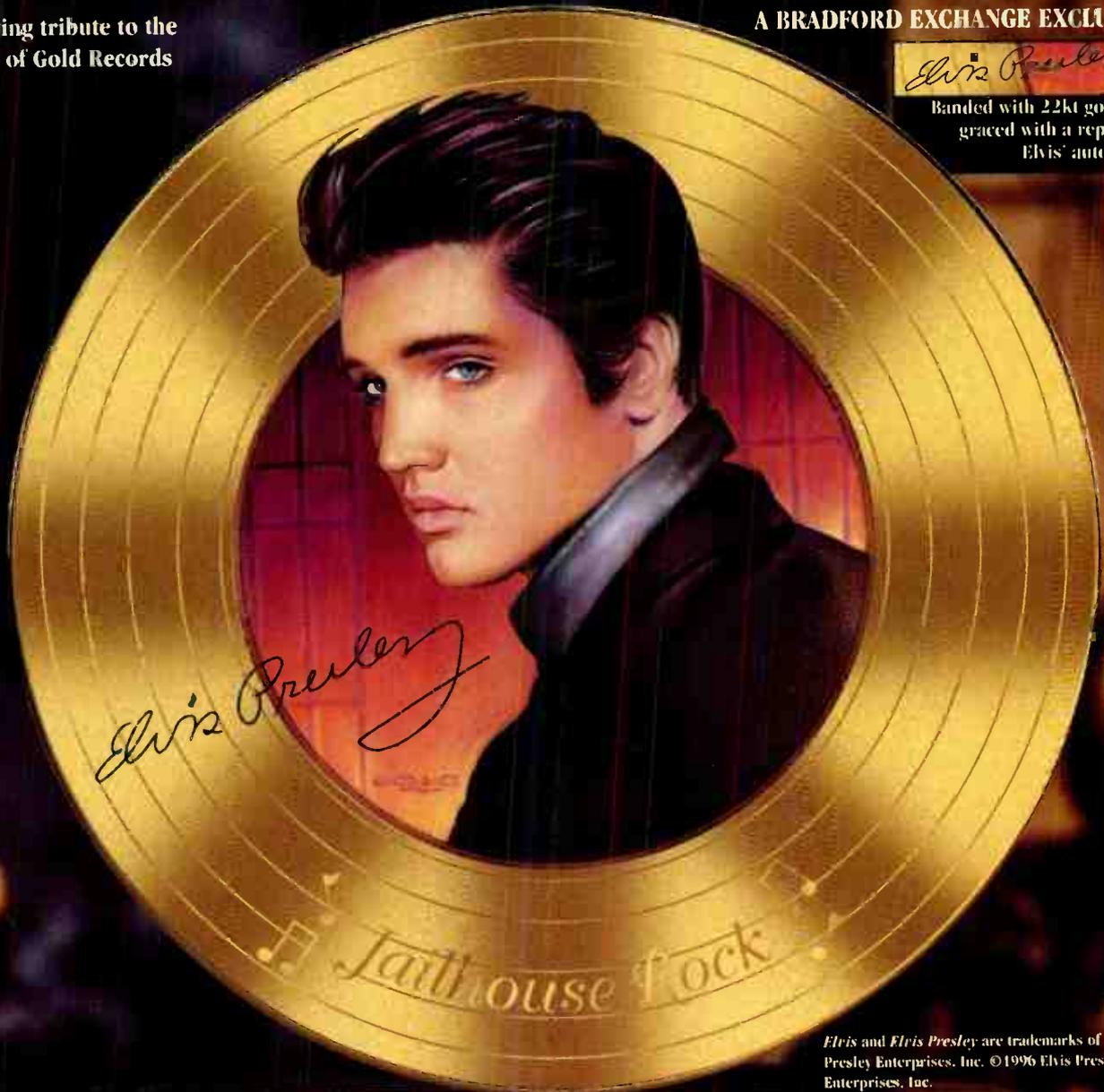
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Record Reviews

ways been just that—he's an outsider. He did things other people wouldn't, or couldn't do (for good or ill), and made himself a multi-million-selling underdog with fans of his boiled-in-rock 'n' roll country music. Even when he had standard material—which was often, and usually written by himself and pal Don Van Tress—he had producers Cotton and Scaife to pull off an energized, well thought out record.

Cotton and Scaife are gone. What comes out of this—Cyrus' first, and hopefully last, self-produced CD—is over-long Cyrus-Von Tress songs that go nowhere, and a very strange but not very interestingly done admixture of classic covers.

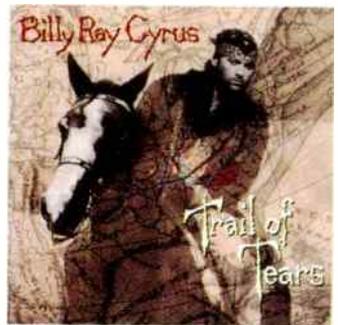
"Trail of Tears," the single, is a vague lament for American Indians set to a pretty blatant rip-off of a hundred old Bill Monroe melodies. "Truth Is I Lied" tells that classic story of redneck rejection in which the protagonist is a cross between Ernest T. Bass and James Dean: man gets hurt, man vandalizes girlfriend's property, man rides off on his motorbike in a blaze of surly, mutton-headed self-pity brighter than the sunrise into which he rides. Cyrus and Von Tress write clumsy, lumpy gravy lyrics to begin with, requiring a really great, bounding rhythmic groove track to carry them off with any grace, and it just isn't here.

I liked the semi-syncopation of the Billy Ray-Mark Collie co-written "Tennucky," the cool blues harp, and the fact that the song was pretty much all chorus, but as the best original number on this album, it still only rates "filler" status. "Call Me Daddy" is just rank sophomoric sentimentalism. "Three Little Words"—man, only Billy Ray could find a song this bad in this town of great songs without having to write it himself.

"Should I Stay" is would-be Orbison (not). "I Am Here Now" gets lost in its own

grade school tautologies. "Need a Little Help" by Billy Ray and his fellow-bad writer Von Tress... well, shucks, the title says it all.

The covers, now; that's another story. "Harper Valley P.T.A." gets a really cool, "Honky Tonk Women"-style treatment. Speed it up a little and you might really have something there. Merle Haggard's taut, autobiographical "Sing Me Back Home" deserved better than this—to be left alone would definitely have been better

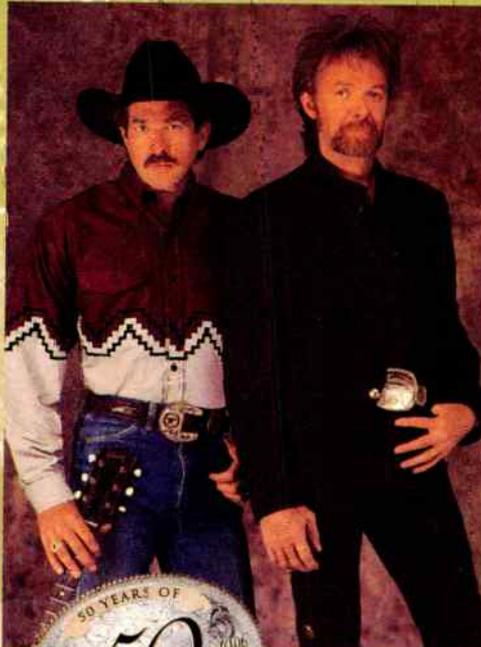


than this. Meanwhile, J.J. Cale's signature slinky slide guitar blues, "Crazy Mama," gets a soul-less, exhausted and exhausting treatment. Mac Gayden's sizzling wah-wah slide on the original made that record—Billy Ray the producer didn't know how to coax anything either original or exciting out of his studio ax man here.

While I have long been tired of Billy Ray's signature baleful glare, I understand that he is a shy man and a very decent and kind human being. These are admirable qualities hard to come by in the music business. But we aren't asked to buy an artist's private self. We are asked to shell out for a record. This effort falls short for all but the most ardent fan.

All in all, this is a real disappointment. Previously, with competent help, Billy Ray plowed his own furrow; this outing he seems to have dug his own grave. Success earns creative latitude, but there can be such a thing as too much rope.

—BOB MILLARD



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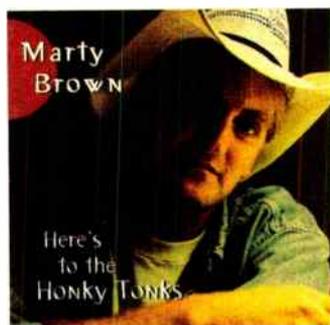
Record Reviews

Marty Brown

Here's to the Honky Tonks

Hightone HCD 8075

When Marty Brown released his first album, *High and Dry*, in 1991, he had the reckless, twangy voice of a Jimmie Rodgers, the songwriting instincts of a Boudleaux Bryant and the unfaked hillbilly charm of a Dolly Parton. These qualities, of course, almost guaranteed that he'd be a failure on modern country radio, and after three albums, MCA Records gave up the battle in 1994 and released Brown to the netherworld of the unsigned. The small-town Kentucky kid with the crumpled-up cowboy hat didn't give up, however, and now he's back with a fourth album, *Here's to the Honky Tonks*, that revalidates all the



early praise heaped upon him by the press.

When Brown declares on his new release that "Love Comes Easy" but "goes down hard," he belts out the chorus with carefree abandon as if he's not only willing to accept the risk but eager to put his heart on the line. In fact, his voice goes jagged on some words and nasally on others as if he were so caught up in the moment that he doesn't have time to be careful. Adding to the excitement is a melody that doesn't so much imitate The Everly Brothers as match them hook for hook. If you're used to today's flawlessly polite singers, you might find Brown's uninhibited yelping a bit disturbing, but give it a chance and you'll get caught

up in his enthusiasm.

Even when his heart is breaking, Brown's voice tingles with electricity. It's as if he believes sadness shouldn't be pushed away when it comes but instead felt as fully as possible. On one honky tonk ballad, the singer stands in the Nashville airport and imagines his lover reading his farewell note while he's "Somewhere Over Arkansas." By the way Brown stretches certain notes so far that they almost turn into yodels, you can tell his regrets have already begun.

The album's best cut is "Behind Bars," a story-song about a barmaid who makes minimum wage serving drinks at the local honky tonk. With his sharp eye for details, Brown evokes the situation of a woman who feels trapped in a dead-end job but can't afford to stop working, and with his note-bending vocal, he makes us feel the push and pull of her dilemma.

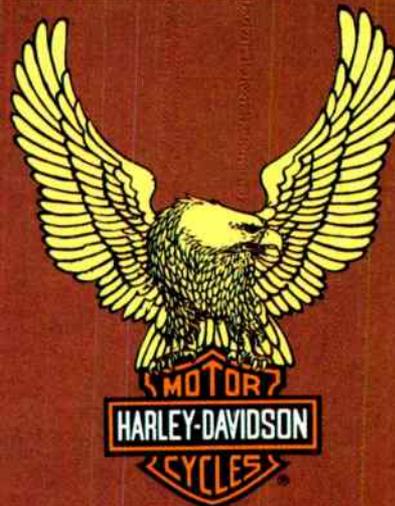
If *Here's to the Honky Tonks* doesn't live up to Brown's two masterpieces, *High and Dry* and *Cryin' Lovin', Leavin'*, it's because his songwriting doesn't quite match the quirky innocence of his early work. Perhaps that's because he co-wrote ten of the 11 songs with fellow Nashville writers who are more aware of how a song is "supposed" to sound. Whatever the reason, the title track is a generic tribute to all saloons rather than a particular one, while "He Thinks Daddy Hung the Moon" lapses into cute sentimentality. On the other hand, Brown is singing better than ever, as one can hear on the one song he didn't write, a Tom T. Hall-like narrative about a moonshiner so beloved even the preacher broke down and cried "The Day the Bootlegger Died." Brown's voice is infectiously giddy on the funny lines and disarmingly tender on the poignant lines—a combination that recalls Willie & Waylon and other outlaws from long ago.

—GEOFFREY HIMES

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BILL MONROE

The Father of Bluegrass Passes On 1911-1996

It's mid-September, and since William Smith Monroe's death, I've spent a lot of time thinking about his life and legacy. It jarred old memories loose, like back in the 1970's when I read Jim Rooney's now-classic book *Bossmen*, which examined the lives of Monroe and blues master Muddy Waters in their own words. Bluegrass was new to me then, and the more Monroe's hard life and views flew off the pages of that thin book, the more of his music I wanted to hear. I recalled finding a partly worn Columbia 78 of "Rocky Road Blues" at an eastern Pennsylvania flea market, which I completely wore out. Then there was the first time I heard "My Last Days on Earth," the amazing, eerie instrumental (with sound effects, yet) written and recorded in 1981 after he faced colon cancer surgery. Complex, symphonic, but thoroughly Monroe, it could have served as his epitaph, but it didn't. He was back on the road soon after. Later in 1982, he returned to the stage only one day after kidney surgery.

Over the past few years as he moved into his 80's, age was finally slowing him down. He had bypass surgery in 1991 and suffered a broken hip just two years ago. Yet his recoveries each time made his mortality easy to forget. I doubt anyone thought much about it on March 15th of this year, the night of his final performance on the Opry.

However, various rumors surrounded the stroke he suffered later that month. In the minds of some, the door was open again for him to rise like Lazarus. But friends who visited him in the Springfield, Tennessee, nursing home where he'd been moved got a more sobering picture. He recognized them, but paralysis cost him his speech and ability to play that famous Gibson F-5 mandolin. Trapped in an unresponsive body, his death on the afternoon of September 9th at age 84, four days before his 85th birthday, had to have been a release.

The media's reported it time and again, but it bears repeating here: there are few individuals in American popular music who alone can be credited with creating a single musical genre. Most musical styles evolved from various individuals heading in the same direction. Jazz was around

before Louis Armstrong, Bob Wills is the father of Western swing, but Milton Brown's pivotal role in the 1930's makes him a co-founder. When Elvis launched rockabilly, others around Memphis had already been experimenting with similar sounds.

Bill Monroe is different. No one else had the singular vision of a sound derived from old-time stringband music that went light years beyond it. No one else propelled the mandolin into the role of lead instrument. No one else created bluegrass music.

It had been a long journey. From a lonely childhood on the family farm near Rosine, in western Kentucky, where he'd been born in 1911, the youngest of six children, he was cross-eyed and shy. His parents, older when he was born, both died while he was young. A mental tape recorder compensated for Bill's poor eyesight and childhood shyness, and he retained the sounds he'd heard. From the shape-note hymns he'd learned as a boy, to the fiddle tunes that his Uncle Pen Vandiver played, as Bill accompanied him on mandolin, he retained them all. He retained the sounds of black gospel, the ragtimey blues guitar of black Kentucky musician Arnold Shultz and even a bit of early jazz.

Leaving Kentucky in 1929, Bill moved north to Whiting, Indiana, near Chicago. There, he joined older brothers Birch, a fiddler, and Charlie, who sang and played guitar. By day, they labored at local oil refineries, trying to hold on in the Depression's early days; after hours, they played informally. Still working day jobs, they caught on as square dancers for Chicago's WLS *National Barn Dance*, and played music locally as The Monroe Brothers. Offered radio sponsorship by a laxative company in 1934, Bill and Charlie continued as a duo. Birch, unsure of a musical career, returned to the refineries. Bill, who'd only played mandolin as a boy behind Charlie and Birch, now compensated for Birch's fiddling by making mandolin a lead instrument, inspired by Uncle Pen's fiddling. The driving, gutsy style that he created would have far-reaching implications. After four years of success and memorable recordings,

The Monroe Brothers split in 1938.

All of this fermented in Bill's fertile mind to create what came to be called bluegrass, taken from Kentucky's status as the "Bluegrass State." To play that music he built a full band called The Blue Grass Boys. Everyone who heard this new music realized its value, including the Opry's notoriously picky creator, George D. Hay. After hiring The Blue Grass Boys for the Opry in 1939, Hay provided an instant benediction: "If you leave, it'll be only because you've fired yourself."

Musical roots aside, Bill Monroe's personality and life experiences defined bluegrass music. It was a music of teamwork, not surprising for a man who so loved baseball that for years, he and The Blue Grass Boys played games on the road. Playing bluegrass demanded discipline, precision and hard work, understandable requisites for a man who from boyhood, earned nothing he didn't sweat for. From the musicians whom he hired and molded, he demanded creativity and vision, hardly earthshaking coming from one endowed with ample amounts of both. Bluegrass was a music that ran the gamut of emotions, from the joy and assertiveness of the upbeat songs with supercharged fiddling, mandolin and banjo, through mournful waltz-time ballads and chilling, eerie high harmonies that Monroe created. But he wasn't inflexible. He'd readily record mainstream country songs that fit his sound.

But one group, the 1945-48 Blue Grass Boys, pulled it all together. In Lester Flatt's voice and guitar, Earl Scruggs' unique five-string banjo style and Chubby Wise's bluesy long-bow fiddling bluegrass defined itself for all time. The band's Columbia recordings became classics. Monroe knew what he had, and took it very personally when Flatt and Scruggs quit to start their own act in 1948. It would be years before they reconciled. Given Monroe's pride, his proprietary attitude was understandable. In 1949, after Columbia signed The Stanley Brothers, whom he considered imitators, Monroe grudgingly finished out his contract and then signed with Decca. It took time for this proud, dignified man to realize that any imitating was done out of respect.



In the beginning there were The Monroe Brothers, Charlie and Bill. Then came The Blue Grass Boys. The group above, dating from 1946, included Wise, Flatt, Scruggs and Birch Monroe.

What Monroe could never have anticipated was how that respect grew through newer technologies which would have seemed unthinkable in his Rosine childhood. Clear channel radio beamed his music throughout the South and North, through hills, plains and hollows and cities and suburbs that sprang up after World War II. Poor Southern kids like Carl Perkins who loved blues guitar and Monroe's driving beat mixed the two, and created a building block of rockabilly. At an early Elvis Presley session at Sun Records in mid-1954, Bill Black's off-the-cuff imitation of Monroe singing "Blue Moon of Kentucky" led to a jumping rearrangement that many assumed would infuriate the song's creator. Surprisingly he not only approved, he quickly re-recorded it, blending their version with his.

Bluegrass had many admirers, and many mainstream artists, among them Carl Smith and Buck Owens, as well as George Jones and Melba Montgomery, recorded bluegrass albums. It influenced rock music as well. Buddy Holly played bluegrass before he ever played rock 'n' roll. The Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia began his career as a bluegrass banjoist and never quit playing that music. Ex-Blue Grass Boys Peter Rowan and Richard Greene contributed to country-rock and, like Monroe disciple mandolinist David Grisman, created their own music that incorporated a little of everything.

As Blue Grass Boys came and went, their list of distinguished alumni grew. Flatt, Scruggs, Chubby Wise, Carter Stanley, Don Reno, Mac Wiseman, Sonny Osborne, Vassar Clements, Kenny Baker and Del McCoury are but a few who, after leaving Monroe, spread the word and added their own distinctive touches. While Monroe, who'd created his sound in the 1930's, found strong acceptance among folk music fans, The Stanley Brothers, Osborne Brothers and Flatt and Scruggs took bluegrass to college campuses. Lester and Earl took it to TV (*The Beverly Hillbillies*) and

film (*Bonnie and Clyde*) and generated ample press. Many in the media mistakenly concluded that Flatt and Scruggs and not Monroe created bluegrass, which left understandably hard feelings among Monroe and his supporters.

Two of those supporters, folklorist Ralph Kinzler, who briefly managed Monroe in the 60's, and pioneer bluegrass festival promoter Carleton Haney, played a major role in establishing Monroe's pre-eminence. As festivals grew in popularity, and particularly after Monroe's 1970 induction into the Country Music Hall of

Fame, the media finally recognized the true Father of Bluegrass. Settling into that role, Bill mellowed somewhat. In 1971, he declined to participate in The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* album project, but by 1985 he appeared in Ricky Skaggs' "Country Boy" video. He continued working the road, made more guest appearances on others' records and showed up often on TNN. The final honor of his life came in 1995, when President Clinton awarded him the National Medal of Arts at the White House.

In death, Monroe's commanding presence, strength, dignity and charisma remains, as does a vast legacy of recorded music leaving no doubt that bluegrass will survive even without its father. That point was driven home at his September 11th funeral service at the Ryman. Following performances by Ricky Skaggs, Ralph Stanley, Alison Krauss, Connie Smith and others, the service concluded with a furious mandolin duet on "Rawhide," played by two who got the message as boys: Skaggs and Marty Stuart.

Several former Blue Grass Boys turned elder statesmen remain active, as do younger generations of performers, some following Monroe's sound, others who've added their own ideas. None would even try to occupy Bill Monroe's pedestal.

One consolation remains as we bid him farewell: that we lived in his time, and he in ours.

—RICH KIENZLE

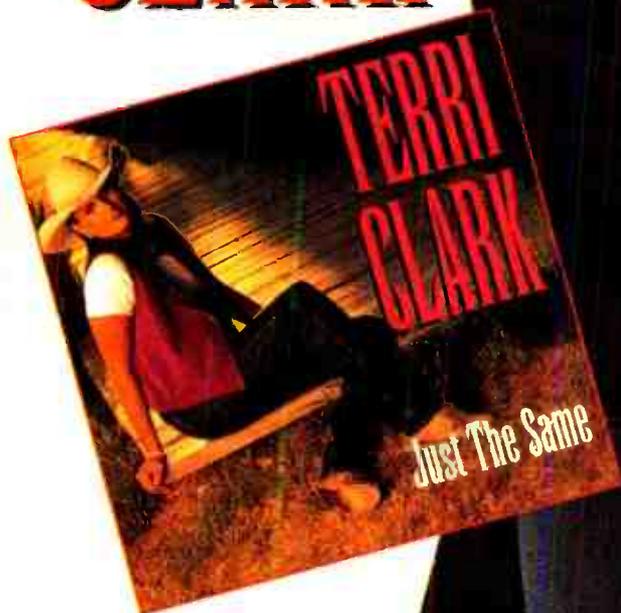


Cherished memories: with longtime bluegrass enthusiast and fan Emmylou Harris, at his own Bean Blossom, Indiana, festival in 1972, in the studio with Ricky Skaggs in 1984, and at home with two friends in later years.



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Alan Jackson

A Dull Guy's Close Shave

The average country fan would never use words like dull or boring to describe Alan Jackson. But ask Alan, and he'll tell you that's exactly what he is. Do we believe him? Heck, no. Phone calls from Sharon Stone, sell-out world-wide tours, and just his look alone tell us that Alan's idea of boring is just about what all of us only dream of. What's more, when it comes to talking about today's country music, he's more than a step ahead of the rest.

BY MICHAEL BANE

“You know my mustache?” Alan Jackson is saying. We’ve de-camped into his bus, crowded with all the band members and assorted road people. Outside is the Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul, Minnesota, where people are, in fact, eating pickles on sticks. Compared to pickles on sticks, Alan Jackson’s mustache is the soul of normalcy.

I acknowledge that yes, I do know Alan Jackson’s mustache, although it and I haven’t been formally introduced.

“I mean, you knew me back when I didn’t have a mustache.”

I nod, wondering where all this is heading.

“Well” he says, “Sharon Stone wants to shave it off.”

The band, as a unit, giggles.

“I mean,” says Alan Jackson, “that she wants to shave it off for my next video.”

I nod enthusiastically. The band has now gone from giggling to sniggering.

“I mean,” Alan Jackson, now flustered, continues, “that Sharon Stone called me

up last week and asked whether she could direct my next video. She likes me better without my mustache, and if we shaved it off during the video, maybe she’d do a guest appearance on it...”

We all smile.

“On the video,” he says. “Man, you guys...”

Maybe, I suggest, *La Stone* would consider shaving all the band’s mustaches for the next video.

“Yeah,” says Alan.

“No way, man,” says one band member, echoed by the rest. “That’s a guaranteed trip to Divorce City.”

“Well, I don’t think I’m gonna do it,” Alan Jackson says emphatically. “I think I look better with my mustache than without it.”

So there. The Great Mustache Controversy should put to rest, once and for all, the pervasive and persistent rumor that Alan Jackson is a Dull Guy. The biggest purveyor of this rumor is, of course, Alan Jackson himself, who often has conversations like this one, after we haven’t seen



Boats as well as cars and motorcycles are favorites of Alan's.

each other in, I don't know, five or ten years:

What have you been doing lately?

"I don't know. I haven't really been doing anything."

Doing any fishing?

"Yeah, I do that when I'm off some. Other than that, we've just been touring, same things we've always done."

How much writing are you doing?

"Not much. I write about like I've always done."

You never had a huge output.

"Too lazy."

Okay, let's cut to the quick, get to the serious meat of this interview:

Can you really waterski?

"I been skiing since I was 6 years old. I didn't do all those tricks in that ["Chattahoochee"] video. But I can barely slalom ski. Years ago I used to do a little trick stuff. I barefoot some. I just quit. Hadn't done it in years—I didn't even have a boat 'cause I didn't have any money. I ski

about once a summer now to prove I can still do it. Mostly, I drive the boat and drag everyone else around. I taught plenty of people to ski, though."

All right! Now we're getting somewhere...

Seriously, though, and Alan Jackson is nothing if not serious, Alan Jackson is an artist who has gone to great lengths to speak primarily through his music. Like George Strait, one of Jackson's idols, Jackson has taken steps to avoid the limelight so hungrily sought by 99 percent of country acts. Instead, again like Strait, he has concentrated on crafting a string of flawless country hits, beginning with "Here in the Real World," "Wanted," "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow," "Midnight in Montgomery," "She's Got the Rhythm (I've Got the Blues)," "Livin' on Love," "Gone Country," "Tall, Tall Trees," "Home"—17 Number One country hits in all. And when I say "country" here, I mean exactly that. When I first met Alan Jackson, just before the release of "Here in the Real World," around 1989, he told me that, more than anything else, he wanted to carry on the traditions of country music.

I remember we were sitting in some small record company office, and Alan was on the swaybacked couch, his hat actually in his hands. He talked reverently about the greats of country music, George Jones, George Strait, Merle Haggard, and said, simply, that if Alan Jackson had a mission, it was to follow in those shoes. At the time, I thought he might have picked an easier mission, such as becoming an astronaut, but I was wrong. In an industry highlighted by a "catch of the day" mentality, Alan Jackson has held the high, lonesome ground.

Now, years later, we're stuffed into the bus, addressing the Mustache Issue. We're also addressing other Critical Issues, such as vintage motorcycles, antique wooden boats and the classic cars that seem to keep cluttering Alan's garages. When we first met, he talked a lot about working on cars, but from a more prosaic viewpoint, such as, it ain't runnin', and it's got to get fixed. Success has given him a little more time to indulge his interests.

Eventually, we decide to face the music, literally.

"I don't keep up with it like I did," Alan says.

"Kinda intentionally, actually. When my career was taking off, naturally I wanted to stay locked into what's going on and what artist is doing what and whose album is selling. And I watched all the charts. Finally, I got so burned out. I mean, you end up spending so much energy on your career and all those things that surround it—the music business, the awards shows, the interviews, the television and suddenly, your songwriting and your music are the last things on your list. Finally, one day I spoke up. I called my office and said don't send trade magazines out on the bus anymore. Ya'll keep them up there, do what you need to do, I don't want to see them. If there's something I want to see, I'll call you. And I don't watch the country news channels so much; I just got away from it. I listen to the radio some, and watch the videos some just to stay a little bit in touch. What I listen to—you don't want me to get up on my soapbox about country music—I'm not real wild

"I'm not real wild about a lot of what I hear on the radio now, because it all sounds so similar. Being a songwriter, there have been some really good songs to come out, but they're few and far between."

about a lot of what I hear on the radio now, because it all sounds so similar. Being a songwriter, there have been some really good songs to come out, but they're few and far between. Most of them are just stuff that just doesn't mean a thing. Even if it's a fun song, it's so lite it's...just...I don't know."

Whew! That's more words at one time than I've ever heard come from Alan Jackson's mouth. The thing is, it shows what's really on country singers' minds these days, which is not so much the music, but how the music gets transferred to us listeners. The secret truth is that Nashville is producing great music these days; unfortunately, we don't get to hear it. What we get, instead, is Prepackaged Country, three minutes in the microwave and—*voilà!*—a short, boring playlist.

"I know I sound like an old man, Michael, saying, 'Well, everything sounds the same,' but a lot of them do," Alan says. "The singers just don't have much...something...that you can identify. And I don't know that I do either, really! But they all have the same sound, or the production sounds the same, or something. Every once in awhile somebody different will come along. Take LeAnn Rimes—she's not real country like I like, but at least her music's a little bit different than all them little women that come out every other day."

Alan Jackson has put his money where his mouth is. He's doing some dates with Rimes and with hard country hero Junior Brown—"I think my fans will love him when they hear him"—literally trying to put the newer, more vital country music in front of the larger audience that he can command.

"You want to know the truth?" he says. "I think if I came out right now, as a brand new artist with the same stuff, 'Here in the Real World,' say, I don't believe radio would play it. I'd have a hard time getting heard. I think I was just really lucky to get in, to break through at a time when the door was open a little bit," Alan says. "I have this fantasy about just buying [Nashville's] WSM, with its huge audience, and just play real country music on it. I mean, there's good stuff out there that's not real country, sure. But there's a lot of good, hard country out there, things I really like, that will never break through."

These are scary times in Music City. The truth is that country music is imploding. After years of crowing about being the biggest music in America, of huge numbers following huge numbers, the party is over. At least one survey reported country listenership off by 23 percent, and in case you haven't noticed, all the hot media attention has moved on from country to the newly revitalized "adult" rock. After someone recently explained to me that, in adult rock, you can "understand the words," I was reminded of something Minnie Pearl told me backstage at the Opry at the heart of the "outlaw" country music revolution. A young rock-turned-country music critic had just finished explaining that people were turning to country because "they could understand the words to the songs."

In a whispered aside, the great comedienne



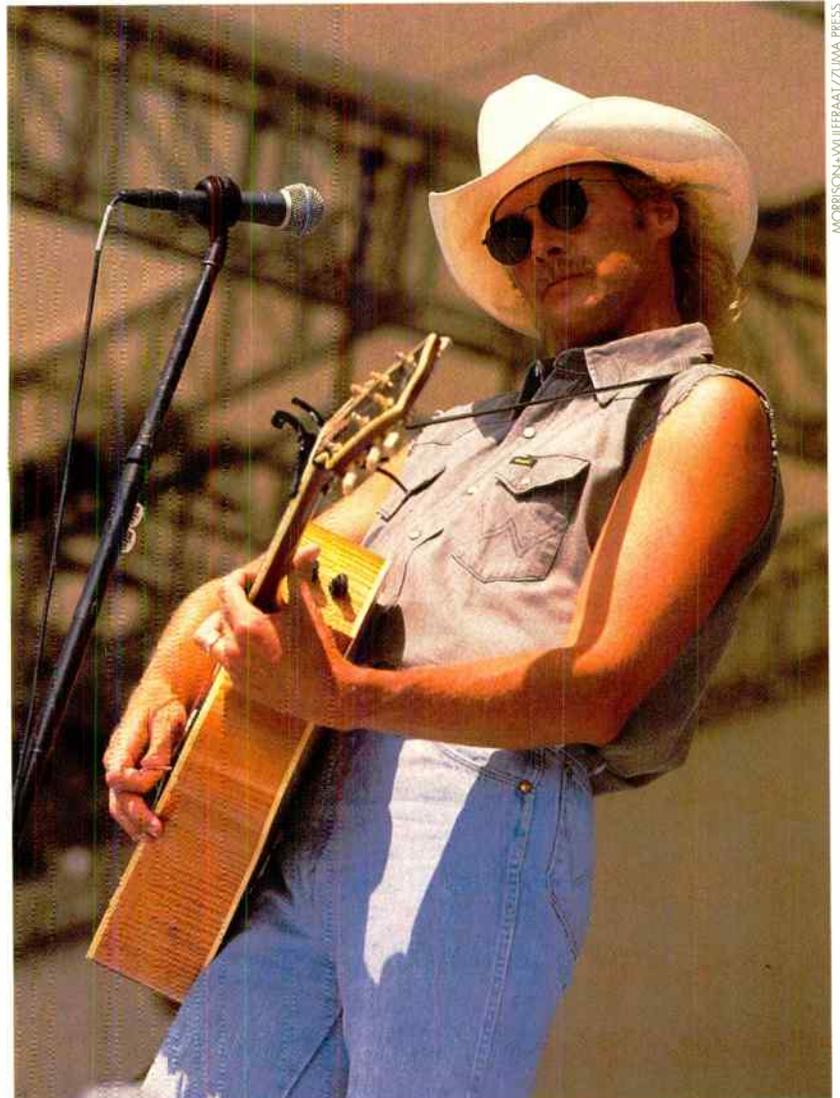
Alan rakes in the awards this June at the TNN/Music City News awards show, with wife Denise and older daughter Mattie.

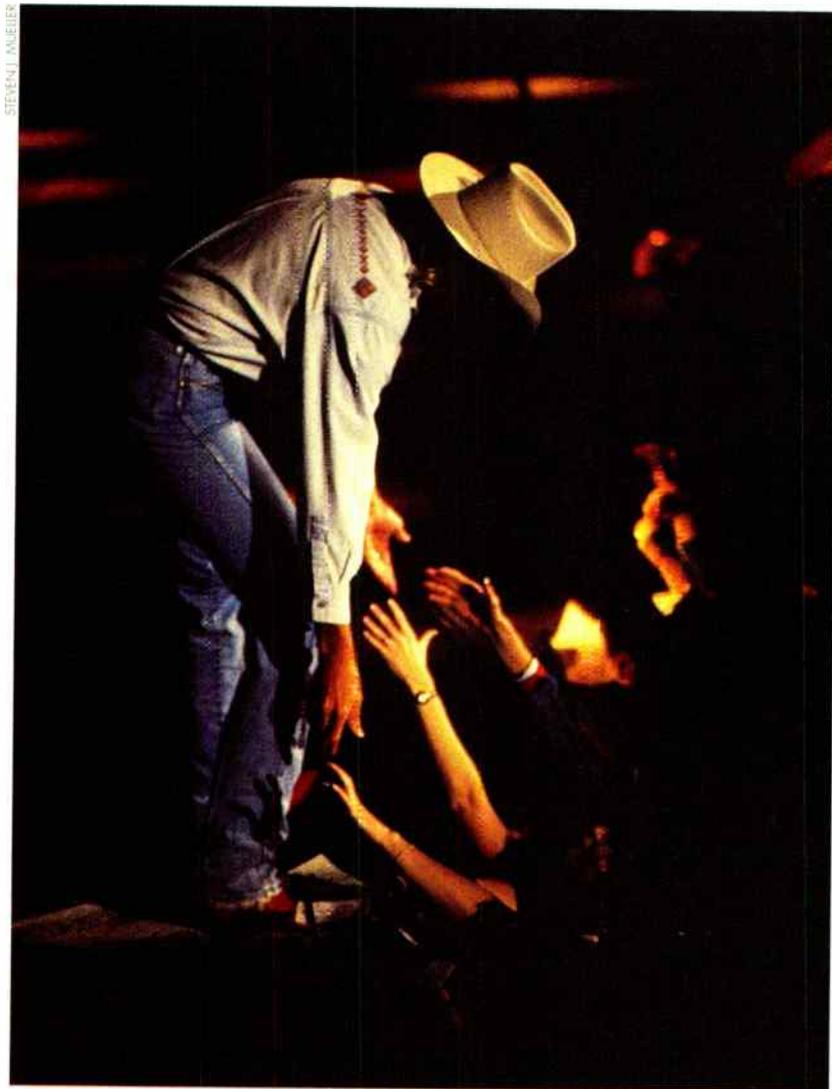
said, "Heck, just 'cause you can understand the words doesn't mean they're worth listening to!"

Nashville's response to this most recent turn of the wheel has been, predictably, to head for the middle of the road and dig in. This increasingly boring centrist viewpoint has affected Alan Jackson not in the least. He was a country singer when he started; he will be, he says adamantly, a country singer when he finishes.

"The thing is, Michael, I don't know how many of these young artists have really been exposed to what real country music is," Alan says. "A lot of fans who came to country music recently don't know the difference in a real country song and one of these progressive pop makeover type records that are out. Some of my fans are teenagers, and, golly, they weren't even *born* until the 80's. A lot of them don't even know who Merle Haggard is. It's a weird deal. I had Merle open for me a couple of

years ago, and we finally had a couple of markets where the radio stations wouldn't even promote our concert because Merle Haggard was on the show. They didn't want to be associated with an 'old time' act. So what do you do?"





The soundtrack running constantly on the bus includes both old and new Merle, Gene Watson, Junior Brown and, of course, George Jones. While he may revere the old music, though, Alan Jackson is far from fond of the old lifestyle. For a daddy with two little girls—he has just flown in from one of his daughter's third birthday party—and wife Denise waiting at home, the endless nights of the road have lost a lot of their appeal.

"It was fun the first couple of years you're out," he says. "It's exciting getting your career off the ground and going everywhere that you've never been. The whole thrill of it. After you ride the bus a hundred zillion miles, and you've been everywhere, it's good to be home. A couple of years ago I slowed down, backed the touring to 100 dates and now 75. Might do 50 next year. It's real comfortable. You just can't have a life touring 300 days a year."

He still writes, of course—he wrote or co-wrote about half the songs on the newest album—but it's harder than it used to be.

"I write mostly out on the road. I don't write much at home," Alan says. "Before I had a record deal, I wrote a lot because I'd go downtown and co-write with people and all that kind of stuff. That's the best way to produce a lot of material. Writing on your own, it's hard to get motivated, I guess, or I'm too lazy. I always write

"It's exciting getting your career off the ground and going everywhere that you've never been. The whole thrill of it. After you ride the bus a hundred zillion miles, and you've been everywhere, it's good to be home."

when I need to for an album, or if I'm really inspired by something. That's pretty rare. If I was just a songwriter, of course, I don't know if I'd write any better, but I'd write more. I think a lot of times, when you're writing for a living, you end up writing because you *have* to. My favorite songs come out of thin air, the ones I write by myself."

This winter, Alan Jackson is building a boat—his newest craze—a 30-foot long replica of a wooden 1922 racing boat.

"It'll have a big block Chevrolet in there, and it'll be a fast boat," he gushes, enthusiastic for Alan Jackson. "It's a wood boat, and it'll be beautiful. Should actually handle and drive really well. I mean, it's not that fast, you know, by today's standards, about 50-60 miles an hour. I don't know if I'd really race it. I don't know that they have antique actual real races. But they might."

It sounds, I say, like you need a bigger and bigger garage.

"Man, I've got a terrible disease," Alan says. "I'm like an alcoholic or something. Old boats; same way with cars and old motorcycles. Now I'm trying to learn to fly, you know, up in an airplane. I've been taking flying lessons, trying to get my private pilot's license. I always loved planes, just loved the style, especially older planes, just loved them. I never thought I'd really want to learn to fly. I've had several offers to fly with the Blue Angels. I think I'd get sick in one of those things, they can throw you every which way..."

Does Denise ever yell at you, I ask? These are Critical Guy Questions, issues each of us Guys is trying to resolve in our own way.

"She doesn't care," he says. "It keeps me sane. I don't think about the music business much. I just go home. I've got my hobbies and my family and the lake."

Oh, yeah, there's a new album. In fact, after the interview, the publicist called and asked how things went.

"Great," I say.

"What did Alan say about the new album," she asks.

"What album?" I reply. Haha, just joking. But sometimes, when you're in the middle of 1949 Harleys and sleek mahogany racing boats from the Golden Age of Bootlegging, it's hard to refocus on ten cuts. "I like it a lot," Alan did volunteer. "Maybe better than any album I've ever done." But about this racing boat...

"Seriously, Michael. I've got it made now. I work less. I'm in a position where I don't have to worry. I've got enough success, so I'm not worried about whether this song is going to make it or not," he says. "Or, is this album not going to sell—you always hope that they will, but it's not going to break my heart if it doesn't. I try to do the best album I can—always have; always will. It's more fun now than it was three or four years ago. I don't work as hard, don't do as many interviews. We pick our dates a little better. My life's perfect.

"I guess let's just face it—I'm boring," Alan Jackson sighs. "For an interview, for a magazine, all they want to hear is divorce, alcoholism, all the bad things...Some guys talked to me about books, but what am I going to say? Just a boring guy who worked hard, got lucky and sings country music. That's it."



BRYAN WHITE

COUNTRY MUSIC MAGAZINE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1996

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF-THE-MONTH

BRYAN WHITE

Facts of Life

Personal Data

Full Name: Bryan Shelton White
Birthdate: February 17, 1974
Birthplace: Lawton, Oklahoma
Residence: Nashville, Tennessee
Family: mother, Anita; father, Bud; brother, Daniel

Vital Statistics

Height: 5'9"
Weight: 160
Color eyes: hazel/green
Color Hair: brown
Favorite movie: *Somewhere in Time*
Hobbies: Freshwater fishing, going to the movies, "playing" in his home studio
Instruments: Guitar and drums (started playing drums when he was 5)
Influences: Steve Wariner; John Conlee, Merle Haggard, Ronnie Milsap, Vince Gill

Recording Career

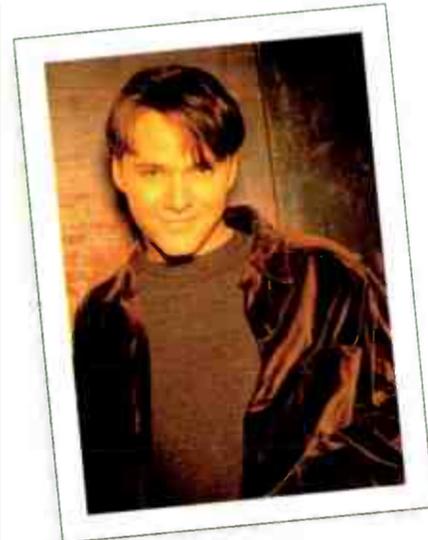
Record Label: Asylum Records, 1906 Acklen Ave., Nashville, Tennessee 37212

Albums	Release date
<i>Bryan White</i>	1994 *
<i>Between Now and Forever</i>	1996 *

*Gold album

Singles
"Eugene You Genius"
"Look at Me Now"
"Someone Else's Star"*
"Rebecca Lynn"*
"I'm Not Supposed to Love You Anymore"*
"So Much For Pretending"*
*Number One Single

Awards
1995: CMT Rising Video Star of the Year
1996: ACM New Male Vocalist; TNN/*Music City News* New Male Star of Tomorrow; Entertainment Radio Network Best New Artist; Entertainment Radio Network Single of the Year, "Rebecca Lynn"; Nominee CMA Horizon Award, Nominee CMA Male Vocalist



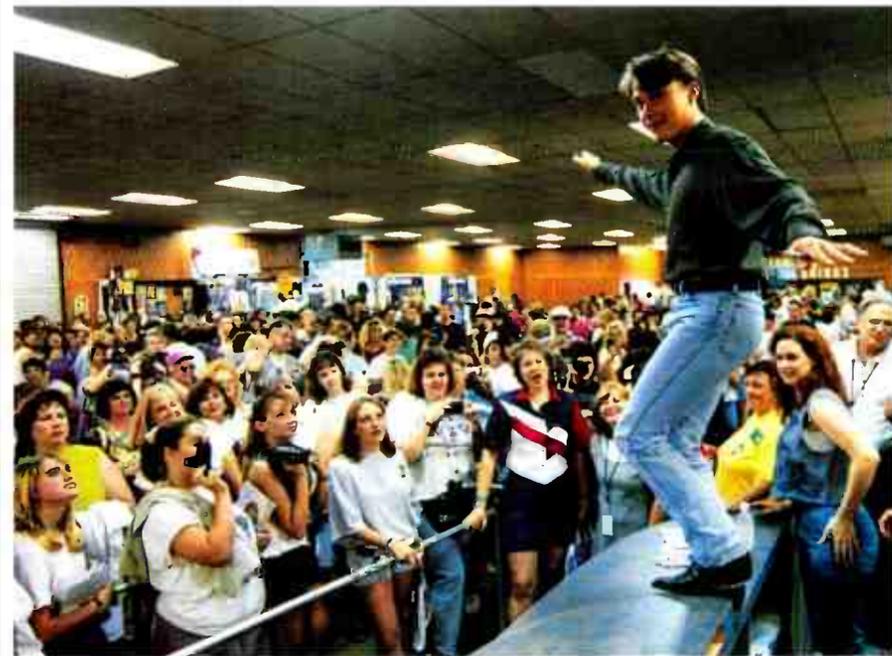
Band: Derek George, guitar/vocals; Brinson Strickland, guitar/vocals; Joe Morgan, bass; Monty Booker, drums/vocals; Joe Rogers, steel guitar/fiddle/squeeze box; and Tom Bently, keyboards

Songwriting: Has written with Bob DiPiero, Jim Weatherly, Susan Longacre, Lonnie Wilson, Randy Goodrum and John Tirro. Co-wrote Sawyer Brown's Top Five hit, "I Don't Believe in Goodbye," with Mark Miller and Scott Emerick.

Concerts: Has toured with Diamond Rio and Pam Tillis and appeared with Randy Travis, George Jones, Steve Warner, Tracy Lawrence and Tracy Byrd.

Early Career: White moved to Nashville after he graduated from high school, when he was 18. About that time he says, "When I set my mind to do something and say I'm gonna do it. I just have to do it. I knew I wanted to sing; I knew I wanted to play; I knew I wanted to write. I didn't think about anything else. I just packed up and left. For the first year, I had to have my family wire me money every month."

Fan Club: Bryan White International Fan Club, P.O. Box 120162, Nashville, Tennessee 37212



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World Radio History

SUZY BOGGUSS

She's Got her Wheels and She's Ready to Roll

If "Give Me Some Wheels," the title tune off Suzy Bogguss' latest album, isn't her theme song, then maybe it should be.

"That was the first song I had in place when I started collecting songs for this album a couple of years ago," says Bogguss, who co-wrote "Give Me Some Wheels" with Matraca Berg and Gary Harris. "It kind of sets the mood for the kinds of songs I was looking for this time around, which tended to fit into two categories: songs about discoveries and decisions."

Bogguss, 39, best known for hits like "Aces," "Letting Go," "Drive South," "Hey Cinderella" and the Grammy-nominated "Hopelessly Yours," is nearly effervescent with enthusiasm as she talks about *Give Me Some Wheels*—her first solo album since 1993's *Something Up My Sleeve*. She's looking fit, rested and ready as she sits in a crowded Washington, D.C., hotel lobby, amidst an annual industry convention. She's just finished a round-robin performance with Pam Tillis and Mary Chapin Carpenter for the enthusiastic conventioners.

As happy as she is to have a record out again, Bogguss also makes it clear that her recording hiatus did her a world of good—afforded her time to make some changes in her life and her music that needed to be made.

Since 1993, she's had her first child, a son named Ben. She's finally gotten settled into the house that she and her husband, songwriter Doug Crider, bought several years ago. She's also toured on a less breakneck schedule while collaborating on various recording projects with other artists—most notably Chet Atkins on *Simpatico*, their charming 1995 duet album.

"It was such a joy to go into the studio when other people

were producing," says Bogguss, who has produced or co-produced her own records for years. "It's just such a joy to be able to go in and just concentrate on the music and the performance instead of having all the details and responsibilities you have to keep tabs on as a producer."

Now, with *Give Me Some Wheels* out on the racks, Bogguss is, at long last, ready to get her own wheels turning full tilt again. The title song, she explains, really captures the

sense of energy and adventure that she's once again feeling about her music. It's the same sort of rush—the thrill of discovery, and the excitement of finding out what's over the next hill—that initially got her started a long time ago. That was back before she moved to Nashville in 1985. Back when she spent five years roaming the country, from Montana to Cambridge, Massachusetts, playing clubs and heeding the call of the open road.

"I started out in a Datsun hatchback, with my p.a. in the back and my dog, Duchess, a shepherd-collie mix, in the front seat," Bogguss recalls with a nostalgic grin. "Then my family grew, and I had a cat, too. So I bought a camper truck with a pop top and everything in it you could ever want, even a shower. It was like a little playhouse on wheels.

"I'd tour in the West for about nine weeks at a time, twice a year," she adds. "The rest of the time I'd stay within about ten hours of my home, in Illinois. I'd go to Minneapolis a lot, Chicago a lot. And once every fall and spring I would go to New York and Cambridge and play all the folk clubs up there. I mainly went because those times of year were beautiful in the Northeast. There was



*After several
years on the
Music Row
treadmill, Suzy
Bogguss took
some time out
and made
some changes.*

*Her music, and
her personal
life, are
better for it.*

by Bob Allen





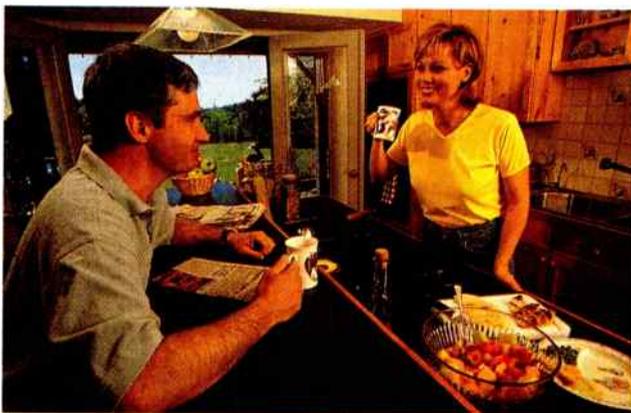
"I don't think anything symbolizes that freedom like the open road, a full tank of gas and some good tires!"

With her "home" complete, Suzy and husband Doug enjoy their time there.

no career plot involved. I just did it to make myself happy. I wanted to be in the most beautiful weather all year round, and while I was there, all I had to do is just sing at night—then I'd have all day long to goof around. I'd go work in a ski resort in the winter and cross country ski, and play music for four or five hours a night. I had a great time.

"I was just so eager to see different places," adds the singer, who originally hails from the Mississippi River town of Aledo, Illinois, and got a degree in metal-smithery from Illinois State University in 1980, before taking on the life of an itinerant musician. "And I really enjoyed the spontaneity of booking myself, sometimes just a little bit in advance, or sometimes not even that. Sometimes I'd just blow into some little town and go into some bar, and say, 'Hey, how about some entertainment tonight? I'm real cheap, and I'm real good!' I really had to play myself up."

Reminiscing about those long-gone times, Bogguss shrugs and concedes with a chuckle, "I still have fantasies of living that life again—though I know I'm forgetting some parts about it that I didn't like. I'm just remembering the good parts, the devil-may-care parts. There's a certain sense of just running away from everything that's involved. Even now, sometimes I get on the highway, and I'll just be driving into town, and I'll think, I'm not stopping, I'm just gonna keep driving. I'm just gonna keep driving, and when I get done, I'll be in Colorado or someplace, and I'll just walk into a bar and say, 'Hi, I'm Suzy



Bogguss, you want me to play in your bar tonight?"

"But I think that's healthy," Bogguss adds with a grin. "Not that I'm unhappy—I'm very happy. But I think, sometimes, things get on your nerves, and get heavy on your shoulders, and you just don't want to be where you are. You just want to be free of everything. And I don't think anything symbolizes that freedom like the open road, a full tank of gas and some good tires!"

Not all the songs on *Give Me Some Wheels* are like the title tune, with its escapist theme of hitting the highway to flee the pressures of a love gone wrong. Quite the contrary. Most deal with the sort of grown-up "decisions and discoveries" that Bogguss herself has had to make these past few years. Others (like "No Way Out") are about love that can't be escaped—not even in a fast car with good tires. Some are about the possibility that maybe women are from Mars and men are from Wal-Mart ("She Said, He Heard"). And one, "Saying Goodbye to a Friend," is about grieving. Bogguss says she was drawn to the song after losing a close friend to cancer last year.

In a more diffuse sort of way, the music on *Give Me Some Wheels* also reflects the vitality and focus that Bogguss says she's rediscovered since having Ben and pulling back a little from the relentless touring and recording merry-go-round she'd been on for too long.

"I had gotten into this cycle for several years of producing my own records and having them out for the market at a given time," says Bogguss, who won the

Country Music Association's 1992 Horizon Award and the Academy of Country Music's 1989 Top New Female Vocalist trophy. "It was such a short period between making albums that there wasn't enough time for growth there, so the albums were starting to kind of emulate themselves.

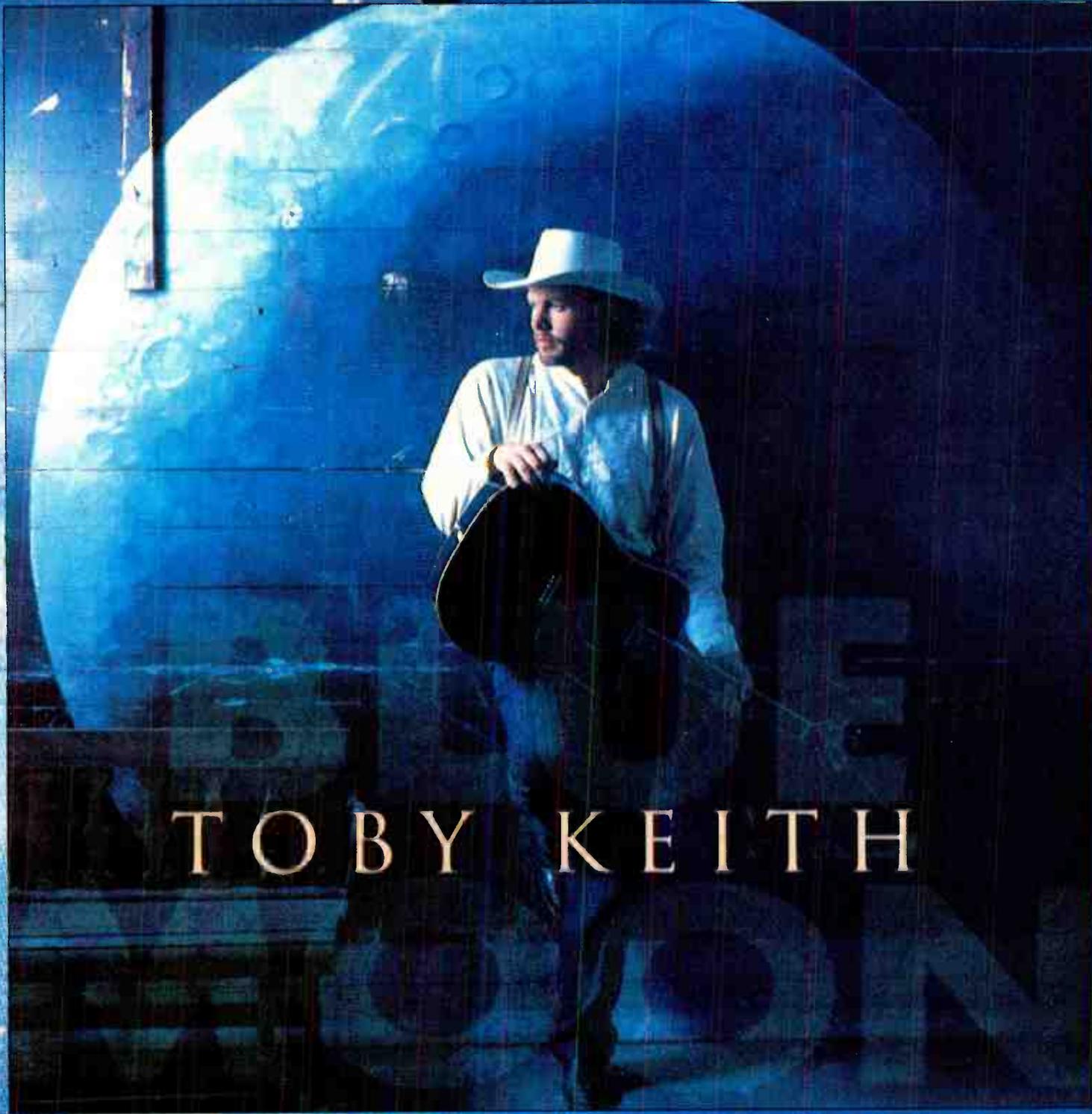
"I basically had no life, is what happened," she adds with a grimace. "I'd spend all my time either on the road promoting a record, or back in Nashville in a mad rush trying to write songs or find material. Then I'd spend two months in the studio making the record. And then the whole cycle would start all over again."

Bogguss recalls that it finally dawned on her just how out of control her life had become when she and her husband bought a new house in the country, near Nashville, about three years ago.

"That was one of the things that really stressed me out so bad," she remembers. "I'm a very big hobbyist. I love to decorate and cook, and I have lots of flowers and everything. But there I was, with this brand-new house that was completely empty. It was eating me up that I'd breeze into town for a couple of days, sleep on a mattress on the floor and never even have time to make any decisions. I tore the kitchen out, and it stayed out for three months, while my husband had to wash dishes in the bathtub and eat out of a microwave. I just couldn't do anything because I was never there long enough. That was part of what drove it home that I needed to make some changes. Doug and I also wanted to start a family, and it just wasn't going to work on that kind of schedule.

"To tell you the truth," she laughs, "I was beginning to feel like a little hamster on a treadmill."

Toby Keith



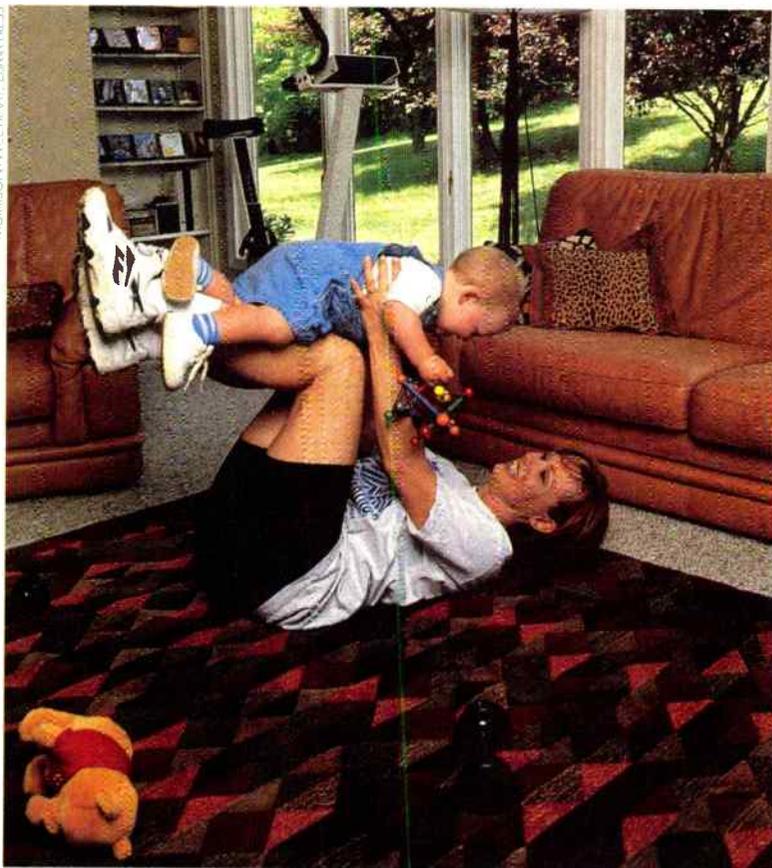
TOBY KEITH

featuring the hits "Does That Blue Moon Ever Shine On You"
"A Woman's Touch" and the new single "Me Too"

Produced by Nelson Larkin and Toby Keith

Management: TKO Artist Management





Suzy's been energized by the birth of a son, Ben, and time to herself.

"The best thing is, this time I got to just play and sing. That really took the pressure off and made it so easy."

There was another reason to slow down. The routine she'd fallen into—co-producing her own records (with former Capitol/Nashville label head Jimmy Bowen) seemed to have fallen into a rut. Bogguss did have her moments—times when the sort of superstardom initially predicted for her seemed imminent. Her 1992 single, "Drive South" (a John Hiatt-penned classic), reached Number Two. And her 1993 hit, "Just Like the Weather," went Top Five. Her 1991 album, *Aces*, sold more than a million copies, and the 1993 follow-up, *Voices in the Wind*, was also certified platinum. But things began to taper off, and somewhere in the mad rush, Bogguss began to lose sight of who she was as a musician.

"My first album [the lovely, and widely acclaimed neo-revivalist 1987 *Somewhere Between*] was closer to where I came from. I'd just been playing my acoustic guitar for years up to that point, and I'd done a lot of cowboy music, because I'd performed a lot in the West, and it was kind of like my alter ego.

"Yet, if you go back and listen to *Somewhere Between*, it's a pretty eclectic record, really. There's some swing, some cowboy music, some folky-ethereal type songs, and some traditional country—like the Merle Haggard title tune. That's what [producer] Wendy Waldman was really good at. She helped me tune in and sing songs I was really comfortable with.

"But the second album [*Moment of Truth*, 1989] is where Jimmy Bowen came in [as co-producer]. Jimmy wanted to make me someone else at that point. I think he felt like: Here's a voice that could be really big. Like Reba's. But that's not who I am, and my voice really isn't like that. It can hold on to a big ballad, but it's just not quite that strong, really. It's more a guitar player's voice, ya know. It took me till the *Aces* album [1991] to figure out that I had to take matters into my own hands. That's when I kind of said to Jimmy, 'Look, this is who I am; this is what I do.' Up till then, his attitude was kind of like, 'We've gotta get rid of that folky busi-

ness, we need to get you into some different clothes....' But I knew we were getting on the right track when he found the song "Aces" [written by Cheryl Wheeler] for me. It was perfect. That made me think, 'Okay, now we're finally seein' eye to eye.'

"Then, after *Aces*, Jimmy just kind of gave me the reins," Bogguss recalls. "He didn't even come in the studio for the last few records I made. He just let me do my own thing. I enjoyed having all that control over my music, but it was a very draining thing—particularly when albums come out as often as they do in the country field. I had a lot of fun producing, but it just got to where I felt like I needed to get off the treadmill. It got to where I had no time, really, to enjoy my life, and it became clear I needed to take a break and get some fresh ideas."

Bogguss didn't pull back entirely. She toured about six months last year, and about four the year before. She did, however, delay her return to the studio. The label bought her some time by releasing a *Greatest Hits* package in 1994. And she recorded *Simpatico*, her duet album with her old pal, Atkins, the next year.

"I've known Chet for 10 years, and he's a dear friend," says Bogguss. "But I really had to hound him to make an album with me. He kept saying, 'You don't wanna make a record with me.' I don't know how many times he tried to talk me out of it. He just thought it wasn't good timing for my career. He thought I was on a roll, and it would interfere. The truth is, it was the best thing I could have done. It gave me time to regroup and do something that was wholeheartedly, completely selfish! It gave me time to get outside my own skin and look down at what was happening to me as a person."

Bogguss also finally found time to remodel that kitchen, turn that new country house into a home and start a family. In the meantime, she made noteworthy contributions to various tribute albums—*Common Thread: The Songs of The Eagles*; *Not Fade Away—Remembering Buddy Holly* (on which she duets with Dave Edmunds on a vibrant rendition of Holly's "It Doesn't Matter Anymore"); and her old buddy Ray Benson's outstanding *Tribute to the Music of Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys*.

When Bogguss was finally ready to begin work on *Wheels*, she very wisely decided to leave the production to someone else this time around: Capitol/Nashville label head Scott Hendricks (who's produced everyone from Brooks & Dunn to Restless Heart) and Trey Bruce (singer Ed Bruce's son and composer of the Garth Brooks mega-hit, "No Fences").

"I really had such a good time doing *Give Me Some Wheels*," Bogguss says with a wide smile. "It's terrible to think that you have to sweat and bleed and be that pained artist in order to make really good music. But this was like a celebration. I'd been away from the studio so long, I was almost desperate to get going again.

"The best thing is, this time I got to just play, and sing," she adds. "That really took the pressure off and made it so easy. I'd spend a few hours laying down some vocal tracks, and say, 'Okay, boys, you pick the best track. I'm goin' home. See ya tomorrow!'"

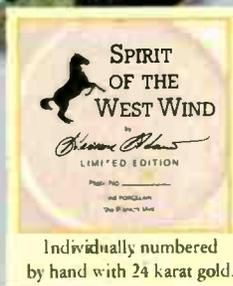
"I also discovered that I had a new energy that had happened to me since I had Ben, and since I'd had some time to myself. I was finally able to get into this frame of mind where I'm not always in a mad rush to get to the next place, and I wanted to capture that.

"A hundred years from now, when I'm sitting on my front porch," she adds with a relaxed shrug and a satisfied smile, as she prepares to rush off to meet some friends for dinner. "I'm gonna remember these times as being a fairly sane part of my life." ■

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It's not lost upon Tracy Byrd that the extreme southeastern region of Texas that he's from—the so-called “Golden Triangle” of the greater Beaumont/Port Arthur/Orange area—has long been a hotbed of American popular music.

For instance, Byrd himself went to high school with new country sensation Clay Walker. He's also good buddies with and played the same clubs as Mark Chesnutt long before they became hitmaking labelmates at MCA/Nashville.

“Of course, ol' [George] Jones was born just up the road from Vidor, which is where I'm from,” says Byrd. “Moon Mullican was from the area, and Johnny Preston before him. Then there was Janis Joplin and [blues rockers] Johnny and Edgar Winter. And The Big Bopper, and a whole bunch of famous Cajun singers.

“They've even opened Gulf Coast Music Museum down in Port Arthur,” adds the 29-year-old singer who played the Golden Triangle honky tonks for quite a few years before he got his major label deal. “They've got Janis Joplin's old MG Midget, which is all painted with flowers, all sorts of stuff in there, and recently they put up an exhibit of me and Clay Walker. I was down there for the press conference, and I ended up spending two hours just walkin' around and seein' all the history.”

Byrd rolls his eyes and adds, “People are always askin' me, what's in the water down there that they raise so many musicians—to me, there's more people who've become nationally known out of Beaumont than out of Austin.” He considers this for a moment, then flashes a good-ol'-boy East Texas grin. “Well,” he drawls.

“There's just hydrogen and oxygen in the water, I guess. I dunno.” He speculates. “Maybe it's some of those ol' chemicals from them industrial plants seepin' down in there!”

If there really is “something in the water,” then Byrd seems to have drunk his share. He possesses a warm, intriguing country baritone that has recently translated into some mighty impressive record sales and a career on the honky tonk fast track. “I'm not a George Jones style of singer who can do all those curls with my voice,” he points out. “But the one thing I've got going for me is a certain texture in the middle range.”

Couple his commanding voice with his boyishly rugged good looks (he's six-feet-plus and has a rangy, made-for-Wranglers frame) and his gentle affability (at times, he comes across much like an East Texas Vince Gill) and you've got a winning combination. It's a package that's thus far translated well with contemporary country fans, who seem to be getting younger and more fickle by the minute.

In the past few years, Byrd has, in fact, become

one of Music Row's hottest properties with hits like “Holdin' Heaven” (a Number One single from his Gold-certified 1993 debut album, *Tracy Byrd*), “Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Famous,” “Watermelon Crawl” (both from his near-double platinum-certified second album, *No Ordinary Man*) and “Keeper of the Stars” (a Number One ballad, also from *No Ordinary Man*). Mainly due to the sustained popularity of “Keeper of the Stars,” the closest thing Byrd has yet had to a “career record,” *No Ordinary Man* became MCA's second biggest selling release of 1995, even outselling recent albums by George Strait, Reba McEntire and Vince Gill. All this has also afforded Byrd choice opening spots on McEntire's and Brooks & Dunn's road shows—two of the hottest tickets in town.

Yet if any of this has gone to Byrd's head, he sure doesn't show it. He's still easy-going East Texas,

through and through. He talks in a lazy drawl and practically lives for those off days at home when he can watch football, fish (often with Mark Chesnutt) and go duck hunting out on Sam Rayburn Lake. “My wife thinks I'm crazy,” he chuckles, “but when it's six degrees, I love bein' out in a duck blind, just freezin', with my dog.

“A lot of people think of Texas as the ‘Home on the Range’ type of thing,” adds the singer, who is clearly not just from the area, but of it. (He just bought a new house in Beaumont, also has land on Rayburn Lake and a beach house on the Gulf Coast, near Sabine Pass.) “But East Texas, once you get inland a little bit, is hilly, with tall pines and big oaks. It's beautiful—a lot like Tennessee.”

As we speak, Byrd has just flown up from Beau-

mont to Nashville for a day's worth of interviews and tapings before flying back the next morning to close on his new house. When we meet, he's in a dressing room at The Nashville Network where's he's taping an appearance on The Statler Brothers' weekly show. It's late afternoon, he's yawning a lot, and his voice is hoarse. He apologizes and sheepishly explains that he really did it up the night before. He and his wife had several other couples over to watch a football game. They stayed up late, drinks were drunk, their team won and a good time was had by all. The upshot, though, is that he was a little late getting started this morning. “It took me forever to find my wallet, and by the time I got to the airport, my flight had left.” He shrugs and sheepishly scratches his day's growth of beard. “I tell ya, I'm rough on wallets and keys. I'm forever losing them.”

The way things are going for Byrd, he's going to be hunting around for those keys and wallets a lot in the coming months. When he gets back to Beaumont, he'll hardly have time to move into his new house with his wife, Michelle, and their year-old

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daughter Eeve before he flies out again to hook up with Brooks & Dunn on the road.

All in all, it's fast lane stuff for a laid-back guy from Beaumont who, as a kid, hardly ever even dared to dream he'd one day be doing what he's doing now. Sometimes Byrd even has to step back and laugh when he remembers the amazingly informal and somewhat naive manner in which he backed into his present occupation as a country singer.

"I can really pinpoint exactly where and when it hit me that maybe I should give it a shot," he recalls with visible amusement, nodding his head and scratching his chin. "I was at a George Strait concert in my senior year of high school. Strait was playin' in Beaumont, and he came on and said, 'Hello, Corpus Christi!' I'm sittin' there thinkin', man, this is so cool! This guy's travelin' so much he don't even know where he's at! And that was particularly cool to me, because I hadn't been many places at all at that age. Of course, everybody at the show was screamin' and hollerin' for him, and all the women loved him. I figured, that's gotta be cool. And I thought, man, I oughta try this. I oughta get a guitar and try this!

"And sure enough, I did."

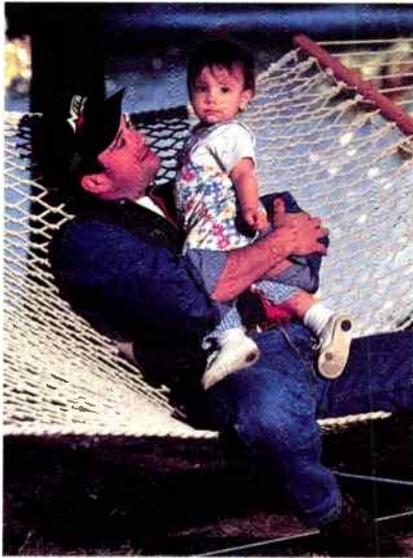
The notion may have taken hold that night at the Strait concert, but the seeds had been planted years earlier. "Even when I was a little kid I can remember on Sundays my parents would get me to sing 'Why Me, Lord' and gospel songs when we were drivin' from church to the Picadilly, which was the restaurant we always went to on Sundays. And a few years later, I remember bein' fascinated by my dad's Bob Wills records—even now, if there was one person that I could go back in time and meet, it would be him.

"Then, later, in school, I'd be out with my buddies listenin' to the radio and maybe drinkin' a beer or two, and I'd get to singin' along. They'd turn the radio down and holler, 'Sing it!' They were always tellin' me, 'Man, you got a great voice! You oughta do somethin' with that.' I'd sorta say, 'Naw.' Because, back then, even though I'd been fanatical about music since I was a little kid, I didn't have much confidence in myself. I mean, I don't know who I thought got to grow up to be a singer, but I didn't think it was me."

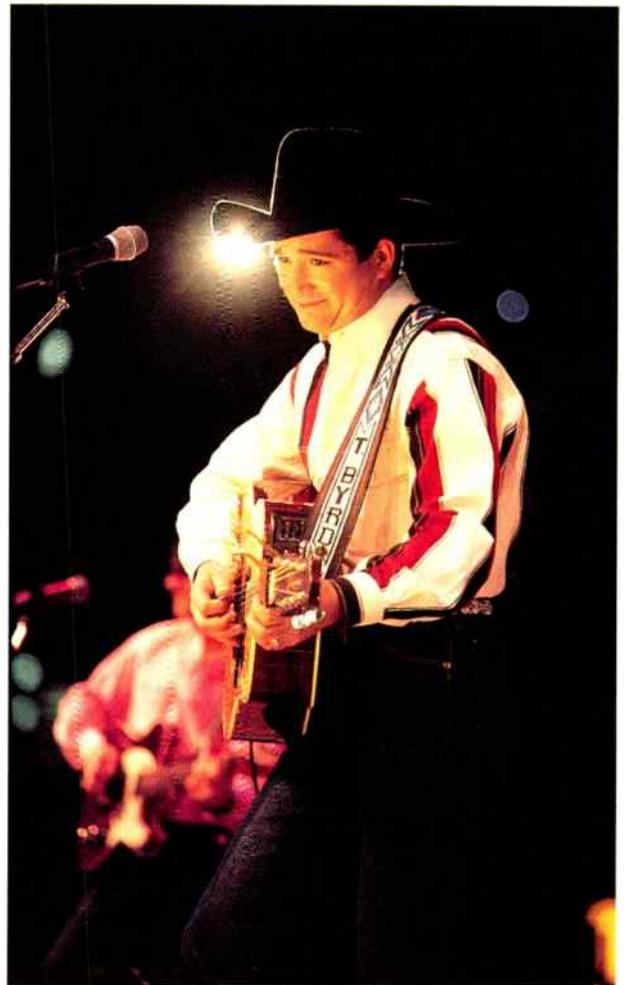
Finally, though, Byrd did summon up the confidence to venture down to *The Charlie Pruett Show*, a local radio show that broadcasts live from the old Jefferson Theater in Beaumont. It was his first ever public appearance.

"I was stiff as a board!" Byrd chuckles. "Scared to death! My mom's got it on videotape, and the only thing that's movin' is my hands and my mouth! I played 'Folsom Prison Blues' and Hank Williams' 'Weary Blues from Waitin'.' And I got a standing ovation. I always say: they had to drag me on that night, and then they had to drag me off. After that, I was hooked."

After high school, Byrd began playing the local clubs and opening shows for artists like Joel Sonnier, Southern Pacific and fellow Texan Clint Black when they came through town. He crossed paths continually with Clay Walker and his future labelmate, Mark Chesnutt. "I'd often go out and hear Mark sing, and sometimes he'd maybe feel like sittin' and drinkin' a beer, and he'd invite me up on stage with his band to finish out his set. We became friends. I've known Mark about 15 years now, and he's one of the best singers I've ever heard. I even



Byrd finds plenty of time for family and fun in addition to his busy touring schedule. Boating and fishing and at home, playing with his daughter, Eevee.



saw a rare interview with ol' Strait the other day. They asked him who he listened to, and he said Bob Wills, Ray Price and Mark Chesnutt."

Byrd got his proverbial "big break" by way of the late Bill Starnes, a Beaumont area wheeler-dealer whose father, Jack Starnes, had co-founded the legendary Starday label—the first label to ever record George Jones. At the time, Starnes was represented by Atlanta attorney Joel Katz, who also represented Bruce Hinton, a big wig at MCA/Nashville. Katz helped Starnes bring Byrd to Hinton's attention. Byrd showcased at a Nashville club, and Hinton later flew to Beaumont to catch one of the singer's shows on his home turf. Hinton eventually signed Byrd to MCA. The tracks for Byrd's 1993 debut album were produced by superstar producers Keith Stegall (Alan Jackson's long-time producer) and Tony Brown (who currently produces George Strait, Vince Gill and Reba McEntire, among others).

Tracy Byrd, that first album, was a hit with fans and critics alike. It was a delightfully rugged slice of neo-traditional East Texas country. It featured a remake of Johnny Paycheck's "Someone to Give My Love To" and Keith Whitley's "Talk to Me, Texas," as well as a rousing duet with the immensely talented and immensely overlooked Dawn Sears on a Melba Montgomery oldie, "An Out of Control Raging Fire." Cuts on *Tracy Byrd* also included "Holdin' Heaven," his first Number One.

But *No Ordinary Man*, Byrd's second album, produced by veteran Jerry Crutchfield, was the one that ended up having the big hits on it—"Keeper of the Stars," "The First Step," "Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Famous" and "Watermelon Crawl."

With sales approaching two million, *No Ordinary Man* is, by far, Byrd's biggest album, to date. Ironically, it's also his least favorite. "Jerry is a great producer, and he cut some big records on me," he explains. "But I feel like we got away from tradition a little bit too much. He also cut my voice about a half step higher,

which I didn't realize till we were finished with the album. Like, with 'Keeper of the Stars,' we cut it in D. But before we released it as a single, we went back and re-cut it in D-flat. See, I've got to be in a lower register to get that special texture, that warm, low tone that sets me apart. But everything on *No Ordinary Man* was sung in that high, thin part of my voice."

But with *Big Love*, his recently released fourth album, Byrd believes he's not only finally gotten it right, but has hit new strides and expanded upon fresh artistic ground that he plowed on *Love Lessons*, his Gold-certified, tradition-flavored third album. In fact, he can barely contain his enthusiasm when the subject of the new record comes up: "*Love Lessons* is an album I'm really fond of, and it helped me break away from being so identified with novelty songs," he explains. "I don't mind at all singing 'Crawl' and 'Lifestyles' each night on stage, but there is a different side of me. *Love Lessons* [which included remakes of oldies by Marty Robbins and Bill Anderson as well as more contemporary sounding hits like "Heaven in My Woman's Eyes" and the title track] was more of what my musical tastes come from than *No Ordinary Man* was. And songs like 'Heaven in My Woman's Eyes' demonstrated what I loved to sing the most.

"But *Big Love* is the album I'm most proud of. I believe there are some songs on it that could one day be considered standards. My guitar player, Mark Nesler, who wrote 'Heaven,' has a song on the new album called 'Old Fashioned Love' that I think is so powerful....Then there's another that Dean Dillon wrote called 'If I Stay'....And there's one that we just kinda thought of on a whim—the old Johnny Paycheck tune, 'Don't Take Her She's All I've Got.' That cut just cooks...."

Byrd bubbles on enthusiastically for a while until that somewhat jet-lagged, aw-shucks grin spreads slowly across his face again. "If all my albums in the future come out as good as *Big Love*, I'll be happy." ■

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Letters

Those Double Trouble Guys

Thanks so much for the cover and article on two of my favorites in the September/October issue. I have never written to Letters before, and I've been a subscriber to CMM for about 20 years. If anyone hasn't seen the Double Trouble Tour yet, well, take my advice and go, for these two guys sure do put on a good show. Especially Marty Stuart, he is a really caring person and treats his fan club members like they should be treated. They are great guys.

When will I see another couple of greats of mine, Lee Roy Parnell and David Lee Murphy on the cover? Even a centerfold would be great. I read all the magazine, but enjoy the Letters, Record Reviews, the cover and cover article the most. I put the centerfolds of my favorites on my bedroom walls.

Wilma Hurst
Tazewell, Tennessee

Double on Marty

Boy, am I glad I renewed my subscription! Your September/October issue made it worth it all by itself. Thank you, big time!

Hazel Smith: The next time you get close to Marty, tell him that even when he's "old, fat, ugly and bald," I will still care. So much of his music feels like he wrote it just for me. Even my very young grandchildren know who Marty Stuart is and that he's Grandma's favorite entertainer! Thank you, *Country Music*, for another great issue! Now, how about a cover story on another favorite, David Lee Murphy?

Megen Meeks
Farwell, Texas

Feature on Murphy coming soon.—Ed.

Great, Great and Great

I just received my September/October issue of *Country Music Magazine*. It's great to see Marty Stuart (and Travis Tritt) on the front cover. The article on these two was wonderful. The pictures were great also. I would like to see Marty Stuart featured as the CMM centerfold sometime. Thanks for a great issue.

Rebecca Lynn Raines
Meridian, Mississippi

Outlaws Revisited

I'm a fairly new subscriber to your magazine, and I was thrilled to see your July/August cover of Willie and Waylon, and



enjoyed the cover story, "Outlaws Revisited." They are two of my very favorite singers, and have been for a long time. I'm happy to see that your magazine is not forgetting the "older" stars who have done so much for country music and who still have so much to offer. I love Waylon's latest album, *Right for the Time*.

I'd love to see an article on Waylon's wife, Jessi Colter. She is such a talented singer and songwriter, and deserves more coverage. I recently found an album of hers titled *Jessi Colter Collection*, produced in 1995. It's wonderful!

V. Goldsmith
Woodside, California

Twenty Great Years

I just wanted to let you know that I've been with you for 20 great years! That's right, I have every issue of CMM since the July 1976 issue with Dolly Parton dressed as the Statue of Liberty. Yours is easily the best country music magazine ever, and I couldn't do without it.

And what better way to celebrate my 20 years with you than with the July/August issue with my heroes on the cover. Waylon and Willie are the greatest and most important country singers ever. Twenty years after *Wanted: The Outlaws* they are still making great music. I hope they both live 100 years and never stop recording and performing.

Thanks for 20 years of great articles, news and photos.

Mike Sheets
Dublin, Virginia

Kudos for Collie

I just wanted to thank you for your article on Mark Collie in the September/October issue of *Country Music*. Since first hearing Mark Collie in concert in June of 1995, I have driven as much as ten hours to his concerts, and they have always been more than worth the trip.

Kathy Schlatter
Byron, Illinois

LeAnn Delivers

Your magazine is very good. I've been reading it for many years. I was pleased to see an article on LeAnn Rimes in the September/October issue. The first time I ever heard her hit song, "Blue," I thought who is this? what a voice! I had just never heard anything like it, so pure, so strong, so sincere. Then when I heard she was only 13 years old, I just didn't believe it. In her video she's so natural, seems so at ease, like a veteran of many years in the business. She sure can deliver a country song.

Carma Lee Peters
Mt. Hope, West Virginia

She's a Wild One

I am a first-time writer, but I read the article on Faith Hill, "Contradictions and Affirmations," by Geoffrey Himes, in the July/August issue. Personally every video I have seen with Faith Hill in it I have thought she was the prettiest country singer in the world, and I still do. She is awesome, and her songs are inspiring and well worth listening to. She is a 10 in my book. Everybody likes to be glamorous sometime in their life and laid back at other times. My one dream is to see her in concert, that is all I would like!

David Haney
Beaverton, Michigan

Startin' Young on Shania and CMM

Just thought you might be interested in knowing that my two grandsons, Devin and Dylan, two-and-a-half-year-old twins, are fans of your magazine. They love Shania Twain! Your pullout photo of Shania in the September/October issue was great. They love the picture.

Jo Ann Holcombe
Carrollton, Georgia

Carr Captures Shania

Thank you, Patrick Carr, for the insightful and very, very fitting tribute to country music's media sweetheart, Shania

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by Karen Scott

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QUIZ

Answers to these questions can be found by reading this issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Answers will be published in the January/February 1997 issue.

1. Which popular actress called Alan Jackson to tell him she wants to direct a video for him?
2. What instrument did the late Bill Monroe, The Father of Bluegrass, bring to prominence?
3. Who wrote Suzy Bogguss' big hit single, "Aces"?
4. Tracy Byrd's hometown has produced several country stars. Name it.
5. How old was Bryan White when he started playing drums?
6. Chevy's S-10 is the only compact truck to offer what handy option?

ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ:

1. The Double Trouble Tour
2. Patsy Cline
3. guit-steel
4. Stealing a goat
5. The Civil War
6. Chevy Trucks' new Vortec engine includes up to 60 additional horsepower.

Chevy Trucks
LIKE A ROCK



Twain, today's superstar for the "navel retentive" and Size 2 IQ's, in the September/October issue. You artfully tell the story of how this "star" was "manufactured," certainly not born. Imagine what such an insidious media blitz would do for someone with real talent like Patty Loveless or Terri Clark.

Part II of this wonderful series should be on Patsy Cline wannabe LeAnn Rimes, whose rendition of "Blue" would bring a chuckle not an appreciative smile to Patsy's lips, I think. You'd think that the media would've learned how sledgehammer making of a "star" always badly misses the mark when compared against real talent after the big, big fall of Billy Ray Cyrus. A nice enough guy maybe, but certainly not the caliber of singer to justify the same type of media rantings he received. Let's just hope that Shania makes as quick of an exodus.

And a P.S. to Patrick. It takes a real big man to admit he's wrong, especially in a nationwide publication, and your apology to the Crook and Chase show really hit in the right place as far as I was concerned. Way to go, Patrick.

Scott Budzien
St. Francis, Wisconsin

Thanks for Rodriguez and More

Just a note to say "thanks" to *Country Music* for the 20 Questions on Johnny Rodriguez in the September/October issue and also to Rich Kienzle for the great review on Johnny's *You Can Say That Again* CD. I have all of Johnny's albums and must say this is one of his best.

Was glad to see Mark Collie included in your articles. He is quite a talent. But one word to Bob Allen: If you are ever in Omaha, Nebraska, check out WOW-AM radio. They are one of the few radio stations in the country that will play any artist's records—no matter their age or label. In 15 minutes you may hear Paul Brandt, Sonny James, Garth, Merle—just a wonderful variety. Their station has the guts to play what the listeners want.

Your magazine is one of the best. Keep up the great work.

Carol J. Scheffler
Newman Grove, Nebraska

Raw Deal for Rodriguez

Just wanted to say give yourself a 10 and a million thanks for the great article—20 Questions—and the record review on Johnny Rodriguez's new album. I've been a fan of his since he first started in the 70's. Personally, I think he's gotten a raw deal. Lots of artists have goofed up but still not been knocked down and out like he was. I hope all his fans who know and love him will get behind him this time out and buy his album and keep calling their radio stations to play it. Give him a chance.

Kathy Khaehn
Seguin, Texas

Good Going on Ball

Thanks for the great review you gave David Ball's *Starlite Lounge* in the September/October issue. He is truly one of today's greatest traditional singer/songwriters. It has been great that he opened last year for Alan Jackson and is now on the Gone tour with Dwight Yoakam.

Joan Buckner
Cropwell, Alabama

Name Those Sawyer-Brownies

OK, who goofed? There it is on page 16 of my July/August issue: a photo of my all time favorites, Sawyer Brown, with The Beach Boys. There's Duncan Cameron, Gregg "Hobie" Hubbard, Mark Miller, Jim Scholten and Joe Scholten? Nope, that's Joe Smyth. Come on, finding anything written about these talented guys is hard enough. What is written could at least be written correctly.

Rebecca Revels
Gastonia, North Carolina
We goofed. Pardonnez nous.—Ed.

Carr Blubbers

It was disheartening to read Patrick Carr's blubbery apology for his crankiness in Final Note in the September/October issue. Country music fans already are saddled with too much wimpy, Chamber-of-Commerce-style writing, as if we're too stupid and fragile to handle real criticism. Patrick, here's hoping all that Pollyanna poop in your last column was a fleeting phase. I liked you better as a cynical sonofabitch.

Doug Erickson
Appleton, Wisconsin

Carr Toots

Every couple of months I pick up my *Country Music Magazine* and read it cover to cover. And every couple of months I grit my teeth and roll my eyes at Patrick Carr's barely disguised contempt for folks who aren't as savvy, worldly or snide as he. In the September/October issue he thrilled us with how he isn't really country, and how his British upbringing and rock 'n' roll roots give him a unique perspective on all things musical. Baloney! This guy is a condescending, self-aggrandizing twit, who thinks we're all more interested in his life than in the lives of country music artists.

How would we ever have known he was the "dean of country journalists" unless he had told us himself? Don't bust a gut tootin' your own horn, Patrick. From now on I will read your magazine from cover to almost cover. I'll skip the final page before I ever read another Final Note.

Tonya Haggard
Beech Grove, Indiana

Justice Is Done

I am glad Patrick Carr finally admitted his mistake of criticizing Lorianne Crook. The words he used to describe himself

are the exact same words that came to mind when I read the original article in the January/February 1996 issue. Justice has prevailed.

La Vern Miller
Stuart, Nebraska

Channel-Surfin' for Crook 'n' Chase

I believe Crook and Chase are in syndication but can't find a home base for them. Can you send me that address? The Orlando area misses Crook and Chase, and I bet TNN does too.

Rich Perry

Winter Park, Florida

Call Jim Owens Productions at 615-256-7700 for affiliates that carry 'em.—Ed.

Dancing with a Legend

I am writing about Bill Monroe. Sorry to hear about his passing away. Always liked to hear him play and dance. On my 85th birthday I got to dance with him on the stage at Lexington, Kentucky—was great. He was a good country fellow, always had a good band. Will be missed by all.

Sally D. Whitson

Cynthiana, Kentucky

A Word About Bear Family

My first time to write any mag, but I just wanted to say something about Bear Family Records. I have several of the box sets—Chet Atkins, two of Ernest Tubb and many singles. All of their CD's are outstanding. Mr. Richard Weize should get a medal for the great job he does. I do feel they should do some box sets of Tex Ritter, it would be great to have all of his Capitol Records on CD. The single CD by Tex, *High Noon* (BCD 15634), is excellent.

You have the best mag of all.

Jurial D. McMellon
Bryan, Texas

Bye-Bye, Bobbie Cryner

I was shocked and saddened to hear that Bobbie Cryner was recently dropped by MCA Records. Hellooooooo! Is anyone at these record companies listening? I guess not. I knew it was bad when the station I listen to, "Real Country" out of Phoenix, couldn't even find one of her singles to play for a request—they play all types of country!

Christie E. List
Reno, Nevada

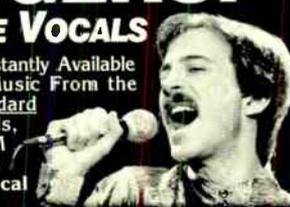
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\$1000 Renewal Sweepstakes winners are as follows: December 1995/January 1996: Johnnie Booth, West Monroe, LA. February/March 1996: Miki S. Adams, Madison Heights, VA. April/May 1996: Ryan F. Caricofe, Orrville, OH. June/July 1996: LaDonna F. Morrison, Glasgow, KY.

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

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

K. T. Oslin—Greatest Hits—Songs From An Aging Sex Bomb (RCA) 125•286

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Billy Dean—Grt. Hits (Capitol Nashville) 476•036



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Diamond Rio—IV (Arista Nashville) 149•146

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Dwight Yoakam—This Time (Reprise) 456•913

Tracy Lawrence—Alibis (Atlantic) 456•558

Brooks & Dunn—Hard Workin' Man (Arista) 454•025

Best Of Chris Ledoux (Capitol Nashville) 476•044

John Michael Montgomery (Allantic Nashville) 121•467

Terri Clark—(Mercury/Nashville) 136•291

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

Billy Ray Cyrus—Some Gave All (Mercury/Nashville) 441•451

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

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

Blackhawk—Strong Enough (Arista) 137•059

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

John And Audrey Wiggins (Mercury/Nashville) 485•722

Randy Travis—Greatest Hits Vol. 2 (Warner Bros.) 448•662

Randy Travis—Greatest Hits, Vol. 1 (Warner Bros.) 448•654

Pam Tillis—Homeward Looking Angel (Arista) 446•963

Travis Tritt—T-R-O-U-B-L-E (Warner Bros.) 445•767

Dwight Yoakam—Dwight Live (Reprise) 128•389

Daryle Singletary (Giant) 130•799

Sawyer Brown—The Dirt Road (Capitol/Curb) 433•656

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

Kim Richey (Mercury/Nashville) 126•870

Kathy Mattea—A Collection Of Hits (Mercury/Nashville) 424•622

Ricky Skaggs—Solid Ground (Atlantic) 141•812

Little Texas—Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.) 136•838

Bryan White (Asylum) 110•734



Sawyer Brown—Greatest Hits (Liberty/Curb) 411•363

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

Dwight Yoakam—Just Lookin' For A Hit (Reprise) 389•718

Hank Williams, Jr.—Greatest Hits 3 (Warner Bros./Curb) 378•182

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

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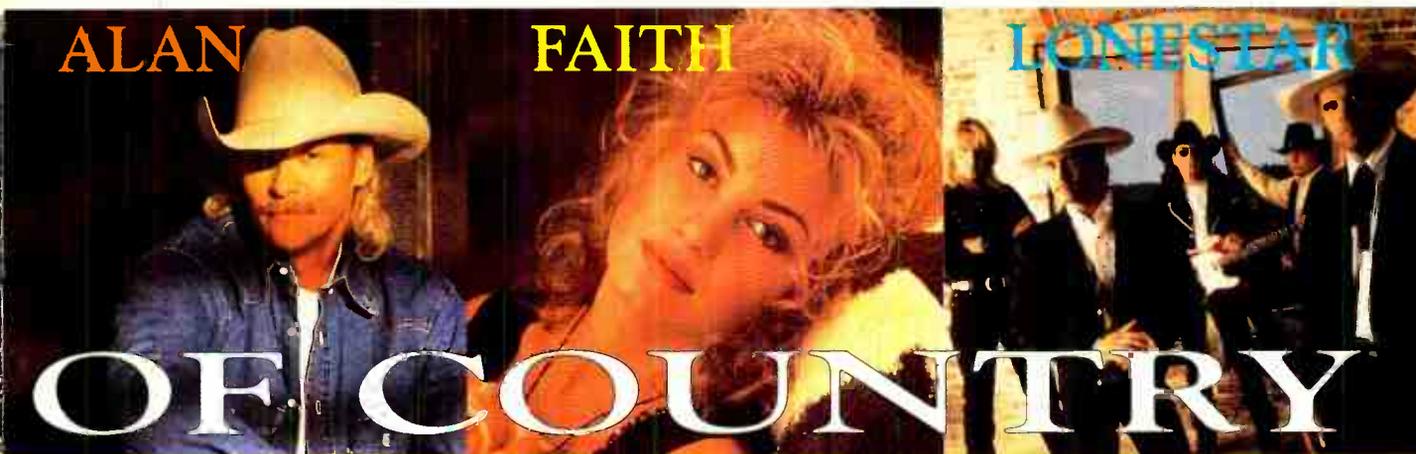
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Alabama—Cheap Seats (RCA) 123-505

Alabama—American Pride (RCA) 123-497

Alabama—Alabama Live (RCA) 123-455

Keith Whitley—Tribute Album: Various Artists (BNA Records) 123-372

John Anderson—Semnola Winc (BNA) 123-232

Neal McCoy—You Gotta Love That (Atlantic/Nashville) 117-119

Toby Keith—Bocmtown (Polydor Nashville) 103-325

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

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

Kentucky Headhunters—Still Pickin' (Mercury/Nashville) 103-358

Reba McEntire—Oklahoma Girl (Mercury/Nashville) 103-333/393-330

Tracy Lawrence—I See It Now (Atlantic) 102-582

Alison Krauss—Every Time You Say Goodbye (Rounder) 100-792

Michelle Wright—Now & Then (Arista) 441-147

k.d. Lang—Shadowland (Sire) 370-288

Alabama—Greatest Hits, Vol. 3 (RCA) 123-513

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

Alabama—In Pictures (RCA) 137-018

Ty England (RCA) 136-911

Best Of Pure Prairie League (Mercury/Nashville) 136-671

Tracy Lawrence—Live (Atlantic/Nashville) 136-630

Lee Roy Parnell—We All Get Lucky Sometimes (Career Records) 133-603

Lee Roy Parnell—Love Without Mercy (Arista) 411-055

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

Victoria Shaw—In Full View (Reprise) 103-408

John Berry—Standing On The Edge (Patriot) 120-956

Dwight Yoakam—Gone (Reprise/Sire) *39-634

Faith Hill—It Matters To Me (Warner Bros.) 134-906

The Gatlin Brothers—Larry, Steve, Rudy—Grt. Hts (Branson Entertainment) 486-639

Eddie Rabbitt—All Time Greatest Hts. (Warner Bros.) 477-133

Crysta Gayle—Best Always (Branson Entertainment) 461-228

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

Kenny Rogers—20 Greatest Hits (Reprise) 444-885

Freddy Fender Collection (Reprise) 430-934

The Essential Series: A Sampler—Various Artists (RCA) 150-110

Ray Stevens—#1 With A Bullet (Liberty/Cut) 425-504

Tennessee Ernie Ford—Sixteen Tons (Capitol Nashville) 140-624

The Statler Brothers—Greatest Hits, Vol. 3 (Mercury/Nashville) 425-108

Hank Williams—40 Grt. Hits (Polydor) 423-863/393-666

Conway Twitty—#1's: The Warner Bros. Years (Warner Bros.) 374-389

The Best Of The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band—Twenty Years Of Dirt (Warner Bros.) 345-744

Connie Smith—The Essential Connie Smith (RCA) 155-374

Chet Atkins—Picks On The Beatles (RCA) 150-649

Floyd Cramer—The Essential Floyd Cramer (RCA) 146-876

Aaron Tippin—Tool Box (RCA) 139-121

Martina McBride—Wild Angels (RCA) 139-071

Lonestar—BNA Records! 140-772

GREATEST HITS

Tom T. Hall—Greatest Hits Vol. 1 & 2 (Mercury/Nashville) 150-235

Jim Ed Brown And The Browns—The Essential Jim Ed Brown (RCA) 150-102

Dotie West—The Essential Dotie West (RCA) 150-094

Tex Williams & His Western Caravan—Vintage Collection Series (Capitol Nashville) 149-062

An Evening With Don Williams (American Harvest) 110-593

Keith Whitley—Greatest Hits (RCA) 124-008

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

Gary Stewart—Greatest Hits (RCA) 146-876

The Best Of Eddy Arnold (RCA) 123-521

Skeeter Davis—The Essential Skeeter Davis (RCA) 123-638



The Outlaws—The Outlaws (RCA) 155-465

Wanda Jackson—Vintage Collection Series (Capitol Nashville) 149-443

Boxcar Willie—Best Loved Favorites (Ranwood) 428-060

Waylon Jennings—Grt. Hits (RCA) 123-646

Merle Haggard—Vintage Collection Series (Capitol Nashville) 149-054

Jerry Reed—The Essential Jerry Reed (RCA) 146-928

Truly Great Hits Of Vern Gosdin (American Harvest) 110-601

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Dolly Parton—The Essential Dolly Parton (RCA) 123-711

Willie Nelson—The Essential Willie Nelson (RCA) 146-845

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■ **Free magazine—filled with music you really want.** This exclusive full-color magazine describes the Selection of the Month in your main music interest, plus alternates from every field of interest. You'll receive your magazine about every four weeks (up to 13 times a year). You'll also get special selection mailings up to 6 times a year for a total of up to 19 buying opportunities a year.

■ **Convenient home shopping:** If you wish to receive the Selection of the Month, you don't have to do a thing—it will be shipped automatically. If you prefer an alternate selection, or none at all, just let us know by mailing the response card to us by the date specified.

■ **A rock solid guarantee:** You'll always have at least 12 days to make your decision. If you ever have less than 12 days and receive a Selection you don't want, return it at our expense.

■ **More Benefits! More Savings!** As soon as you receive your first magazine, you'll be able to get more of your favorite music at huge savings. For example, you'll have the opportunity to get CDs for as little as \$1.99 with the purchase of one at regular Club price (shipping and handling additional). Once you've fulfilled your agreement, you'll often get super "Buy One, Get 2 FREE" offers (shipping and handling are extra).

■ **To have it all:** Just complete the application, and return it with check or money order for \$1.50 (that's 1¢ for your first 11 selections, plus \$1.49 enrollment charge). And if you wish to take your discounted and bonus selections now, simply add an additional \$3.98 for Cassette or \$6.98 for CD (we'll bill you later for shipping and handling on your introductory package).

■ **P.S. No risk to try us.** We'll send details of the Club's operation with your introductory shipment. If you're not satisfied for any reason, just return everything within 10 days for a full refund at our expense and with no further obligation. Extremely fair? (Yes.) Great Deal? (Yes.) Making your selections right now? (Good.)

■ **If the Application is missing, write to:** Columbia House, 1400 North Fruitridge Avenue, Terre Haute, Indiana 47811-1130. © 1996, The Columbia House Company.



Selections with two numbers count as two selections—write each number in a separate box.

COLUMBIA HOUSE, 1400 N. Fruitridge Ave., P.O. Box 1130, Terre Haute, IN 47811-1130

Enroll me in the Club under the terms outlined in this advertisement. I am enclosing my check or money order for \$1.50 (that's 1¢ for my first 11 CDs or Cassettes, plus \$1.49 enrollment charge). I agree to buy six more selections, at regular Club prices, within the next three years—and may cancel membership anytime after doing so (A shipping and handling charge will be added to each shipment).

1 RUSH THESE 11 SELECTIONS NOW!
Write in numbers of your 11 selections (one number in each box).

1.	•	5.	•	9.	•
2.	•	6.	•	10.	•
3.	•	7.	•	11.	•
4.	•	8.	•		

2 **Bonus Offer:** Also send me this 12th selection at a discount. I've enclosed an additional \$3.98 for Cassette or \$6.98 for CD. (Shipping and handling will be billed.)

3 **12th Selection:** I'm entitled to this 12th CD or Cassette (FREE)

3 My main music interest is (check one): I may always choose from any category

<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Rock Michael Bolton, Manah-Cathy	<input type="checkbox"/> Hard Rock Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty	<input type="checkbox"/> Rap Cypress Hill, Wu-Tang Clan	<input type="checkbox"/> Alternative Alanis Morissette, Green Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Latin Luis Miguel, La Manita
<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Megadeth, Ozzy Osbourne	<input type="checkbox"/> R&B Boyz II Men, Luther Vandross	<input type="checkbox"/> Dance Pop Crystal Waters, Real McCoy	<input type="checkbox"/> Light Sounds Barbra Streisand, Neil Diamond	<input type="checkbox"/> Jazz* Fourplay, David Sanborn
<input type="checkbox"/> Christian/Gospel: Twila Paris, Kirk Franklin		<input type="checkbox"/> Country: John Michael Montgomery, Shania Twain		

4 I PREFER CDs or CASSETTES
(check one only)

5 Mr. Mrs. Miss Print First Name Initial Last Name Age _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

6 Do you have a Telephone? (01) Yes No
If yes, write in number (05) (Area Code) _____ (Number) _____

Do you have a Credit Card? (03) Yes No DFZ-8S-8T-8V-8W
Note: we reserve the right to request additional information, reject any application or cancel any membership. These offers not available in APO, FPO, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico; write for details of alternative offer. Canadian residents will be serviced from Toronto—some terms may vary. Applicable sales tax added to all orders. *Jazz Club Members will be serviced only with CDs. 626/996

CLASSIFIED

For Ad Rates Call (800) 762-3555
Fax (813) 442-2567

ADDRESSES

COUNTRY STAR ADDRESSES BY REQUEST! Send us the names of the stars you want to write to, and we'll send you their addresses. \$2.00 per star. Send self-addressed, stamped envelope. Country Lists, Dept. CM-1, P.O. Box 41219, Nashville, TN 37204.

BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS

UNPUBLISHED BOOK, Elvis Presley, The Fifties by Walter Bruce and Lloyd Ozment. Includes free unpublished photo, writings, pictures. 100 pages. Send \$10 plus \$2.00 to Bruce Treasure Corp., 3459 Villa Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71107.

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NICE SINGLES with Christian values. Photos, Profiles. Free magazine. Send age, interests. Singles, Box 310-CM, Allardt, TN 38504.

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CELEBRITY PHOTOS. SEND SASE - Name favorites. Photoworld-CMM, P.O. Box 20747, Houston, TX 77231.

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OZARK MOUNTAIN ACREAGES. Nothing down, we finance, environmental protection codes, huge selection. Includes Branson area. Free catalog. Woods & Waters, Box 1-CM, Willow Springs, MO 65793. 1-(417) 469-3187.

RODEOS

NATIONAL FINALS RODEO (NFR) - Las Vegas. December 6th - 15th. Tickets available. \$70 & up. 1-(800) 281-7539.

RECORDING

YOUR GOALS ARE MY GOALS. Work with award winning artist, in artist development recording. Let me help you achieve your goals. MidLand Productions, P.O. Box 2303, Hendersonville, TN 37077. (615) 824-1503.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING INFORMATION

RATES: Regular classified ads are \$6.50 per word. Minimum ad 10 words. All advertisements are set uniformly. They are set solid with the lead words set in caps. Abnormal capitalization, type variations, illustrations and borders are not permitted. The classified display rate is \$340 per column inch. The magazine will pub-set most regular type faces at no charge. The column width is 2.25 inches including border. For ads using either an illustration or halftone, send negative film, 133 line screen.

PAYMENT: All classified advertising must be prepaid with order. Make check or money order payable to *Country Music Magazine*. For credit card orders (Visa/MasterCard only), include account number, expiration date and the amount you authorize *Country Music Magazine* to charge your account.

CLOSING DATE: *Country Music Magazine* is published 6 times per year. The next available issue is January/February, which closes November 20th; the March/April issue closes January 20th.

Mail advertising copy, payments and production materials for display ads to: *Country Music Magazine*, Classified Department, P.O. Box 570, Clearwater, Florida 34617-0570. For overnight courier service send to: 1510 Barry Street, Suite D, Clearwater, Florida 34616. Telephones: 1-(800) 762-3555; International (813) 449-1775; Fax (813) 442-2567.

RECORDS/TAPES/CD'S

WAREHOUSE SALES - Tapes by mail. P.O. Box 550, Angels Camp, CA 95222.

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POEMS, SONGS WANTED. \$100,000 - recording contract possible! Free appraisal. Majestic Records, Box 1140, Linden, TX 75563.

URGENT! SONGS, POEMS NEEDED. Radio, TV, royalties. Hollywood Records, 6000 Sunset, Studio M, Hollywood, CA 90028.

WANTED COUNTRY GOSPEL song poem hits! \$5,000 cash advance royalties information! Top Records, Box 23505-K, Nashville, TN 37202.

POEMS/LYRICS set to music by hit songwriters. Cash, recording awards. Poems to: Edlee Music, Box 15312-CMM, Boston, MA 02215-5312.

WE MAKE MUSIC. ORIGINAL RECORDED productions. Nashville musicians/singers, your words/music, exceptional quality, sample available. TLC Studios, P.O. Box 149025, Nashville, TN 37214. (615) 754-2924.

POEMS WANTED FOR MUSICAL SETTING and recording. We pay above costs on selected poems. Jeff Roberts Publishing, 299 Newport Ave. (CM), Wollaston, MA 02170.

HOLLYWOOD RECORDERS makes songwriter demos. Free information, samples. 603 Seagaze, #138, Oceanside, CA 92054. (619) 757-7446.

SINGERS, SONGWRITERS NEEDED. Free! Applications: United Agency, Box 862-D, New York, NY 10009.

YOUR OWN SONG! Write just words or words/music. We provide first-class demos! Professional studio musicians. CD quality recording. \$150-\$250/complete. Sample tape available. Nashville Digital Demos: 113 Catawba Ct., Nashville, TN 37013. 1-(800) 484-8581, code #3631.

LYRICS, POEMS FOR MUSICAL setting and recording. \$1,000 for best poem. Publishing available. Talent (CM), P.O. Box 31, Quincy, MA 02169.

AWARD WINNING SONGWRITER/recording artist credited with 8 chart records, offering co-writing on accepted material. Send best song lyrics to: Ramsey Kearney, 602 Inverness Avenue, Nashville, TN 37204. 1-(615) 297-8029.

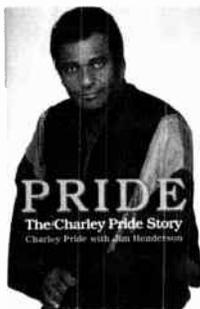
POEMS NEEDED FOR STARS TO RECORD. Entertainer Network, Box 292511, Nashville, TN 37229.

PRODUCER - ACCEPTING SONGS, poems, lyrics! Studio 3. P.O. Box 120145, Nashville, TN 37212-0145.

FOR **CMSA** MEMBERS ONLY

Charley Pride in Legends

Reissues of Charley Pride's original hit material have been few and far between, but RCA is about to change that. Due out about the time you read this is a budget CD called *Super Hits*, which contains 10 of Charley's many chart entries, including "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone," "I Know One," "Just Between You and Me" and "Let the Chips Fall." You should be able to find it in stores now. Then, coming in April 1997, is a more extensive set: a Charley Pride volume of the label's *Essential Series*. This one will include much more material, and like others in the series, will probably feature an informative booklet with rare photos and liner notes. Be sure to keep an eye on *Buried Treasures* for a review of this item when it's released.



Meanwhile, Pride's excellent autobiography (reviewed by Rich Kienzle in *Essential Collector* in the May/June 1994 issue) is out now in paperback. Written with Jim Henderson, the book details Charley's life and rise to fame, with frank discussions of his childhood poverty, the racism he encountered, and more. Order by item number, B2BPP. Regular price \$10.00. Members' price \$9.00. See ordering instructions at the end of this page.

Buried Treasures Special

CMSA members are entitled to a discount on all of the products

featured in this section. Take \$2.00 off each item featured here except for the Bear Family boxed sets. Among the items included this time around are reissues on some classic Louvin Brothers albums, a blues set from Hank Williams Sr., early Elvis, and a Jimmy Wakely set. As for the Bear Family boxes, members receive a generous discount on these items: members may deduct \$107.50 off the regular price of the Hank Thompson box, and pay just \$250.00 for this 12-CD set, which includes a hardcover book with notes by Rich Kienzle. On the George Morgan

set, members may deduct \$61.87—pay just \$185.63. Include membership number if taking discount. See ordering instructions in *Buried Treasures*.

Essential Collector Special

Members may also take a discount on anything featured in *Essential Collector*. Deduct \$2.00 off the regular prices shown for each item. Rich gives thumbs up to autobiographies from Waylon Jennings and Carl Perkins, videos on Roger Miller, Lee Roy Parnell and Chet Atkins, and a new CD/cassette release featuring some of the many great performances from the PBS series, *Austin City Limits*. See ordering instructions on the *Essential Collector* page.

Classic Photo

All-Star Anything Goes, a popular series of 1970's-era TV specials that featured celebrities from various fields competing against each other in light-hearted events, often included some of the top country stars of the day. In 1979, a team was fielded by country hit-makers Jerry Lee Lewis, Barbara Mandrell, Jerry Reed and this issue's legend—Charley Pride (see left). Whether or not they won the games is lost to history....

How to Order

To order items listed on this page, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111296N, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Include \$3.00 postage/handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 additional.



VOTE

MEMBERS POLL/NOVEMBER 1996

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

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records, cassettes or compact discs) in the last month? Yes No
How many records? _____ cassettes? _____ CD's? _____
2. In the boxes below, write the numbers of any of the albums on the Top 25 list in this issue which you bought in the last month.
3. For any albums you bought in the last month not on the Top 25 list, write performer's name and album titles in the space below. (Attach a separate sheet if you need more room.)

Your Choice for Album of the Month

4. List numbers of your five favorites from Top 25 in this issue.
Singles (list 5 numbers) Albums (list 5 numbers)

Where Do You Buy Your Records?

5. From which types of stores do you buy music? (Check all that apply) Please specify store:
 Department store _____
 Discount store _____
 Music retailer _____
 Other _____
6. Have you bought music by mail or by phone in the last 12 months? Yes No
7. If yes, did you buy music from any of the following services in the last 12 months? (Check all that apply.)
 Columbia House BMG Music Service
 Reader's Digest Music Time-Life Music

Who Can Vote

Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, write your membership number here _____
If you are not a CMSA member but would like to join and vote immediately, enclose your check for \$16 for a one-year CMSA membership (you get an extra year of *Country Music Magazine*, too).

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

TOP 25

Albums

1. LeAnn Rimes *Blue*
2. Shania Twain *The Woman in Me*
3. Jeff Foxworthy *Crank It Up—
The Music Album*
4. George Strait *Clear Blue Sky*
5. Mindy McCready *Ten Thousand Angels*
6. Brooks & Dunn *Borderline*
7. Trisha Yearwood *Everybody Knows*
8. Travis Tritt *The Restless Kind*
9. John Berry *Faces*
10. Deana Carter *Did I Shave My
Legs for This?*
11. Alan Jackson *The Greatest Hits Collection*
12. Garth Brooks *The Hits*
13. Tracy Lawrence *Time Marches On*
14. Paul Brandt *Calm Before the Storm*
15. Garth Brooks *Fresh Horses*
16. Ty Herndon *Living in a Moment*
17. Vince Gill *High Lonesome Sound*
18. Bryan White *Between Now and Forever*
19. Lyle Lovett *The Road to Ensenada*
20. Collin Raye *I Think About You*
21. Sammy Kershaw *Politics, Religion and Her*
22. James Bonamy *What I Live to Do*
23. The Beach Boys *Stars and Stripes, Volume 1*
24. Faith Hill *It Matters to Me*
25. Tim McGraw *All I Want*

Singles

1. Ty Herndon *Living in a Moment*
2. Bryan White *So Much for Pretending*
3. Trisha Yearwood *Believe Me Baby (I Lied)*
4. Billy Dean *That Girl's Been Spyin' on Me*
5. Tracy Lawrence *Stars Over Texas*
6. Faith Hill *You Can't Lose Me*
7. Paul Brandt *I Do*
8. Vince Gill *Worlds Apart*
9. Mark Wills *Jacob's Ladder*
10. Clint Black *Like the Rain*
11. Toby Keith *A Woman's Touch*
12. JoDee Messina *You're Not in Kansas Anymore*
13. Sammy Kershaw *Vidalia*
14. Rick Trevino *Learning As You Go*
15. Alabama *The Maker Said Take Her*
16. David Lee Murphy *The Road You Leave Behind*
17. Mindy McCready *Guys Do It All the Time*
18. Collin Raye *Love Remains*
19. Kenny Chesney *Me and You*
20. Travis Tritt *More Than You'll Ever Know*
21. Tim McGraw *She Never Lets It Go
to Her Head*
22. John Michael Montgomery *Ain't Got Nothin' on Us*
23. Patty Loveless *Lonely Too Long*
24. George Strait *I Can Still Make Cheyenne*
25. Joe Diffie *Whole Lotta Gone*

Make check payable to *Country Music*. Mail to: Top 25, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, TN 37229

Check one: Cassette \$9.98, CMSA Members \$7.49
 CD \$16.98, CMSA Members \$12.74

Add \$3.00 postage and handling. Circle numbers you want from album list above. Offer expires March 30, 1997

1	6	11	16	21	Total Amount	\$ _____
2	7	12	17	22	Postage and Handling	\$ _____
3	8	13	18	23	TN residents include sales tax	\$ _____
4	9	14	19	24	Total Enclosed	\$ _____
5	10	15	20	25		

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

CMSA Membership # _____

I want to join the CMSA and get Member's price. I'm adding \$16 for membership which includes an extra year's subscription to *Country Music Magazine*. 111296T

A 25% Discount For CMSA Members Only

Here it is, folks! Your quick and easy order form for your choice of the Top 25 **Albums** currently on the country music charts. Everyone may order, but members of *Country Music Magazine's* own Country Music Society of America get 25% off list price. Albums listed on this page are available on CD or cassette. **Sorry, no singles, LP's or 8-track tapes available.** To order, fill out coupon on this page and include your check or money order. Be sure to specify format. Allow six to eight weeks for delivery. To join the CMSA and save 25% on every CD or cassette you buy, send \$16 to cover membership dues and use members' prices. Dues entitle you to an additional year of *Country Music Magazine*, the CMSA Newsletter with every issue, membership card, discount coupons, other merchandise discounts and more.

Celebrate the Good Tidings!

Treetop Angel

an illuminated
treetop angel
\$39.98

a Holiday
Collectible
by Patricia Rose

A shimmering messenger heralding good tidings, the "Treetop Angel" alights atop your Christmas tree or makes a breathtaking centerpiece any time of year. Her lovely face is crafted from hand-painted, imported bisque porcelain. Her majestic wings and billowing skirt glow with the warm light of miniature bulbs.

A Joy to Behold

The "Treetop Angel," bringing the most joyous of all days to life, is sure to be a welcome addition to your home and an heirloom to pass on through the generations. This individually numbered Premiere Edition bears the artist's signature and comes to you with a full 100-Day Buy-Back Guarantee. Porcelain for this heavenly messenger will be cast for just 100 firing days, so we urge you to place your reservation today!

Actual size of the "Treetop Angel" is 13" from head to the hem of her gown. She comes complete with golden hair, numbered Certificate of Authenticity and exquisite collector's box.

The "Treetop Angel" glows with miniature bulbs underneath her skirt and behind her back. UL approved, there is no assembly required - simply plug her in.

Treasury Collection
Premiere Edition

Paradise Galleries™

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Suite 510, 8070 La Jolla Shores Dr.
La Jolla CA 92037-3230

Please respond by

Treetop Angel

by Patricia Rose
Premiere Edition
Limited to 100 Firing Days

Paradise Galleries, Inc.
Suite 510, 8070 La Jolla Shores Dr.
La Jolla CA 92037-3230

CJ611B00

December 31, 1996

X

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Date

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Address

City

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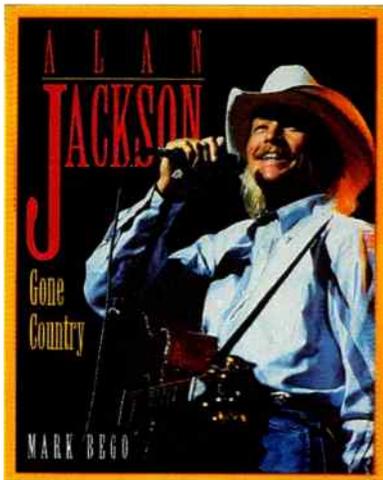
*Plus \$4.96 shipping and handling and any applicable sales tax (CA only). Canadian price \$59.98 plus \$19.98 shipping in Canadian funds. Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. All orders subject to acceptance.

YES! Please enter my reservation for "Treetop Angel," a limited edition and individually numbered holiday collectible, crafted in fine bisque porcelain.

I need send no money now. I will be billed for my angel in two installments of \$19.99* - the first duels before shipment.



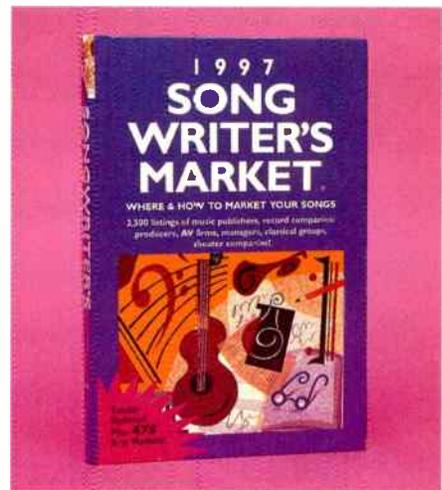
EDITOR'S CHOICE



ALAN JACKSON: GONE COUNTRY

Loaded with more than 100 full-color and black-and-white photographs, *Alan Jackson: Gone Country* is a celebration of this great vocalist and an insightful look at his life and music. It starts by examining his hardscrabble roots, when his family lived in a converted toolshed that his grandfather built for his parents. After working as a carpenter, Jackson started playing small clubs and bars in a band called The Strayhorns. Bestselling author Mark Bego then explores Jackson's big breakthrough in the 90's, his rise to the top of the country charts, his philosophies about music, his inspirations and his off-stage pastimes.

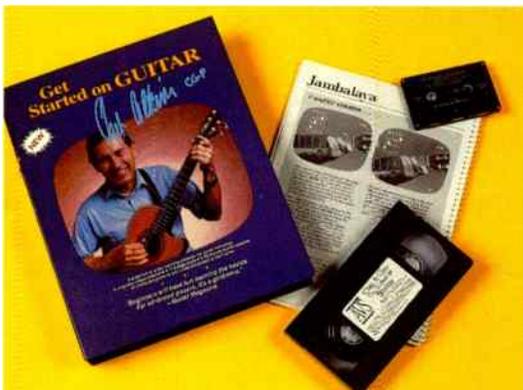
Jackson's life has been as vivid and unusual as any country lyric. *Alan Jackson Gone Country* separates fact from fiction, and what emerges is a candid but affectionate account of the popular singer's life and music. Ask for Item #B5A, \$19.95.



NEW! 1997 SONGWRITER'S MARKET

Get your songs into the right person's hands with the all new 1997 edition of the essential *Songwriter's Market*, containing 2,500 listings of song markets, each with the most complete and current information on contact names, royalty/pay rates, song submission, types of songs wanted and vital tips from the "buyers." There are lists of clubs, associations, contests, workshops, publications AND MORE! Item #B5N97, \$21.99.

CHET ATKINS VIDEO INSTRUCTION COURSE: GET STARTED ON GUITAR



Learn to play the guitar (or sharpen your existing skills) with one of the grandmasters of guitar pickin'. With the acclaimed Chet Atkins Instruction Course, *Get Started on Guitar*, beginners can have fun learning the

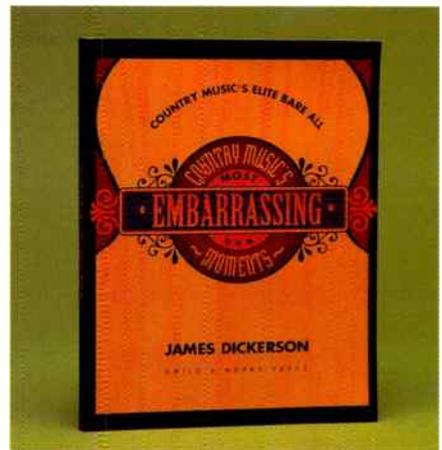
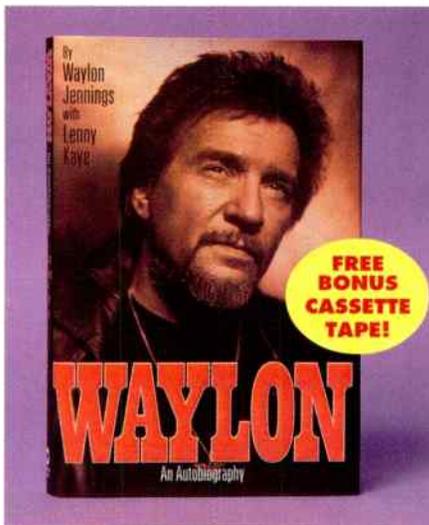
basics, and advanced players will discover a goldmine of helpful hints and ideas. The set includes a one-hour video, a 112-page instruction book and a 40-minute audio cassette—all three components cross-referenced to each other and packaged in a sturdy plastic case. The instruction book will guide you through the music Chet plays in the video. Each tune has its own chapter complete with advanced tips and basic information. There are also special easy-to-read reference sections titled "Playing Chords," "Finger-Picking Chords," "Playing Melodies" and "Playing by Ear." The video shows split-screen close-ups so you can see exactly how the techniques are done. It's a great gift idea. Ask for Item #B2G, only \$69.95.

NEW! WAYLON: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A contemporary country music legend—you know it! Over 27 million records sold to date, 16 hitting Number One—but what about the man behind the music? Now, for the first time, Waylon tells all about his towering career that stretches from the mid-50's, when he was a young protege of the great Buddy Holly, through four fabulous decades of country music. Johnny Cash says, "Of all the books about or by celebrities, it isn't very often that one comes along that I have the slightest interest in. I love this one." But probably Willie Nelson sums it up best when he says, "No one knows Waylon's story better than Waylon himself. Finally, here is the autobiography we've all been waiting for." Well, Willie, I know I have. Item #B5W/R13, \$23.

FREE WAYLON JENNINGS CASSETTE!

Order now and you'll also receive Waylon's popular Full Circle cassette...FREE!



NEW! COUNTRY MUSIC'S MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENTS: COUNTRY MUSIC'S ELITE BARE ALL

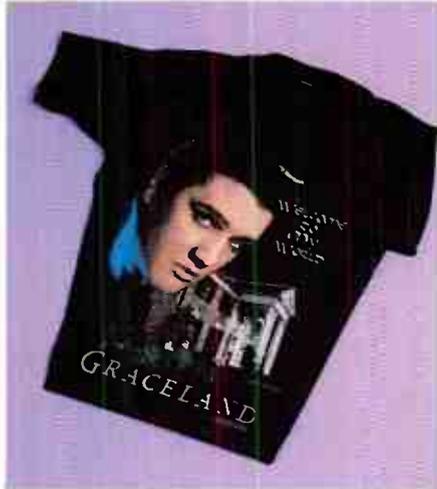
Country music stars are just human, and experience the same compromising moments as the rest of us mortals. *Country Music's Most Embarrassing Moments* contains painfully true stories from 23 of these headliners. They share their embarrassing private moments for the first time, holding nothing back. Here are the sometimes hilarious and sometimes humiliating anecdotes from celebrities like The Statler Brothers, Chet Atkins, Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, Shania Twain, Marty Stuart, Mark Chesnutt and Aaron Tippin. Ask for Item #B8L, \$7.95.



Nashville Warehouse Country Christmas

THE ELVIS PRESLEY T-SHIRT

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Produced in cooperation with Graceland and Elvis Presley Enterprises, here is one of the most famous cars in the world and the only authorized die-cast model of Elvis' 1955 pink Cadillac. Designed in cooperation with the Cadillac Motor Car Division of General Motors, this 1/18 scale model is nearly a foot in length and comes complete with the history of this famous car. Item #G2G, \$49.95.

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The handsome **Elvis Profile Watch** features the most unique second hand—a rotating guitar. It makes a great conversation piece. Item #J2B, \$49.95 (specify male or female size).

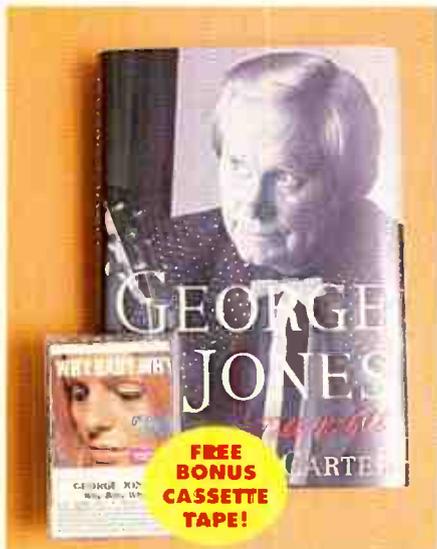
THE GEORGE JONES AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Here, for the first time, in *I Lived to Tell It All*, George Jones delivers a no-holds-barred account of his excesses and ecstasies. How alcohol ruled his life and performances. How violence marred many friendships and relationships. How money was something to be made but never held on to. And, finally, how the love of a good woman can ultimately change a man, redeem him, and save his life.

Notorious for evading the press, the subject of two unauthorized biographies and countless cover stories, George Jones finally comes forward with his own story, told to Tom Carter (highly respected co-author of books with Ralph Emery, Reba McEntire and others). Ask for Item #B10A/R12, \$23.

ORDER NOW AND GET A FREE GEORGE JONES CASSETTE!

Why Baby Why features the title song plus hits like "Frozen Heart," "You Never Thought It Would Be You," "One Is a Lonely Number," "Settle Down" AND MORE!



NEW! THE OFFICIAL RYMAN AUDITORIUM COLLECTIBLE MUSIC BOX

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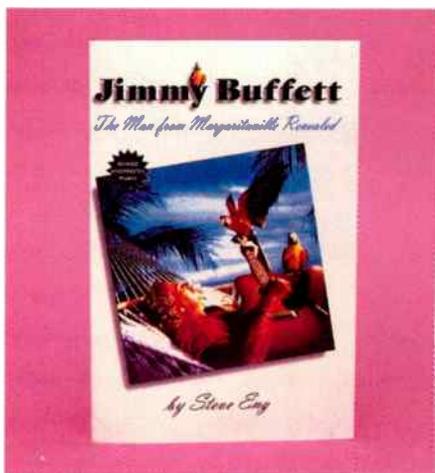
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COUNTRY MUSIC PEWTER AND ENAMEL BUCKLE, KEY CHAIN AND PIN

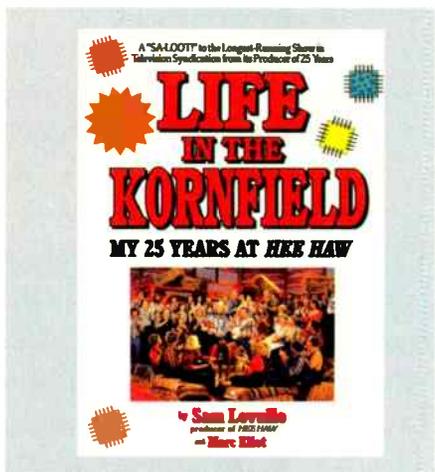
Here is the most popular buckle we have ever offered. It features a brown fiddle and white banjo inlaid over an outline of the U.S.A., with a deep blue background. Now, for the first time, we are offering it, separately or together, with our new matching **Key Chain** and **Lapel Pin**. For the new **Lapel Pin** ask for Item #G1T, \$2.95. For the new **Key Chain** ask for Item #G1K, \$5.95. For the **Country Music Buckle** ask for Item #G7L, \$9.95. Order the **Country Music Buckle** and **Key Chain** together and you get the **Lapel Pin**...FREE!





NEW! JIMMY BUFFETT: THE MAN FROM MARGARITAVILLE REVEALED—ORDER NOW AND SAVE 10%!

From Jimmy's sea-going forefathers, to Mobile, Alabama, where he spent his youth loafing around, drifting, wanting only to play music, to his hero's journey to Nashville, where he finally hit—author Steve Eng tells the creative odyssey of Jimmy Buffett in this entertaining new hardcover biography scheduled for a December release. Reserve yours now and SAVE \$2.50! Item #B5D, regularly \$24.95, now \$22.45.



NEW! THE HEE HAW STORY—ORDER NOW AND SAVE 10%!

The legal problems that held up the original publication date for the *Hee Haw* story are now over, and *Life in the Kornfield* is scheduled for a December release.

Author and *Hee Haw* producer Sam Lovullo remarks, "*Hee Haw* was the Grand Ole Opry of television, with a little bit of something for everyone." Now he brings you the real story behind Roy Clark, Buck Owens, Minnie Pearl, Junior Samples, Grandpa Jones, Lulu Roman, The Wonder Dog, The Hee Haw Honeys, the music, the big-name guest stars, the jokes and everything else that made this show so popular. It includes over 50 behind-the-scenes photos. Order now and SAVE 10%! Item #B4Z, regularly \$15.00, NOW \$13.50.

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For those who want literally everything Monroe recorded for Decca from 1950 to 1958, this Bear Family four-CD boxed set is the answer. It contains a total of 109 cuts and includes a book by Charles Wolfe and Neil Rosenberg. Item #BCD15423, regularly \$137 - NOW \$109.

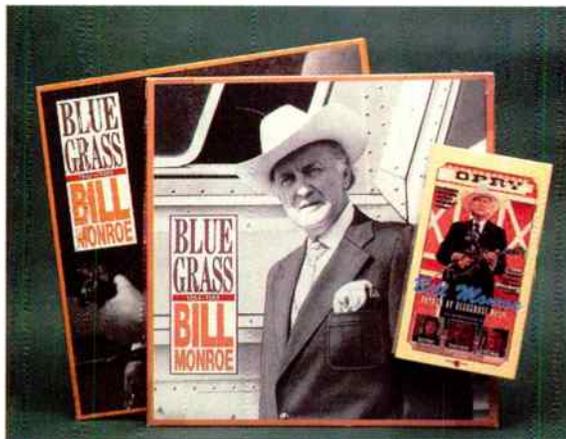
BILL MONROE BLUEGRASS: 1959-1969—FOUR-CD COLLECTION & BOOK

This follow-up four-CD Bear collection delivers all of Monroe's songs from 1959 to 1969, including seven previously unissued titles. This set features another fascinating book about Monroe recording sessions. Item #BCD15529-4, regularly \$137 - NOW \$109.

BILL MONROE VIDEO:

FATHER OF BLUEGRASS—90 MINS.

Produced with the cooperation of Bill Monroe, ex-Blue Grass Boys and other performers he influenced, this documentary clearly defines Bill Monroe's unique role in American music. It covers his early years in Kentucky with great footage. The era of The Monroe Brothers, his early years on the Opry, the Flatt-Scroggs-Wise version of The Blue Grass Boys—all are here. This video is a fitting tribute to this bluegrass legend. Item #V2K, \$19.95.



COUNTRY MUSIC'S FAVORITE ALLSTAR T-SHIRTS—ALAN JACKSON, REBA MCENTIRE, TRAVIS TRITT (NOT SHOWN) AND VINCE GILL (NOT SHOWN)

These popular high-quality T-shirts are 100% cotton, which makes them all-American sturdy and guaranteed to last. Each shirt is concert quality—without the typical high concert price tag. Each shirt comes in the men's sizes specified below. Each shirt is \$16.95. Order by size and item number.

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Nashville Warehouse Country Christmas



DOLLY PARTON DOLL

This replica of Dolly Parton stands one-and-a-half feet tall. She's wearing a red leatherette dress accented with gold and white lace. In her gold-tone belt is a red, ruby-like stone, and the whole ensemble is topped with a gold-tone necklace. Order right away, we'll give you an early Dolly album on cassette, *Just the Way I Am...* **FREE!** The Dolly Doll costs \$49.95 and includes a stand. Ask for Item #D1A/R4A.



NEW! PHOTO CALENDARS FOR 1997

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GEORGE STRAIT FOUR CASSETTE/CD SET: STRAIT OUT OF THE BOX

This *Billboard* Top Ten set is the ultimate George Strait collection. The four cassette tapes or CD's feature 72 songs, and there's a 72-page illustrated booklet. Just some of the songs you'll find include "Right or Wrong," "Let's Fall to Pieces Together," "Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind," "The Cowboy Rides Away," "The Fireman," "The Chair," "You're Something Special to Me," "Haven't You Heard," "Wonderland of Love," "I Cross My Heart" **AND MORE! SPECIAL BONUS: ORDER THIS SET AND GET THE GEORGE STRAIT BOOK BELOW ...FREE!** Item #MCAD-11263, cassette \$49.98, CD \$59.98.



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GEORGE STRAIT: AN ILLUSTRATED MUSICAL HISTORY



Edited by *New York Times* bestselling author Dave Marsh and authored by David Cantwell, this popular addition to Putnam Publishing's new compact book series lets fans follow the story of this boy from a small Texas town who made it big in Music City. Photos, timelines, historical data and music criticism combine to make this book absolutely indispensable for the serious George Strait fan. And the unique CD package design is a perfect touch. Order this new compact edition by itself...or **GET IT FREE** when you order the great George Strait collection just above. Item #B10B, \$7.95.

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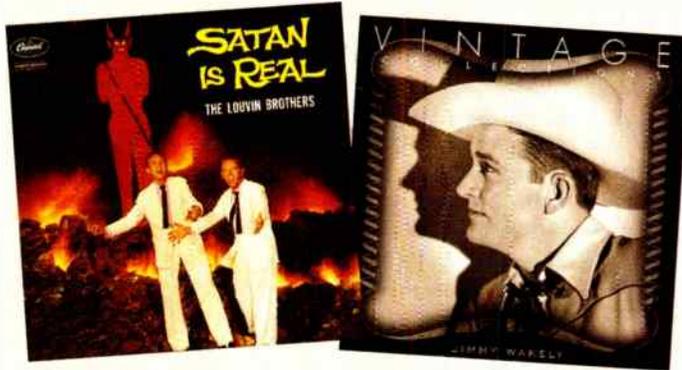
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Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

Hank Thompson: In 1946-47, Hank Thompson recorded six songs for small labels: two for a Globe Records single, four for two Blue Bonnet singles. From 1947 through 1964, he recorded 317 songs for Capitol: singles, EP's and LP's. Though he started as an Ernest Tubbs-style honky tonk balladeer, having hits in that style, by 1950, he had reworked his Brazos Valley Boys into a danceable Western swing outfit that gave him a distinct sound. His hits established him nationwide, from "Green Light" to the classics "Wild Side of Life," "Wake Up, Irene," "The Blackboard of My Heart" and many more. George Strait succeeded with a very similar honky tonk-swing mixture 30 years later.

I annotated this package, so only the facts. *Hank Thompson and His Brazos Valley Boys* (Bear Family BCD 15904), a 12-CD, 323-song collection, chronicles Thompson's 1946-1964 career with every number he recorded from beginning to end, including two unreleased Capitol recordings. The set begins with the first single, "Swing Wide Your Gate of Love," which he recorded for Globe in '46. All the Capitol hits, originals and remakes, are here, as are all his LP's, from his 1965 Christmas album to his classic honky tonk LP *Songs for Rounders*, and his three live albums (Hank was the first solo country artist to record a live LP). The tasty fingerpicking comes from Hank's friend and (occasional touring partner) Merle Travis, who played on most of Thompson's sessions after 1953. The package, assembled with Hank's complete cooperation, includes an 84-page hardback book of photos and memorabilia from his own personal archives (including a 1943 manuscript copy of "Swing Wide Your Gate of Love," which he wrote while in the Navy). A personal note: unlike some artists, whose memories are understandably



clouded by age or who don't always articulate those memories well, Hank deserves most of the credit for the text. Articulate and witty, possessing a razor-sharp memory for detail, he recalls events and details of his life and career that occurred over half a century ago in an amazing way.

George Morgan: George Morgan's only real press exposure in recent years has come from passing references in articles covering the far more successful contemporary career of daughter Lorrie. Morgan had enough problems in his heyday, since his gift for smooth ballad vocals led some to dub him, for better or worse, an Eddy Arnold knock-off. The fact Morgan was hired by the Opry in 1948, just after Arnold left the cast to try greater challenges, fueled the comparisons. Nonetheless, from 1949 until 1966, Morgan recorded for Columbia Records. His hits, plentiful at first, gradually faded out, and he never really regained his momentum. Nonetheless, he did some excellent work, all of it chronicled on *Candy Kisses* (BCD 15851), a 201-song, eight-CD box set.

The set includes hits, misses, LP's and everything in between, along with some half-baked attempts to push him into pop by teaming him with two of Columbia's top female pop singers, Dinah Shore in 1949 and Rosemary Clooney in 1952. His later country duets with Marion Worth are also here in their entirety. The un-

even quality of Morgan's recordings is obvious, yet so is his ability to handle the smooth Nashville Sound productions of the late 1950's. Though his voice was perfect for such material, he had surprisingly little commercial success compared to, say, Jim Reeves, who didn't start crooning in earnest until the mid-50's. The 39-page booklet features a definitive essay by Colin Escott, various rare photos—including some amazing shots taken at a rehearsal prior to a 1949 Columbia recording session at the WSM studios (with Uncle Art Satherley producing)—and a complete discography.

Jimmy Wakely: I also annotated this set, so again, just the facts. Capitol Records had never before created anything resembling a comprehensive Jimmy Wakely collection on either LP or CD. The 20-track *Vintage Collections* (36591) attempts to cover all aspects of his years with the label by mixing Wakely's biggest solo hits like "Mine All Mine," "Mona Lisa," "One Has My Name, The Other Has My Heart" and "I Love You So Much It Hurts" with three Wakely-Margaret Whiting hit duets ("Slipping Around," "Wedding Bells" and "When You and I Were Young Maggie Blues"). Added to that are some obscurities that were also released ("Song of the Sierras," "Moon Over Montana" "Oklahoma Hills," "Walkin' the Sidewalks of Shame") and several unreleased songs (Jimmie

Rodgers' "Roll Along, Kentucky Moon," "Between the Lines" and "Midnight Wind"). Wakely is featured in various contexts, singing his first duet (with Nashville guitarist Velma Williams Smith) on "One Has My Name," with a small pop-country combo (steel guitar and organ) used on "Slipping Around," and the full-bodied, California country accompaniment (accordion, fiddles and trumpet and vocal chorus) heard on "Song of the Sierras." The Les Baxter Chorus, a pop vocal group which was an early manifestation of the vocal group accompaniment that became commonplace in Nashville from the mid- to late 50's, accompanies Wakely on the 1951 recording, "At the Close of a Long, Long Day."

Wakely's voice was adaptable to any material, be it Western (he was a modestly successful B-movie cowboy in the 1940's), pop or Western swing. Though he made nearly all his recordings on the West Coast with topflight musicians, one performance, his 1949 hit, "I Wish I Had a Nickel," features him singing with backing from some of the same Southeastern musicians who played on Hank Williams' early sessions (Jerry Byrd on steel, Zeke Turner on guitar, etc.). He does as well with their backing as with California steel guitar virtuoso (and childhood friend) Noel Boggs on his 1950 hit, "Mona Lisa."

Elvis: Except for an alternate take of "Heartbreak Hotel" (take number five if you're interested), *Elvis '56* (RCA 7863 66817-2) assembles everything he recorded in the year he exploded nationally. Assembled for the 40th anniversary of these groundbreaking hits, there are no surprises among the 22 songs, beyond the outtake mentioned above. "Hound Dog," "Paralyzed," "Blue Suede Shoes," the hit version of "Heartbreak Hotel," "Too Much," "My Baby Left Me" and so on are heard in digitally

remastered sound, for whatever that overused marketing term means by now. The difference is the packaging, a far cry from the days RCA seemed to strive to put out tackier and tackier Elvis packages. Crammed with Alfred Wertheimer's compelling black and white 1956 candid shots of Elvis on tour, this is the perfect gift for that younger person who has seen Elvis as cult figure or as a running joke for comedians. It's a powerful way to introduce them to the youthful, revolutionary power of these early records.

Frankie Miller: Older fans remember Texas honky tonk singer Frankie Miller for two songs: his 1959 Starday hit singles, "Black Land Farmer" and "Family Man." Those songs will be on a future Bear Family Miller collection, but *Sugar Coated Baby* (BCD 15909), a 30-track compilation, goes back to a period when he was known mainly around Texas. It begins with 1951 material that Miller recorded for the tiny Gilt-Edge label (later released on an ultra-rare LP on Audio Lab, King Records' budget label) and for Columbia, where he affected a Hank Williams style. Miller didn't have to imitate Hank, however, to make the point: he was a raw, unsubtle vocalist. Though his later stardom was short-lived, the gritty edge of this early material is particularly impressive. He wrote a fair amount of the 1951-52 material recorded for Gilt-Edge (with The Drifting Texans), most of it clearly influenced by Hank Williams. Some songs, like the Jimmie Rodgers-derived "Bare Foot Blues" and the semi-hit "I'm Only Wishing," were better than others. His covers of the Hank Williams songs, "Baby We're Really in Love" and "I'd Still Want You," are fine, and "I Can't Run Away," an urgent-sounding cover of an Eddie Noack recording, is particularly sharp.

After being drafted and spending two years (1952-54) in the Army, Miller emerged and signed with Columbia, recording at Jim Beck's famous Dallas studio. His music was still heavy on Hank overtones

(check out "It's No Big Thing to Me"), and there were plenty of uneven songs, yet Miller was honing his vocal style, making it more distinct. After recording 12 songs for Columbia through 1955 (Willie Nelson played rhythm guitar on Miller's final session), the label dropped him. The five 1956 demos at the end of the disc are, in some ways, the best performances. Recorded with only a bass player (Miller overdubbed guitars and percussion), the five songs have the feel of early Johnny Horton Columbia material like "Honky Tonk Man." Following his Starday hits, Miller toured and recorded for other labels and had no qualms about hanging up his guitar for good in the late 1960's. At last report, he was happily managing the service department of a car dealership in Arlington, Texas. Notes by Kevin Coffey, based on new interviews with Miller, provide terrific insights into the early 50's milieu that launched Miller's career.

The Louvin Brothers: Capitol Nashville recently reissued three of The Louvins' greatest Capitol LP's on budget priced CD's. *Satan Is Real* (37378), *A Tribute to the Delmore Brothers* (37379) and *Tragic Songs of Life* (37380) are landmark albums that have had immense influence on bluegrass, contemporary country and even pop artists. Not only are the albums' original covers and notes reproduced, all have new notes by Charles Wolfe, whose definitive Louvin biography,

In Close Harmony, will be out by the time you read this.

Though most of the material on *Satan Is Real*, their 1959 gospel package, was contemporary, the music captured Southern gospel's stark, fundamentalist side. Though not their first gospel LP, it was certainly their most compelling, beginning with the title number with its chilling recitation from Ira. Titles like "The Drunkard's Doom," "The Christian Life," "Are You Afraid to Die" and "Dying From Home, and Lost" (a song that went back to the 1800's) speak for themselves. A bonus is Wolfe's amusing account of how the brothers conceived the striking cover, with Ira and Charley cavorting around burning tires that simulated the fires of hell.

Publisher Russ Barnard rightly considers The Louvins' 1960 *A Tribute to The Delmore Brothers* album to be one of their finest moments. Like The Louvins, Alton and Rabon Delmore, one of the first truly great brother acts, hailed from Alabama. They had great influence on The Louvins' style of harmonizing. On the album, The Louvins mixed pre-war Delmore favorites like the immortal "Brown's Ferry Blues," "Nashville Blues," "Weary Lonesome Blues," "Southern Moon" and "Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar" with post-war favorites "Blues Stay Away from Me" and "Freight Train Boogie." The Louvin performances honored The Delmores by remaining faithful to the

sound and spirit of the original recordings. Complementing the original notes by old Delmore friend Merle Travis are Wolfe's new notes, based on interviews with Charlie Louvin, describing Alton Delmore's loaning deceased brother Rabon's old guitar to Ira for the session, and Merle Travis' presence to provide advice.

Capitol reproduced both covers used on the 1956 *Tragic Songs of Life*, both the original, a stark 1950's style drawing of the brothers, and the cover photo from a later reissue. This set digs into both old-time country and traditional folksongs that both brothers had known for years. Among these were somber numbers like "In the Pines," and "I'll Be All Smiles Tonight," the traditional "Knoxville Girl," a hit for the brothers in 1959, and "Mary of the Wild Moor." "My Brother's Will" was a contemporary song, penned by their Capitol producer, Ken Nelson. If you have the Razor & Tie package but can't afford Bear Family's, these three are the perfect complement.

Hank Williams: Hank Williams collections are out there in so many configurations it's hard to keep track of all of them. The newest package, *Low Down Blues* (Mercury 314-532-737-2), assembles 16 numbers, some ("My Bucket's Got a Hole in It," "Long Gone Lonesome Blues") blues in the standard 12-bar sense, while others possess the intensity of great blues even if their melodies ("I Heard That Lonesome Whistle" and "Lovesick Blues") don't qualify in the purest sense. Five songs are demo recordings, four featuring Hank alone with acoustic guitar on early versions of "Honky Tonk Blues" and "Weary Blues (From Waitin')," the terrific "Wearing Out Your Walkin' Shoes" and "Low Down Blues." Thematic collections of Hank material have been done before on LP, but Mercury is on to something here. Similar collections of Hank material covering various subjects and moods could appeal to more casual Hank fans, as opposed to the hardcore collectors.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: Hank Thompson, *The Hank Thompson and His Brazos Valley Boys* (BCD 15904), a 12-CD boxed set, \$375.50/George Morgan, *Candy Kisses* (BCD 15851), an eight-CD boxed set, \$247.50/Jimmy Wakely, *Vintage Collection* (Capitol 36591), CD only, \$17.98/Elvis Presley, *Elvis '56* (RCA 66817), CD only, \$29.98/Frankie Miller, *Sugar Coated Baby* (BCD 15909), CD only, \$27.50/The Louvin Brothers, *Satan Is Real* (Capitol 37378), *A Tribute to The Delmore Brothers* (Capitol 37379), *Tragic Songs of Life* (Capitol 37380), CD only, \$14.98 each CD/Hank Williams, *Low Down Blues* (Mercury 314-532-737), \$9.98 cassette, \$14.98 CD. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111296, P.O. Box 292553, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling. Canadian orders, add an additional \$3.00 postage. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Offer expires March 31, 1997

Essential Collector by Rich Kienzle

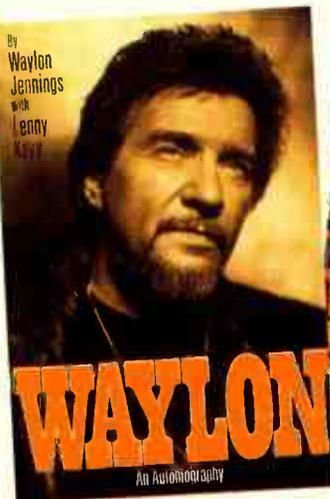
▪ Books ▪

Waylon Jennings: Willie's written his autobiography, George has written his, and now, at long last, Waylon's told his life story—warts, cocaine, Buddy Holly, Outlaws, Jessi, bypass surgery and all—in *Waylon*, penned with rock guitarist-journalist (and longtime country fan) Lenny Kaye. The book's strength, aside from the plain-spokenness that's long been Waylon's trademark, lies in the rich and vivid pictures he paints of his entire life, starting with his Texas boyhood and abortive plans to name him "Wayland."

The colorful group of characters in his family, his early love of music, his youthful musicianship and hilarious early days as a disc jockey literally jump off the page. His famous association with Holly, who produced Waylon's first record and used him as his bass player, ended with the rock star's fatal 1959 Iowa plane crash (Waylon was nearly a passenger). The association loses no drama in the telling. Waylon's relocation to Phoenix, his early recordings and discovery by Herb Alpert at A&M Records is completely examined. Likewise, his early days with RCA, working with and hassling with the label, through Chet Atkins and subsequent producers like the thoroughly inept Danny Davis, all get ample space.

There's an affectionate chapter recalling his brush with B-movie stardom in the drive-in quickie *Nashville Rebel* (his co-star was Mary Frann, later of the sitcom *Newhart*). The days of pill-popping and sharing a place with a then-unreformed Johnny Cash are treated as they happened.

Longtime Outlaw fans will be surprised at his view of the producer's role in Nashville (he supports them), even though he demanded RCA give him the freedom to produce himself (the true essence of the so-



called Outlaw movement). Memories of recording the *Honky Tonk Heroes* LP include a worried Billy Joe Shaver fretting over Waylon's changes to his material. The financial ups and downs, drug bust and near-fatal dependence on cocaine and a fried-food diet that led to 1988 open heart surgery are all tackled with humor and insight.

Overall, the book has all the impact of his greatest records. It not only deserves best-seller status, I wonder who'll be playing him in the film version.

Carl Perkins: If anyone should've written an autobiography before now, it's rockabilly legend Carl Perkins, he of "Blue Suede Shoes" fame, and a charter member of the Sun Records family. At long last, it's happened with *Go, Cat Go! The Life and Times of Carl Perkins*. Co-authored with rock journalist David McGee, Carl's story is told in the third person, but the book is peppered with ample quotes from interviews with longtime friends and associates and a hundred hours of interviews with Perkins. Sections of these interviews show up throughout the book, often graced with the pretentious heading "The Voice of Carl Perkins."

Perkins' life is compelling, and McGee is candid about the tragedies that plagued the



singer's life, be they poverty, misfortune or his own personal flaws. Like many of his contemporaries, Perkins was born dirt-poor (in 1932) in a three-room sharecropper's shack in western Tennessee's Lake County. He grew up loving blues and country, but, not seeing music as a career option, he played on the side and labored by day, marrying Valda Crider in 1953. In the bars, he and his brothers, Jay, a guitarist, and Clayton, who played bass, were creating their own version of rockabilly in rough local honky tonks before Elvis ever met Scotty Moore and Bill Black.

After Elvis' early successes in 1954, Carl auditioned at Sun Records in Memphis in the fall of that year. Sam Phillips pushed him to find new "edgy" upbeat material, which he gradually developed until he wrote "Blue Suede Shoes." The book brings to life the good times of touring with other Sun artists including Elvis, Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis, as well as the near-fatal 1956 car crash that kept Perkins and his brothers from playing "Blue Suede Shoes" on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Jay Perkins' death from cancer and Clayton's mental illness and suicide, combined with Carl's own struggles with alcoholism, are sobering.

One can relive his gratification when, on a 1964 tour of England, he met The Beatles, all longtime Perkins fans, and watched them record his song

"Matchbox." Carl's anger and litigation with Sam Phillips' over his handling of the publishing of "Blue Suede Shoes" and other Perkins classics show a darker side of the Sun Records founder, though Carl (partly) won the battle.

The narrative continues up to the present, covering his days of touring with Johnny Cash, his successful career as a country composer, his current band, including sons Stan and Greg, and his harrowing bout with throat cancer. In all, McGee, with Perkins' help, has produced a moving work capturing the mix of wildness and country soul that Carl's always infused into his music.

▪ Videos ▪

Roger Miller: In addition to his own autobiography, Waylon's also told another story recently: that of his (and seemingly all of Nashville's) friend, legendary singer-songwriter Roger Miller. With old Miller friends Buddy Killen and Captain Midnight involved in producing the video documentary, *Roger Miller: King of the Road*, the tape serves as a celebration of an extraordinarily productive (and zany) life.

With cooperation of Miller's mother, his widow Mary, son Dean and a host of friends—from Killen and Mel Tillis to his cousin Sheb Wooley and Kris Kristofferson, Glen Campbell, Bill Anderson and producer Jerry Kennedy—and outstanding use of archival video, this is an engrossing and definitive portrait of a true Nashville original.

As host, Waylon moves through Miller's life, with comments from family, friends from his Oklahoma childhood, and Nashville buddies and associates as they trace the peaks and valleys of his career. Buddy Killen, who ran Tree Music, remembers Roger writing the song "Home" in 1959 (a hit that year for Jim Reeves), all because Miller wanted a \$300 advance to buy a riding

lawn mower (which he rode eight miles home).

Such stories, mixed with Roger's videotaped interviews with Bill Anderson and Bobby Bare, and taped live performances from his career, remind everyone of his madcap humor and genius. His son Dean correctly observes that his dad's biggest country and pop hits came in the mid-60's when The Beatles owned pop music, making those achievements all the more impressive.

Jerry Kennedy, who produced Roger's greatest hits for Smash Records, recalls both Miller's genius in the studio, and the challenge of dealing with him when he was wired on pills. Amazing mid-60's footage of him singing his hits on the *Opry Almanac* TV show capture him as stardom washed over him—unchanged and crazy as ever. Introducing him on his 1960's syndicated show, Porter Wagoner barely keeps a straight face as Roger ad-libs.

Surprisingly, nothing was said about Miller's own short-lived NBC-TV show. However, his memorable Tony Award-winning work on the Broadway musical, *Big River*, is dealt with in considerable detail. Though a genuine sense of sadness creeps in as the documentary discusses his untimely death in 1992 at age 56, it ends on an up note that Roger, who once described himself as "20 minutes ahead of his time," would appreciate.

Chet Atkins: Vestapol Videos' *Chet Atkins: Rare Performances 1955-1975* is the first compilation of Chet's TV appearances that includes his infrequent 1950's guest spots. Beginning with a 1955 appearance fingerpicking the "The Poor People of Paris" on *The Purina Show*, it also features him accompanying Anita Carter as she sings "Makin' Believe," a big hit that year. Two 1958 Ozark Jubilee shots showcase his increasingly Latin flavor.

An extended portion of a 1963 televised concert from Norway shows him, backed by Jim Reeves' band The Blue Boys, performing a mixture of

material, from "Levee Walking" and "Wildwood Flour" to "The Peanut Vendor," "Streets of Laredo," "Green-sleeves" and "Tiger Rag." An extended TV appearance from 1973, also from Norway, with a large orchestra, serves as a retrospective of his career. It features many songs he recorded in his first few years with RCA, including "Back Home Again in Indiana," "Mister Sandman" and "Country Gentleman," an instrumental medley of hits he produced for others ("He'll Have to Go," "Oh Lonesome Me," etc.) and samplings of the later pop numbers that dominated his albums. A 1973 *Porter Wagoner Show* appearance features a tasty version of "Muskrat Ramble."

Lee Roy Parnell: Any Lee Roy Parnell fan knows that he's not only a tough, blues-based singer but a topflight slide guitarist. Deeply influenced by Southern rockers like The Allman Brothers (particularly the late slide guitar master Duane Allman) and 1970's rootsy California acts like guitarist Ry Cooder and Little Feat, which featured another late slide guitar ace, Lowell George, Parnell took his slide style even further. The influence of the Western swing artists he loved, including the steel playing of Leon McAuliffe, is also reflected in his playing. For Parnell fans who want to get a view of how he coaxes that lyrical sound from his instruments, Hot Licks Video recently released *Lee Roy Parnell: The Art of Slide Guitar*.

Relaxed, almost seeming eager to discuss his technique, Parnell is candid about his influences, beginning by explaining acoustic slide playing, using vintage instruments. He takes guitarists through some "classic" slide blues riffs from Delta blues, then between each lesson performs the songs with a full electric band. He provides tips on the types of slides that work best for him (heavy glass models).

On the video's second half, he switches to electric guitar and explains in detail how to get a tough electric slide sound through choice of pickups, and how to get a "clean" slide sound that eliminates noise from adjoining strings. His non-technical tips are just as valuable, including more comments about his musical influences. He remembered listening to his idols and learning how to play like them, but added that one day, he had to put their records away and concentrate on developing his own sound, worthwhile advice for any young musician playing any instrument. The video comes with transcriptions of each lesson in an accompanying book. Non-picking Parnell fans might want this for their collections, but his lessons are most valuable for any country or blues player.

■ Recordings ■

Austin City Limits: It's been over 20 years since *Austin City Limits* began its run on Public Broadcasting, a run that continues today, presenting extended performances from

top country and roots music acts, many of them seldom seen on the networks—some not even given proper exposure on TNN.

Having watched the show since its beginnings as I have, it'd be easy to quibble with what's *not* on Sony Legacy's *The Best of Austin City Limits: Country Music's Finest Hour* (Legacy CK 65007), taken from the broadcast's stereo soundtracks. The intent of this release, however, was to create a saleable anthology mixing legends, contemporary stars (Dwight, The Judds) and country rock pioneers.

In most cases, these artists were captured in the era when these particular songs were brand new. Beginning with an exception to that rule, Haggard's moving 1978 "Silver Wings," it moves through a hot 1995 Mary Chapin Carpenter performance of "I Feel Lucky." Dwight Yoakam's 1985 "Guitars, Cadillacs," performed at the beginning of his stardom, is a reminder of how he whipped onto the scene. Alison Krauss' "Baby, Now That I've Found You," also from 1995, is perfection, as is The Mavericks' "What a Crying Shame" and Patty Loveless' ripping "Blue Side of Town." George Jones' 1985 reprise of "He Stopped Loving Her Today" and Tammy's 1984 "Stand By Your Man" are both effective, as is Willie's 1976 "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain."

The earliest number is Charlie Daniels' "Texas," from the program's first year of broadcast. The only mistakes were using k.d. lang's overblown "Three Cigarettes in an Ashtray" and Asleep at the Wheel's 1987 version of "Boogie Back to Texas" (surprising since the far better "classic" band of the 1970's appeared on the show).

What's here makes one dream of a multi-volume series of discs featuring the best moments of individual performers. I don't know if that's possible, but who knows? Part of the proceeds from sales of this disc will help sustain future broadcasts.

How to Get These Collectibles

Books: Waylon Jennings with Lenny Kaye, *Waylon: An Autobiography* (B5W), \$23.00/Carl Perkins and David McGee, *Go, Cat, Go! The Life and Times of Carl Perkins* (B6P), \$27.95. **Videos:** Roger Miller, *King of the Road* (V20G), \$19.95/Lee Roy Parnell, *The Art of Slide Guitar* (V8R), \$24.95/Chet Atkins, *Rare Performances, 1955-1975* (V20D), \$29.95. **Recordings:** Various Artists, *The Best of Austin City Limits: Country Music's Finest Hour* (Legacy CK 65007), \$19.98 CD, \$14.98 cassette. To order, send check or money order to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 111296EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, Tennessee 37229. Add \$3.95 postage and handling per order. Canadian orders, add \$3.00 extra for postage. **CMSA members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Offer expires March 31, 1997

After eight years' absence, Tom T. Hall recently released a new album, *Songs From Sopchoppy*. Our reviewer, Bob Millard, called it "a worthy effort by a happily retired genius." Our review also expressed gratitude that this living legend had made an album that "rolls nicely over a fan who remembers an era of brilliance—Tom T. Hall's heyday." Since I'm that kind of fan, I was prompted to ask the legend 20 Questions. —R.D.B.

1 I was really taken by your new album. Were you? I got around to listening to it after it'd been released, and...I was in kind of a melancholy mood, don't you think?

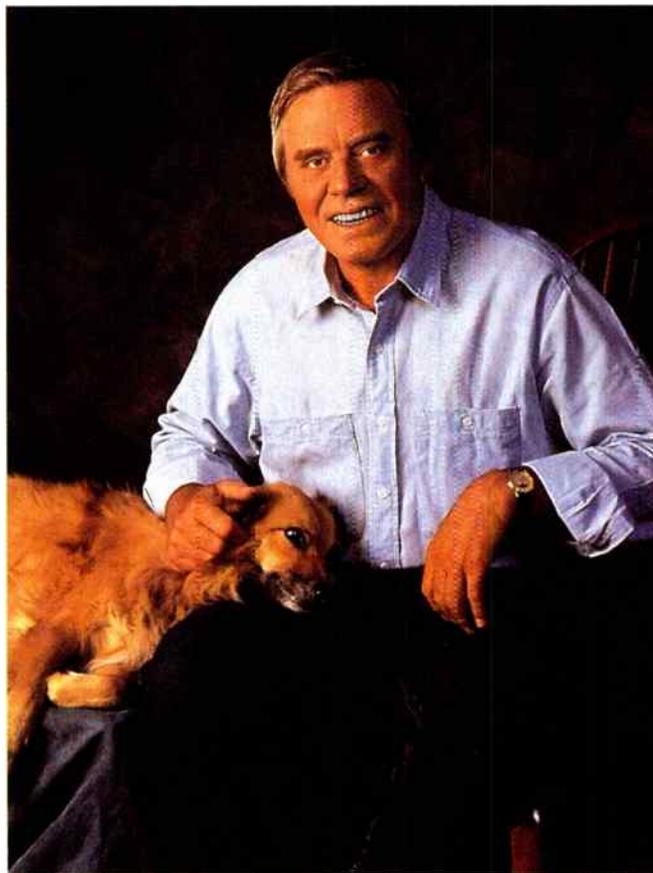
Well, it's pretty sad stuff...but I thought you had gone pop when I heard the saxophone. Yeah, well...you know I'm a closet sax player.

"Ships Go Out" is a sad one. That's about all the people we've lost down through the years.

I really think this "Shoes and Dress That Alice Wore" song is a masterpiece, but it's weird. You know, I've had great reviews on that, and some people came up to me and asked what happened to Alice, and I said, "Gee, I don't know." That's a good question I hadn't thought about.

2 What's behind the story in that song? Actually, it was the color "teal." A poet friend—Jim Whitehead—and I were sitting around, and he was talking about the color "teal"—we'd had some Jack Daniel's. I said, "Yeah, that's an awesome color isn't it. They named a duck after it..."

That's what Jack Daniel's will do for you! Yeah. Speaking of Jack Daniel's...you know, Dolly Parton said an interesting thing the other day. She said, "Say what you want about these new guys, but they're not a bunch of drunks and pillheads like the old guys we used to work with." Wasn't very kind, because it was so true...



DEAN DRON

20 Questions with TOM T. HALL

By Russ Barnard

3 Do you think that may make them a little boring? You wonder if they know what they're singing about. When we made a record, you knew we knew what the hell we were talking about.

From experience? Yeah. You go back to all the great artists—in every discipline of the arts—and you look, and they were not the happiest damn people in the world! Nor were they straight, or sober.

4 How does this new crop make it so big without all that? I don't get it, but they're good kids.

In 1972 I was the hottest

thing in country music—I had Number One records by myself, and I was writing them for other people, I was everywhere—like Coca Cola. Anyway, I read in the paper the other day that in Kansas City two weeks ago, Reba McEntire made as much money in one night as I made in 1972! I worry about the economy...

It's certainly true in baseball; your average right fielder makes more in one year than Mickey Mantle did in his life. Yeah, Ben Hogan won the U.S. Open and made \$3,500. This year's winner made \$350,000. They keep moving those decimal points on us.... God, what are they doing with it?

5 So what's next? What are you up to now?

Well, I'm working on a new project. I'm a little more positive and upbeat on this one. I'm in a little better mood. I was walking the beach every morning, watching the sun come up. That's an awesome sight. I never knew it was possible to get to a place like St. George Island, Florida, where you get up in the morning, walk on the beach, come back and have a little bite of breakfast. Then you read, go someplace for lunch, then some people come by for a drink, and the days just kind of go by. I thought that was a myth. But you can do it if you can get your mind in the right place.

But that's because you didn't have to go hoe any cotton in order to put some bacon on the table.

Well, that's true. I don't have a lot of money, compared to...I mean, I have a good lifestyle, but the kind of money these people are talking about—in a week they could make as much as I've got. Which kind of fascinates me. I think Garth Brooks made my net worth in Fort Worth in two days. I don't know what that is.... But, you know, I'm pleased that some of these young people are starting to cut my songs.

6 Which one of your songs is on the new Alan Jackson album?

"Little Bitty." It's his new single. For a songwriter, Alan Jackson recording your song...they tell me that's like winning the lottery.

You mean, you think it might equal "Harper Valley PTA"?

It should make 20 times the money I made off "Harper Valley" with demographics the way they are. My first check for "Harper Valley" was \$19,000. That was big money. I went out and bought a new car.

And had some left over... Absolutely! I could have bought two cars.

But I'm really pleased that Alan Jackson recorded one of my songs. You know, I thought we'd go through this

whole hat thing, and I wouldn't ever get one of them to sing one of my songs, so it's kind of a head thing for me.

7 *He's got a voice that would have stood up in earlier times, where some of these people don't.*

Yeah, he could have been born 30 years earlier and still been a big star. It's ironic, too, because he's one of the new guys I admire most. I thought "Here in the Real World" was just a hell of a song! Of course, I was disappointed that he was as cute a button, too, but what the hell.... So to have the guy who I admire the most cut one of my songs in this day and time, it seems like some sort of destiny thing.

8 *What did you think of Billy Ray Cyrus' cover of "Harper Valley"?*

I thought it had a lot of the fire that the original had. I really can't help but be a little bit pleased with it.

You'll probably get another \$19,000 out of that...

Maybe so. I got up on stage at Fan Fair and played guitar with him. That was one of the most dangerous five minutes I've ever spent on stage, because he'll run over you. He's all over the place! I wondered why the band was all hiding out back there in a circle. So I got up on stage, and he ran over me two or three times, and I moved to the back where I belong...a lot of gymnastic steps in his show.

9 *How do you explain these "girl singers" being beautiful and selling millions of records? Even the guys are good looking, too! But on the radio, often you can't really tell one from the other.*

I don't know. It's a phenomenon, isn't it? In the old days of radio, the more distinctive the voice, the bigger the act. You never saw them, just heard them. So, the record companies looked for people with distinctive, recognizable voices like Hank Snow, Ernest Tubb, Johnny Cash, George Jones...you never wondered who they were.

10 *So, in the Video Age, how you look may be more important than how you sound? Maybe that explains why some of these hats and girl singers who you can't recognize by their voices, still have big hits: you know them by their videos?*

You recognize them by their belly buttons. Absolutely! It's amazing how beautiful some of these people are—how handsome the boys and beautiful the girls. An amazing era of cosmetics.

Maybe that goes back to Dolly's point. Instead of popping pills and drinking booze, they're lifting weights.

That's right. I don't know, when Waylon quit taking drugs and started eating, he got fat. And Willie said, "That's why they call it the Food and Drug Administration." I've always thought that was kind of a strange comment...

11 *There's a jazz flavor in this latest album. Were there any jazz musicians in the group?*

Well, we have people who drop by there, and if we happen to be sitting there picking, we'd throw one of them on the demo. We got a banjo player down there, he's got a 100-year-old banjo, and he plays in kind of a folkie-funky way, so there's some real intellectual type, folk-American music oriented players, and I don't push them around to follow me. I just get in, and whatever they hear, I just follow them. We kind of share.

12 *You mean you don't run it like Bill Monroe ran his band.*

No, I don't make 'em do my kind of music. I admired old Bill for that, though.

13 *So, tell me a favorite—publishable—Bill Monroe story.*

Bill had a new wife, and he introduced me to her backstage at the Grand Ole Opry, and I said, "Bill, that's wonderful. I'm glad you're married again, because you need somebody to love you and look after you, take care of you." And Bill said, "Yeah,

and she can sell albums too."

He was always the practical fellow, always took care of business. And thought very highly of me. Anybody from Kentucky was alright...no matter what they did.

14 *Well, that "Ships Go Out" song...that made me think of Tootsie's. Can you remember the first time you went to Tootsie's?*

I came there the first time in '55 or '56, came down with a guy named Paul Gilley. I was still living in Kentucky. I was just a young boy. Gilley used to come to town and sell his songs to people. And I used to sing his songs—put 'em on a demo tape for him.

15 *Did you meet any stars or anything the first time you went there?*

Oh, yeah, we'd sit in Tootsie's, and we'd see people come in from the Opry. That was backstage for the Opry back then. I was amazed to see these big stars just sitting around drinking beer, getting ready to go on.

16 *Who were the guys of your generation of writers that you first got acquainted with?*

Well, all my first acquaintances were my heroes: Bill Anderson, Harlan Howard, Hank Cochran, Willie. Well, I didn't meet Bill right away. Those other guys would hang around Tootsie's, but Bill was not a beer drinker. I'd see him at social functions.

17 *And you would have met Kristofferson at that time?*

He got there after I did. I ran into him up at the Country Corner. He was a bartender there. He growled all the time—I never knew what the hell he was talking about. He told me he was a songwriter, and I said, "Who ain't!" Faron Young and Webb Pierce used to come in there and shoot pool and drink beer and raise hell.

Faron would have been one of the major rounders at that time.

Oh, yeah, he was a superstar.

He was it. Faron and Webb Pierce owned the whole damn town!

18 *How's your golf game? Do you play regularly?*

I play golf with Ralph Emery and Jerry Whitehurst.

Does Ralph cheat?

Yes, he does.

Does anybody tell lies while they're playing?

No, really, nobody cheats and nobody tells lies. Ray Stevens used to play with us, and we got rid of him for that reason....

Because he cheated and told lies both?

Yep. Ray was the bad guy.

Are you the best golfer?

Oh, yes. I am the best golfer. I can beat them all with one hand tied behind me. Which is the way I play most of the time anyway...

19 *What else do I need to know?*

Well, I got my new book coming out. It's called *What a Book!*—with the exclamation point.

Is it a novel?

It's a novel. Not a serious novel. A big farce. Starts off with Miss Dixie and I going to Jamaica where we stayed at Johnny Cash's place there, Cinnamon Hill. It's crazy. And it's supposed to be funny, so we'll see. It's hard to explain. But it has some music business in it, because one of the characters comes back from Jamaica and makes it in the music business. A guy named Bubba Hernandez makes it big at the Opry.

20 *Miss Dixie, who claims she's still married to you, wrote one of the songs on your new album, "Redneck Riviera." Is that line autobiographical... about riding nude on the Harley?*

I didn't ride a Harley nude! But Miss Dixie? I don't know. She spent some time down there by herself. I guess I better check around and see what she's up to down there....

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