THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COUNTRY MUSIC

COMPILED BY THE STAFF OF THE

COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM NASHVILLE

EDITED BY

PAUL KINGSBURY

FOREWORD BY

Emmylou Harris

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Country Music

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The Ultimate Guide to the Music

Compiled by the staff of the Country Music Hall of Fame
and Museum

Edited by Paul Kingsbury
with the assistance of Laura Garrard, Daniel Cooper, and John Rumble

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FOREWORD

I first became acquainted with the Country Music Foundation in the mid-1970s, when Bill Ivey, the CMF's director at that time, made me a tape of 1950s and 1960s recordings by the Louvin Brothers that he thought I might like. I hadn't asked him to make that tape, but he was right—I did like the songs. A *lot.* Ira and Charlie Louvin were not just exquisite harmony singers, they were also masterful songwriters whose songs are still being recorded to this day.

Through that little courtesy, I gradually came to find out that the Country Music Foundation is one of America's great natural resources. In addition to operating the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum (probably the premier music museum in the world), the CMF's staff oversee a massive archive of country music recordings, photographs, films, and publications. They're collecting country music today so that our grandchildren—and their grandchildren—will know why we love it so, where it came from, and what country music tells us about ourselves.

The people who work for the CMF really care about country music. All of it—from the oldest old-time fiddle tunes on up to what's happening on Nashville's Music Row right now. I've learned a lot from those folks. And just as with that first tape, they're still passing that passion and knowledge on.

This encyclopedia represents the culmination of several years of hard work and dedication. As with everything they do, the staff of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum have put this book together with a genuine love and concern for the music. They've brought in experts from all over to make this encyclopedia the best it can be. It's truly a labor of love, and I'm proud to be associated with it.

I hope you find that it brings you a little closer to the music you love and leads you down paths that bring more music into your life.

—Emmylou Harris

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INTRODUCTION

What is country music?

That is a question fans, performers, and businesspeople have been asking and debating, in one form or another, for most of the twentieth century. Many styles of music now fall under the broad rubric known as country music: old-time, honky-tonk, western swing, Cajun, bluegrass, rockabilly, country-pop, country-rock, folk-country, new traditionalism, hot country, and even insurgent or alternative country. The reason that country music exists as such a catchall category of music can be found in the music's commercial origins.

Country music came into being as a genre of music in the early 1920s when record companies began seeking new audiences to sell recordings to. Since the turn of the twentieth century, record companies had been made in the big city and catered to big-city tastes with the marching tunes of John Philip Sousa, the arias of Enrico Caruso, the hammy show tunes of Al Jolson, and the orchestral jazz of Paul Whiteman. When radio became a commercial reality in 1920, the new entertainment medium immediately cut into sales of record companies, especially in the cities, where radio stations first thrived. The reason was simple economics. After the initial investment in a radio set, to listen to a radio was free, of course. Records, on the other hand, cost at least 75 cents apiece, sometimes as much as $1.25.

It was time for record companies to find new niche markets, and they found them quickly in two previously underserved and unexploited markets: black audiences and rural white audiences. To reach black record buyers, the record companies sought out black blues and jazz performers to make "race records," as they were then called. For their rural white counterparts, the record companies sought genuine rustic talent in the hills and hollows of the rural Southeast: fiddlers, stringbands, singers of old folk ballads, gospel quartets. These sorts of performers and their music became the foundation of what has come to be known as country music. In the beginning, though, this white rural music was known by many different names as the record companies struggled to define the new and lucrative market they had discovered, labeling their new series variously Old Time Tunes (OKeh Records), Old Time Melodies of the Sunny South (Victor), Special Records for Southern States (Vocalion), Familiar Tunes (Columbia), and finally and most typically, Hillbilly Music. Somehow the audiences found the music and responded.

The first country music "hit" was Fiddlin' John Carson's "The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" b/w "The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster's Going to Crow," released in July 1923 by OKeh Records. By early 1925, country music had its first million seller with Vernon Dalhart's recording of "The Wreck of the Old 97" b/w "The Prisoner's Song" for Victor Records. It has been said that by the early 1930s it was commonplace in general stores across the South to hear this familiar refrain: "Let me have a pound of butter, a dozen eggs, and the latest Jimmie Rodgers record."

But even if businessmen in a way "created" country music by identifying various strains of rural music and getting them to their rightful audience, they never completely controlled it. Because it was music, after all, it had meaning for its audience far beyond whatever the businessmen had ever intended. Music can be sold like a commodity (like breakfast cereal), but it is never merely consumed, and it is appreciated in an entirely different way than a simple disposable commodity.

As musicians and fans grew accustomed to the idea of hillbilly music, they began

ascribing to the music its own traditions and codes. By the time of Hank Williams, the genre was established enough that the great country songwriter felt he could state unequivocally what characterized the music (then known as "folk").

"Folk music is sincere," Williams said in 1952. "There ain't nothin' phony about it. When a folksinger sings a sad song, he's sad. He means it. The tunes are simple and easy to remember, and they're sincere with them.

"I judge a song by its lyrics," he added. "A song ain't nothin' in the world but a story just wrote with music to it."

A few years later, hillbilly/folk music would become known as country & western, and then simply as country. But even as its name changed, its bedrock values remained. Country music is simple music. It is a music of nostalgia and sentiment. It is a music that speaks of the tension between sin and salvation. It is a music of human stories, hopes, and failings.

Today country music is also big business, accounting for more than $2 billion in annual record sales by 1995. In addition, as writer Peter Applebome has noted, "With 2,400 radio stations, country is on 1,600 more stations than the next most popular format, news talk. Each week, 70 million Americans listen to country radio, leading its nearest rival, adult contemporary, by almost 19 million listeners."

By the 1990s, country music had broken out of its original marketing niche. No longer was country music simply rural music made for rural listeners. A case in point is Garth Brooks, a college marketing major from suburban Oklahoma who had sold more than 62 million records by 1997, meaning not only that his sales placed him in the same elite echelon as the Beatles and Elvis Presley but also that Brooks reached the same mass audience that had embraced those famous rock & rollers. Country music has become—as the businessmen on Nashville's Music Row are fond of calling it—America's music.

One indication of how far country music has come is the very existence of an institution such as the Country Music Foundation. Formed in 1964 by the state of Tennessee as a charitable educational organization, the CMF is the governing body of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which opened in 1967. Today the Country Music Foundation and its museum constitute the largest and most active popular music research center in the world, with a full-time staff of thirty-five. In addition to the Hall of Fame, the CMF offers journalists and researchers a massive library of recordings and printed material covering the full history of country music. The heart of the library's holdings is a collection of 250,000 country recordings. Thousands of films, videotapes, books, periodicals, and microfilms round out the collection. Dozens of network television productions and such films as *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Tender Mercies* have used the research facilities at the CMF. In addition to its museum and library programs, the Country Music Foundation reissues historic recordings on its own record label, publishes books, conducts educational programs in schools, and actively investigates issues related to contemporary and historical country music performance.

Speaking for the staff of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, we believe it is high time for an encyclopedia that does justice to the music. To that end we enlisted some 150 authorities on the music to help us compile this book, which we believe is the most comprehensive, thorough, responsible, and accurate encyclopedia of country music to date. In addition to making sure that each of the encyclopedia's entries was written by an acknowledged expert on the subject, the staff of the Hall of Fame rigorously fact-checked each entry for accuracy. Going far beyond the work of previous books, the staff verified every birth name, birthplace, birth date, and death date by vital-records searches, contacts with surviving family, musicians' union records, genealogical searches on the Internet, and personal conversations with living performers and their representatives. We have chosen to limit this vital-records information to birthplace, birth date, and date of death, reasoning that place of death is generally of far less importance, for biographical purposes, than birthplace.

A few words about the parameters of the encyclopedia: This compendium focuses on North American country music, primarily commercial country music of the United States. Although we acknowledge that thriving country music scenes exist outside the United States, their performers are not treated here.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said there is no history, only biography, and this encyclopedia certainly subscribes to that dictum. The entries herein are primarily biographical ones on performers, with entries also devoted to important songwriters, businesspeople, and

radio personalities. In addition, there are entries for important radio and television programs, substyles of country music, instruments used in the music, music organizations, and record companies. Unfortunately, not every person or entity that could have been mentioned is included in this encyclopedia. We had to set some limits to make this encyclopedia usable and affordable. Therefore we have focused on those people and entities that in our judgment have had the most impact on the history of the music. In some cases we have chosen to include performers such as Emmett Miller, John Denver, and the Eagles, who are not squarely in the country music tradition. Our rationale in these cases has been to include those whose influence within and on the realm of country music has been significant, even if the performers never considered themselves a part of country music.

Informing our choices has been the Country Music Foundation Library and Media Center and its staff. For more than twenty-five years the Hall of Fame has offered a reference service out of the Library and Media Center. Annually, the Reference Department responds to some 2,500 telephone inquiries and 300 to 400 letters. In addition, the Reference Department and other staff work to answer questions and provide footage and photographs for national television news programs, music businesses across the nation, and even for country entertainers who want to research old records and career histories. All of these years of research and reference experience inform the work in this encyclopedia—from the overall choice of entries down to the checking of every last, minute fact. For these reasons, we believe this encyclopedia to be the most useful and accurate on the music to date.

How to use this encyclopedia:

1. The entries are titled and alphabetized by the most commonly used name for that person or organization (e.g., The Big Bopper rather than J. P. Richardson, ASCAP rather than American Society for Composers, Authors, and Publishers). Wherever possible, full names for individuals and business enterprises have been included within the body of the entries.
2. Cross-references to other entries are indicated within entry texts by names in small capitals.
3. Most artist entries are followed by brief listings of representative recordings. These are not intended to be comprehensive but to suggest where one might best begin to investigate the works of the artist.
4. See the appendices in the back for important tables of record sales and major awards.
5. If you simply cannot find enough information within these pages, we encourage you to visit us in Nashville at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, where we take pleasure in answering your questions personally.

—PAUL KINGSBURY

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Over the past four years, this encyclopedia has required the dedication of many people, all of whom deserve recognition for their significant contributions to this work. Our thanks go first of all to the writers who contributed to this book; they are experts in the field, and they responded enthusiastically to the challenge to compile the most authoritative encyclopedia in the country field. Thanks to the Board of Trustees and the hard-working staff of the Country Music Foundation for aiding the production of this volume in innumerable ways. For farsighted guidance and support, thanks to former CMF director Bill Ivey and acting director Kyle Young. Thanks in particular go to Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum staff past and present who worked hard to ensure the accuracy and relevance of each of the encyclopedia's entries: especially Kent Henderson, Bob Pinson, Ronnie Pugh, and John Rumble. Other staff members who made valuable contributions include Jonita Aadland, Sally Allen, Steve Betts, Lauren Bufferd, William P. Davis, Chris Dickinson, Lauren Finney, Linda Gross, Bob Kramer, Mark Medley, Becky Miley, Chris Skinker, Alan Stoker, and the staff of Hatch Show Print. For help in compiling our invaluable databases, thanks to the CMF's John Knowles. For administrative assistance, thanks to Kelley Sallee Snead. Thanks also to our energetic and dedicated team of interns over the past four years: Amanda James, Rob Porter, Shannon Becker, Charlotte Walker, and Kara Furlong. For contributions of incalculable value at every stage of the project, thanks to Daniel Cooper. My personal gratitude and appreciation go to Laura Garrard and Ashley LaRoche, each of whom managed this project on a daily basis and kept it running smoothly—Ashley from April 1995 to June 1996, and Laura from July 1996 to its completion. Laura was particularly involved in assisting with editing the final manuscript. Finally, thanks to Jonathan Wiener, Soo Mee Kwon, and Maribeth Anderson Payne at Oxford University Press for their unstinting support of this project and their considerable editorial expertise.

—PAUL KINGSBURY
EDITOR

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Abbott Records

established in Hollywood, California, fall 1951

Hollywood-based Abbott Records was an important independent label in country music in the early 1950s. It was founded by FABOR ROBISON, primarily to promote the career of country singer JOHNNY HORTON. The name Abbott came from Robison's partner, a drugstore owner who put up part of the funding. Though Horton had no major hits on Abbott, Robison soon found and recorded artists such as JIM REEVES, who had his first #1 hit, "Mexican Joe," on the label, and MITCHELL TOROK, whose record "Caribbean" was a #1 country hit in 1953. Many of Abbott's artists, as well as studio musicians, were drawn from Shreveport's KWKH and its *LOUISIANA HAYRIDE* show. By 1954 Robison had turned most of his attention to a new label, FABOR RECORDS.

—Stacey Wolfe

Jean and Julian Aberbach *(see* Hill & Range)

Nathan Abshire

b. Gueydan, Louisiana, June 27, 1913; d. May 13, 1981

Cajun accordionist Nathan Abshire learned much of his music from his parents and an uncle, all of whom played the accordion. He was also strongly influenced by pioneer Creole accordionist Amédé Ardoin, with whom he often played dances. Abshire began his performing career at age eight, when he appeared at a dance hall in Mermentau Cove. In the 1930s he recorded for BLUEBIRD RECORDS with the Rayne-Bo Ramblers, but the 1940s saw a decline in the popularity of the accordion in Cajun music, and Abshire's career suffered as a result.

In 1949 Abshire helped revive the popularity of the accordion with his hit recording of "Pine Grove Blues" on the O.T. label. He followed this with other moderately successful recordings, such as "Pine Grove Boogie," "La Valse de Holly Beach," and "Shamrock Waltz," but was unable to duplicate the success of "Pine Grove Blues." Abshire's career enjoyed another upturn when he was discovered by folk music enthusiasts during the folk music revival of the 1960s and 1970s. One of the best-loved and most influential figures in Cajun music, he remained a favorite on the folk festival circuit right up until his death in 1981.

—Charlie Seemann

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

The Best of Nathan Abshire (Swallow, 1991); *French Blues* (Arhoolie, 1993)

Academy of Country Music *(see* ACM)

Accordion

The accordion is an instrument made of an airtight box in which a bellow pushes air through *free reeds.* A free reed is a tongue made of metal or wood, attached at one end over a close-fitting opening through which the free end vibrates when air passes over it. The period from 1818 to 1848 was the time of development of a whole new group of musical instruments, the free reed instruments, today represented by the accordion, the harmonium, and the HARMONICA.

In the early nineteenth century, much experimentation was done in developing effective reed instruments. The single-row melodeon, the lap organ, and the Viennese Physharmonica were a few of the first experiments. One of the earliest popular accordions was the concertina, an instrument with an octagonally shaped body, a very complete chromatic scale of notes (divided between the two sides of the body), and double-action reeds (the tone is different according to whether the air is drawn or blown through the reeds). This instrument was perfected in 1844 by Charles Wheatstone of England. The first famed player of this instrument was the Italian Giulio Regondi, followed by the Englishman Richard Blagrove.

In the twentieth century, the accordion gained its greatest popularity in 1910 when various makers, notably Mariano Dallapé of Italy, began to make the reeds out of steel. Steel reeds have steadier pitch and a much greater volume, thus giving them the bite and power to hold the attention of an audience. The popular types of accordion in this century are the single-row diatonic, a small rectangular instrument with one row of double-action reeds; the double row, larger with two rows of double-action or diatonic reeds; the triple row with three rows of double-action reeds; the triple row with a chromatic scale (a scale containing all the accidental, or sharp and flat, notes); and lastly the piano-key accordion, a large accordion with single-action reeds (reeds that make the same tone whether played by pushing or drawing air through them) and a piano-style keyboard. The piano-key accordion was first developed in Vienna and Paris and later adopted in Italy and Germany.

The accordion has been used in several styles of country music, particularly the western songs of the singing cowboys and in Cajun music. Sally Ann Forrester even played the instrument briefly in BILL MONROE's Blue Grass Boys during the early 1940s. Probably the most famous accordionist in country music has been bandleader PEE WEE

KING. In the mid-1800s German settlers introduced the diatonic accordion to the Acadian population of southwestern Louisiana, and it soon became a key ingredient of the Cajun sound. Among its famous practitioners have been JOE FALCON, IRY LEJEUNE, LAWRENCE WALKER, NATHAN ABSHIRE, Octa Clark, and Clifton Chenier. More recently, Zachary Richard, Steve Riley, Wayne Toups, and this author's husband, MARC SAVOY, have carried on the tradition of the accordion in Cajun music. —*Ann Allen Savoy*

ACE

established in Nashville, Tennessee, November 4, 1974; ended September 25, 1981

Following the October 14, 1974, CMA Awards Show, which saw Australian pop star OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN win the Female Vocalist of the Year award, GEORGE JONES and TAMMY WYNETTE hosted a meeting of twenty-two other country artists at their home in Nashville. Artists attending included BILL ANDERSON, JIM ED BROWN, BRENDA LEE, BARBARA MANDRELL, DOLLY PARTON, CAL SMITH, HANK SNOW, MEL TILLIS, CONWAY TWITTY, PORTER WAGONER, DOTTIE WEST, and FARON YOUNG. A week later this group announced the formation of the Association of Country Entertainers (ACE), an organization restricted to country performers. Ostensibly, these Nashville-based artists organized to look after the specific interests of entertainers and to bolster the CMA's efforts in promoting country music growth worldwide. They announced that they were primarily concerned about inadequate entertainer representation in the CMA's board of directors and problems with country radio's playlists. But owing to the timing of the organization's formation, and public statements made ten days after their first meeting, many observers concluded that ACE had been formed to protest the increasing acceptance of pop singers in the country community and that ACE was opposed to change. In fact, ACE convened a screening committee to determine the country credentials of prospective ACE members.

Two years later, on November 4, 1976, ACE presented a more carefully refined set of views during a press conference that focused attention on problems arising from short radio playlists and suggested a need for additional choice in country radio formats. ACE never had adequate funding to do its job, and the office closed in 1981.

The artists most active in ACE were all connected with the GRAND OLE OPRY. They included GRANDPA JONES, ERNEST TUBB, VIC WILLIS, JEAN SHEPARD, HANK SNOW, ROY WIGGINS, Patsy Stoneman, JUSTIN TUBB, DEL WOOD, Oscar Sullivan, GEORGE MORGAN, WILMA LEE & STONEY COOPER, CONNIE SMITH, BARBARA MANDRELL, Charlie Louvin, Bill Carlisle, Jesse McReynolds, BILLY GRAMMER, and JIMMY DICKENS. —*Paul W. Soelberg*

ACM

established in Los Angeles, California, 1964

A trade organization formed by Tommy Wiggins, EDDIE MILLER, and Chris & Mickey Christensen, the Academy of Country Music's stated goal "to enhance and promote the growth of country music" was undertaken by a combined membership of performers and fans. Many key forces in West Coast country, including TEX WILLIAMS, JOHNNY BOND, and CLIFFIE STONE, served as academy presidents; EDDIE DEAN and JIMMY WAKELY were also very active in the organization, which aggressively focused on California-based country artists for its first ten years.

Initially known as the Country & Western Music Academy, the organization gave out its first awards in 1965, two years before the rival CMA adopted a similar program. Among the 1965 winners, determined by popular membership vote, were BUCK OWENS, BONNIE OWENS, MERLE HAGGARD, and ROGER MILLER. By 1974 the organization had been renamed the Academy of Country Music, and its awards show was broadcast nationally on ABC. In 1979 the ACM's BILL BOYD and Gene Weed moved the show to NBC, where it has since aired to high ratings annually.

—*Jonny Whiteside*

Roy Acuff

b. Maynardville, Tennessee, September 15, 1903; d. November 23, 1992

Named the King of Country Music by baseball great Dizzy Dean, Roy Claxton Acuff emerged as a star during the early 1940s. He helped intensify the star system at the GRAND OLE OPRY and remained its leading personality until his death. In so doing, he formed the bridge between country's rural stringband era and the modern era of star singers backed by fully amplified bands. In addition, he co-founded ACUFF-ROSE PUBLICATIONS with songwriter FRED ROSE, thus laying an important cornerstone of the Nashville music industry.

Although he helped bring country music to the city and to the world of big business, Acuff came from a rural, folk-based background. His father farmed while also serving as Maynardville's postmaster and as pastor of the town's Baptist church. As a youth, Acuff soaked in music of all sorts: folk ballads and fiddle tunes learned from neighbors and kin, hymns learned from itinerant school instructors, recordings of early country artists, and even some of the classical vocal training pursued by his sister Sue after the family moved to Fountain City, a Knoxville suburb. But Acuff's real love at the time was sports; in high school he lettered in football, basketball, and baseball.

Roy Acuff

After graduation, Acuff turned down a scholarship to nearby Carson-Newman College and worked temporarily at a variety of jobs, including that of railroad "call boy," the one responsible for rounding up other workers as the need arose. He also played semiprofessional baseball and boxed informally. Early in 1929, major-league baseball scouts recruited Acuff for training camp, but his collapse during a game—an aftereffect of an earlier sunstroke—prompted a nervous breakdown and sidelined him for most of 1930.

During his recuperation, Acuff began to practice his fiddle, and in 1932 he worked a medicine show tour of the Tennessee-Virginia mountains that fired his enthusiasm for show business. Next, he began playing square dances and other gatherings with various local musicians, including Lonnie Wilson and BEECHER "PETE" KIRBY, who would both become longtime members of his band. Radio broadcasts on Knoxville's WROL and WNOX broadened his experience. It was a WROL announcer, in fact, who named Acuff's band the Crazy Tennesseans. His radio fame caught the attention of AMERICAN RECORD CORPORATION (ARC) producer W. R. CALAWAY, who brought the band to Chicago to cut their first twenty numbers in 1936. Follow-up sessions yielded recordings released on a series of department-store labels, budget priced for Depression-era buyers.

Acuff lost no time trying to gain a spot on the Grand Ole Opry, but the Opry's GEORGE D. HAY repeatedly refused his services until promoter J. L. FRANK intervened in Acuff's behalf. A 1937 guest shot produced no results, but another, on February 5, 1938, did the trick when Acuff's performance of the classic "The Great Speckled Bird" generated sacks of fan mail. J. L. Frank suggested a new band name, the Smoky Mountain Boys, and Opry executives HARRY STONE and DAVID STONE immediately put the singer at the center of a budding star system, pushing Acuff's trademark song "Wabash Cannon Ball" equally hard. Stylistically, his clear, heartfelt vocals modernized the era's predominantly stringband sound just enough to seem innovative and traditional at the same time.

Early in the 1940s, Acuff zoomed to the top of his field with help from WSM's 50,000-watt transmitter, Opry promotion, and his status as headliner of the *Prince Albert Show*, the Opry's NBC network segment begun in October 1939. Fast-selling songbooks, hit records for the OKeh label such as "Wreck on the Highway" and "Fireball Mail," mushrooming gate receipts on the road, and appearances in a series of films all boosted his income to the $200,000 mark in 1942. In that year he proved himself a business leader by forming Acuff-Rose Publications—legally a partnership between Acuff's wife, Mildred, and Fred Rose—a company that laid the foundation for music publishing in Nashville while providing the Acuffs with their greatest source of wealth.

Acuff's star did not shine as brightly during the late 1940s. The rise of honky-tonk, exemplified by the Opry's ERNEST TUBB, and a smoother, pop-oriented brand of country music personified by EDDY ARNOLD were eclipsing Acuff's old-time sound. But his music remained highly popular, and he remained an important star in country music's growing constellation of hitmaking artists. Although he left the Opry during 1946–47 in a salary dispute, he returned to host the *Royal Crown Cola Show* segment. He also opened a recreational park near Clarksville, Tennessee; ran—unsuccessfully—for the governorship of Tennessee on the Republican ticket in 1948; and made his first international tour with an Opry troupe, which performed at U. S. military bases in Europe in 1949. His subsequent travels outside the U.S. mainland included Alaska, Korea, Japan, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean.

By the early fifties, Acuff could easily have retired from the recording studio and the road, but he remained active, recording for CAPITOL, DECCA, MGM, and after 1957, HICKORY RECORDS, a label he formed with Fred Rose and WESLEY ROSE in 1953. His records charted occasionally during the 1950s, but his annual sales generally amounted to a small, if steady, 25,000 copies. Combined with falling road show receipts during the late fifties and early sixties, his modest sales prompted him to temporarily incorporate a snare drum and electric guitar into his band, but these experiments were ultimately dropped in a return to his standby all-acoustic sound. After he suffered serious injuries in a July 1965 car wreck that also nearly killed band member SHOT JACKSON, he began to speak of retiring from the road, though he would continue to make personal appearances for some time to come.

In 1971 Acuff received a substantial boost by participating in the famous *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* album project, which featured the NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND and a number of country artists. This added to the exposure he'd gained on the college circuit during the folk music revival of the 1960s. Other testaments to his continuing popularity were the 1974 chartmaking records "Back in the Country" and "Old Time Sunshine Song," written by Acuff-Rose singer-songwriter EDDY RAVEN.

Although appearances on *Hee Haw* and TV specials also helped to keep Acuff in the public eye, his primary showcase continued to be the Grand Ole Opry. The Roy Acuff Theater at OPRYLAND, the Roy Acuff Museum (housing his collection of instruments and other memorabilia), and his long-held role as the Opry's senior statesman gave him a status that no Opry star has surpassed.

Acuff was elected the first living member of the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1962. *—John Rumble*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Columbia Historic Edition (Columbia, 1985); *The Essential Roy Acuff* (Columbia, 1992)

Acuff-Rose Publications

established in 1942

As Nashville's first country music publishing company, Acuff-Rose Publications was a key player in the city's emergence as a music center beginning in the early 1940s. The company was organized in 1942 by GRAND OLE OPRY star ROY ACUFF and Nashville songwriter FRED ROSE. Acuff put up $25,000 he had saved from songbook sales, while Rose contributed his personal songwriting catalogue as capital. As it turned out, Rose, who ran the firm, never had to touch Acuff's working capital, due to Acuff-Rose's earnings from early hits with BOB WILLS, Acuff, and BOB ATCHER. After the war, the company had continued success with such artists as CURLY FOX & TEXAS RUBY, EDDY ARNOLD, and PAUL HOWARD, all of whom scored hits with Acuff-Rose material.

Acuff-Rose's most significant connection, however, was with HANK WILLIAMS. He began publishing songs regularly through Acuff-Rose in 1946 and signed an exclusive writer's contract with the company in 1948. In addition, Rose steered Williams to a profitable recording contract

with MGM, beginning in 1947. Besides Williams's own country hits, Rose and his son WESLEY ROSE, who joined the firm in 1945 as general manager, secured numerous lucrative recordings of Williams's songs by pop acts. Other memorable Acuff-Rose copyrights of the late 1940s and early 1950s included "Tennessee Waltz," a country hit for PEE WEE KING and a pop smash for Patti Page, and "Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy," a dual-market chart-topper for RED FOLEY.

During these same years, Acuff-Rose pioneered in advocating songwriters' interests. In 1948 the Roses worked out the "Nashville Plan" with BMI to secure performance royalties for songwriters. Acuff-Rose would pay writers a portion of its BMI earnings, and BMI would reimburse the company. In 1953 Acuff and the Roses established HICKORY RECORDS as an outlet for rising songwriters and recording artists. (In 1959 the Acuff-Rose Artists Corporation joined the complex.)

Wesley Rose successfully ran the firm after his father died in 1954. From the late 1950s into the early 1970s, Acuff-Rose remained a power in the country and pop fields, helping to develop singers and songwriters such as the EVERLY BROTHERS, MARTY ROBBINS, DON GIBSON, JOHN D. LOUDERMILK, ROY ORBISON, MICKEY NEWBURY, EDDY RAVEN, and DALLAS FRAZIER. (Earlier, Acuff-Rose had been responsible for bringing ace songwriters BOUDLEAUX AND FELICE BRYANT to Nashville.) Beginning in 1957, Acuff-Rose set up offices abroad. The company's development of new writers and artists waned after the early 1970s, but the firm's impressive catalogue continued to generate hits, making it an attractive purchase by Gaylord Broadcasting in 1985, when Acuff-Rose became part of Gaylord's Opryland Music Group. *—John Rumble*

Kay Adams

b. Knox City, Texas, April 9, 1941

During the mid-1960s, Princetta Kay Adams recorded a series of concept albums in the hard-country style popularized by BAKERSFIELD legends BUCK OWENS and MERLE HAGGARD. *Wheels and Tears* (1966) is perhaps the best of Adams's records. A collection of truck driving songs sung from a woman's point of view, it included the minor (but enduring) hit single "Little Pink Mack."

Raised in Vernon, Texas, Adams moved to Bakersfield in 1964. There she met producer CLIFFIE STONE, who signed her to the Tower label, a subsidiary of CAPITOL RECORDS. Adams's first single for Tower, "Honky-Tonk Heartache" (1964), earned her the 1965 ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC award for Most Promising Female Vocalist (Merle Haggard won Most Promising Male Vocalist honors the same year). Adams starred in a country music opera (*The Legend of Johnny Brown*, 1966) and appeared in the road shows of Owens and Haggard. She subsequently recorded for Capitol, Granite, Ovation, and Frontline. In 1996, after years of relative professional inactivity, Adams teamed up with Nashville neo-honky-tonkers BR5-49 to record "Mama Was a Rock (Daddy Was a Rolling Stone)" for *Rig Rock Deluxe*, a collection of truck driving songs compiled by Jeremy Tepper of DIESEL ONLY RECORDS and Jake Guralnick for the Upstart label. *—Bill Friskics-Warren*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Wheels and Tears (Tower, 1966); *A Devil Like Me Needs an Angel Like You* with Dick Curless (Tower, 1966)

Trace Adkins

b. Springhill, Louisiana, January 13, 1962

Trace Adkins, a six-foot-six Louisiana honky-tonk baritone singer, earned his first #1 single and platinum album in 1997, the same year he was named Top New Male Artist by the ACM.

Adkins began singing in the gospel quartet New Commitment while attending a Sarepta, Louisiana, high school. The quartet recorded two albums for an independent label: *The New Commitment Quartet* (1979) and *The Best of the New Commitment Quartet* (1980). After graduating from high school, Adkins played defensive end for Louisiana Tech University's football team and studied petroleum technology. A knee injury ended his sports career after two years, so he spent the next eight years working in the oil industry as a derrick man and pipe fitter. He joined a band called Bayou that won a regional talent contest and competed in the national finals in Nashville. The band played clubs in Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Mississippi for four years.

Adkins became unhappy with his musical career and returned to the drilling rigs. But he did have the foresight to have an injured pinky finger set in a permanent bend so he could continue to play guitar. He moved to Nashville in August 1992 and decided to make music a full-time career. He was introduced to CAPITOL Nashville president SCOTT HENDRICKS, who signed Adkins to the label after seeing him perform at a Mount Juliet bar, Tillie's.

Adkins's debut album, *Dreamin' Out Loud*, was produced by Hendricks and released in June 1996. Adkins penned his own debut single, "There's a Girl in Texas," which was a Top Twenty hit, and followed that with the Top Five hit "Every Light in the House." He earned his first #1 in 1997 with "(This Ain't No) Thinkin' Thing." Adkins released his second album, *Big Time*, in September 1997, and it was certified gold in early 1998. The album contains the ballad "The Rest of Mine," which Adkins cowrote and sang at his May 1997 wedding to Rhonda Forlaw. The song reached #2 in December 1997.

—Beverly Keel

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Dreamin' Out Loud (Capitol, 1996); *Big Time* (Capitol, 1997)

AFM

established in New York, New York, November 6, 1896

The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) was originally chartered in New York with Owen Miller as president. He resolved to improve musicians' wages, employment hours, and benefits. Today there are some 125,000 members nationwide.

For more than half a century, only three presidents had headed the union: Joseph Weber, who served thirty-nine years; Frank Carothers (1914–15), and James C. Petrillo (1940–58). Petrillo called a strike against record labels, effective August 1, 1942, halting recordings. In September 1943 Decca became the first label to come to agreement with the union, establishing a performance trust fund to aid out-of-work musicians. A second strike, on January 1, 1948, was settled to the satisfaction of the AFM on December 14, 1948. Steve Young was voted national AFM president in June 1995.

Nashville Local 257 was chartered December 11, 1902, with Joe Miles as president. GEORGE W. COOPER JR. held the branch presidency the longest, serving successively from 1937 to 1973. HAROLD BRADLEY, elected in December 1990, is now president. With its growth as a major recording center, Nashville has become the sixth-largest union branch in North America, with nearly 4,000 members.

AFM Los Angeles was chartered March 15, 1897; and AFM Chicago was chartered September 17, 1901.

—Walt Trott

AFRS

established fall 1943

The Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) was a special program of the U.S. military created to boost the morale of U.S. servicemen overseas. The AFRS accomplished this by creating and distributing to troops 16-inch radio transcription discs providing timely information, education, and, importantly, entertainment. These transcriptions offered AFRS-produced fare, network radio broadcasts, and, starting in 1945, commercial recordings of current pop, jazz, Latin, classical, and country music. Among the important country music programs in the AFRS library are the AFRS-created *Melody Roundup* series of more than 2,000 fifteen-minute shows (originally distributed at the rate of four per week) and Nashville's long-running GRAND OLE OPRY, which was used for more than twenty-five years. Although AFRS was officially established in the fall of 1943 as a branch of the Special Services Division, in reality the SSD had already been providing the unique service one commonly associates with AFRS since summer 1942.

AFRS discs were heard on naval vessels (including submarines), in the field via mobile fifty-watt suitcase units, at military hospitals abroad, and in the United States through closed-circuit broadcasts, short wave and AFRS-developed station transmissions, and even on foreign station broadcasts via airtime provided gratis or on a lease basis. By 1945 more than 800 AFRS outlets were sharing a weekly mailing of 200 sets of discs from AFRS's primary production center, Los Angeles.

AFRS's entertainment programming emphasized music, but not to the exclusion of comedy, drama, and sports. And this philosophy has continued right up into the television era as the AFRS has become the AFRTS (Armed Forces Radio and *Television* Service). Since 1953, TV programs have been distributed to troops via film, videotape, and satellite. Meanwhile, AFRTS radio programming, which was originally distributed on 16-inch discs, was issued on 12-inch microgroove LPs beginning in the early 1960s, and then on cassettes as of 1994. By the late 1990s, satellite radio programming feeds to AFRTS made the need for discs and cassettes almost inessential.

—Bob Pinson

AFTRA

established in New York, New York, August 1, 1937

The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) is a national union representing television and radio artists, including announcers, actors, dancers, singers, and broadcasters. Chartered in 1937 with actor Eddie Cantor as president, today it is an 82,000-member organization, headquartered in New York City. The Los Angeles chapter, also chartered in 1937, boasts some 30,000 members. Susan Boyd is president of AFTRA-L.A., dealing largely with TV, radio, and phonograph recordings. The Nashville chapter, founded in 1961, is 1,500 members strong and acts as local representative for the Screen Actors Guild in regard to locally produced motion pictures, commercials, and TV shows. Randall Himes has been executive director since 1986.

Country has a strong voice in the chapter. Past presidents Jim Ferguson and Louis Nunley still perform regularly. Nunley and ANITA KERR (both of the Anita Kerr Singers) are among the local founding members. Ferguson and Nunley are past national vice presidents. "We are the only phonograph-driven local in the United States," Himes said in 1995. "We process more session reports than any other AFTRA local. We have jurisdiction for audio- and videotapes . . . our blanket [license] fee is a contribution to the Performers Benefit Fund, which we instituted as part of our negotiations with the OPRY."

—Walt Trott

Rhett Akins

b. Valdosta, Georgia, October 13, 1969

A fairly new hitmaking artist, Thomas Rhett Akins can be considered both a prolific writer and a hitmaking singer. He grew up in Valdosta, Georgia, and played the guitar as a boy, forming a band with his brothers before he was eleven years old. In 1992 he came to Nashville and was eventually signed by DECCA.

On his January 1995 debut album, *A Thousand Memories*, Akins co-wrote nine of its ten songs, including the #1 single "That Ain't My Truck" and the ballad "She Said Yes." Two other songs on the album hit the Top Forty: "What They're Talking About" and "I Brake for Brunettes."

This first effort firmly established Akins as a member of the New Country club, or a youthful singer walking the line between country-rock and a cleaned-up version of honky-tonk. Most of Akins's material focused on lighthearted themes that appealed to his representative age group, as found in the song "That Ain't My Truck."

Akins received an additional career boost with his first tour in 1995, opening for REBA MCENTIRE. His second DECCA album, *Somebody New*, released in June 1996, also produced a #1 single, "Don't Get Me Started," co-written by Akins. This album reflected the work of a maturing artist and emphasized slower-tempoed songs dealing with the topic of personal relationships. Propelled by his early chart success, Akins was named one of *Country America* magazine's Top New Stars of 1995. Akins was also a finalist in the New Country Artist category at the 1995 American Music Awards.

—Bob Paxman

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

A Thousand Memories (Decca, 1995); *Somebody New* (Decca, 1996); *What Livin's All About* (Decca, 1998)

Alabama

Jeffrey Alan Cook b. Fort Payne, Alabama, August 27, 1949
Teddy Wayne Gentry b. Fort Payne, Alabama, January 22, 1952
Mark Joel Herndon b. Springfield, Massachusetts, May 11, 1955
Randy Yeull Owen b. Fort Payne, Alabama, December 13, 1949

When the ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC and *Cashbox* magazine both named Alabama Artist of the Decade in 1989, it

Alabama: (from left) Jeff Cook, Randy Owen, Teddy Gentry, and Mark Herndon

reflected how thoroughly the quartet had dominated commercial country music in the eighties. As of 1995, Alabama has sold more than 57 million albums worldwide, has scored forty-one #1 hits, and has won 160 music awards, including the COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION's Entertainer of the Year award for three consecutive years, 1982–84.

Unlike vocal groups such as the OAK RIDGE BOYS and the STATLER BROTHERS, Alabama was a self-contained band—they handled all the instruments as well as all the vocals, an unprecedented phenomenon at the upper reaches of the country charts. Although session musicians contributed to Alabama's recordings, guitarist Randy Owen, bassist Teddy Gentry, drummer Mark Herndon, and guitarist Jeff Cook acquitted themselves as competent if not virtuosic players on the band's busy tour schedule. By successfully applying the rock & roll model of the self-contained band to country music, Alabama paved the way for such acts as RESTLESS HEART, SHENANDOAH, and the MAVERICKS.

Owen and Gentry are first cousins who grew up within walking distance of each other on farms outside Fort Payne, Alabama. Distant cousin Jeff Cook lived in town, and as teenagers the three relatives formed a band called Wildcountry. In 1973 they quit their day jobs and played their blend of Allman Brothers–style southern rock and country-pop throughout the South, most notably at the Bowery in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. In 1977 Wildcountry changed its name to Alabama and in 1979 hired rock & roller Herndon as its permanent drummer. Alabama recorded for the small labels GRT and MDJ in the late seventies and even scored Top Forty country hits for MDJ with "I Wanna Come Over" in 1979 and "My Home's in Alabama" in 1980. That won the group an invitation to the "New Faces" show at Nashville's annual Country Radio Seminar, and their popular performance there quickly won them a contract with RCA, which they signed on April 11, 1980.

Alabama's first single for RCA, "Tennessee River," began a streak of twenty-one consecutive #1 singles between 1980 and 1987. Among the more memorable singles in that run were "Feels So Right" (1981, pop Top Twenty), "Love in the First Degree" (1981, pop Top Twenty), and "The Closer You Get" (1983, pop Top Thirty, Grammy winner). In addition, the albums *Feels So Right* (1981), *Mountain Music* (1982), *The Closer You Get . . .* (1983), *Roll On* (1984), *40 Hour Week* (1985), and *Greatest Hits* (1986) all went platinum and broke into the Top Thirty pop album charts.

Since 1982 Alabama has sponsored the June Jam, a full-day music festival in a forty-acre field behind Fort Payne High School. With Alabama as the annual headliner, the June Jam has drawn as many as 60,000 fans at a time and has raised more than $3 million for local charities.

Despite Alabama's immense commercial success, the band has never fared well with the critics, who have complained about its vacuous songwriting and watered-down, middle-of-the-road arrangements. Typical was the *Baltimore Sun* argument that Alabama "renders country music all but indistinguishable from pop" and thus "trivializes some of country's most hallowed traditions."

Alabama revisited its Myrtle Beach days and its roots in the r&b-flavored beach music of the Carolinas by cutting the 1997 album *Dancin' on the Boulevard.* —*Geoffrey Himes*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Feels So Right (RCA, 1981); *Mountain Music* (RCA, 1982); *The Closer You Get . . .* (RCA, 1983); *40 Hour Week* (RCA, 1985); *American Pride* (RCA, 1992); *Dancin' on the Boulevard* (RCA, 1997)

Pat Alger

b. LaGrange, Georgia, September 23, 1947

In the early 1990s, Patrick J. Alger emerged as one of Nashville's most successful and perceptive songwriters. Merging a literate folkie's touch for insightful social com-

mentary with MUSIC ROW's knack for catchy songcraft, he has written four #1 hits for superstar GARTH BROOKS. Alger was born in LaGrange, Georgia, and he set his career in motion in 1973 when he moved to Woodstock, New York, where he joined the Woodstock Mountain Revue, a loose-knit group that included John Sebastian, Paul Butterfield, Eric Andersen, JIM ROONEY, Bill Keith, and Happy & Artie Traum. He also recorded a duet album with Artie Traum: *From the Heart* (Rounder, 1980).

Alger's initial success as a songwriter came in 1980, when Livingston Taylor recorded his "First Time Love," which became a Top Ten adult-contemporary hit. The following year, Alger moved to Nashville; his early cuts included contributions to NANCI GRIFFITH ("Once in a Very Blue Moon" and "Lone Star State of Mind"), DON WILLIAMS ("True Love"), TRISHA YEARWOOD ("Like We Never Had a Broken Heart"), and HAL KETCHUM ("Small Town Saturday Night"). KATHY MATTEA scored hits with Alger's "Goin' Gone," "She Came from Fort Worth," and "A Few Good Things Remain."

Upon moving to Nashville, Alger also met up with Woodstock cohort Jim Rooney, a partner in the publishing company Forerunner Music, Inc., along with Garth Brooks's producer ALLEN REYNOLDS. This connection brought Alger together with Brooks, for whom he co-wrote the #1 hits "Unanswered Prayers," "The Thunder Rolls," "What She's Doing Now," and "That Summer." He was named ASCAP Songwriter of the Year in 1992, and from 1995 to 1997 he served as president of the NSAI board. Alger also has released two solo albums, *True Love and Other Stories* on SUGAR HILL and *Seeds* on LIBERTY.

—Michael McCall

Deborah Allen

b. Memphis, Tennessee, September 30, 1953

Deborah Allen (born Deborah Lynn Thurmond) had a successful career as a Nashville songwriter before achieving popularity as a performer. In 1978 she began collaborating with Rafe Van Hoy, producing hits for JOHN CONLEE, LEE GREENWOOD, JANIE FRICKE, and TANYA TUCKER. She and Van Hoy married in 1982.

A former Memphis beauty queen, Allen migrated to Music City at age nineteen. After stints at OPRYLAND and as a backup singer for ROY ORBISON, she began recording duets with the deceased JIM REEVES in 1979. Allen added the ethereal harmonies to Reeves's tracks, and three of these tunes, including "Don't Let Me Cross Over," became Top Ten country hits.

Allen's country-pop style, marked by a wall of sound and soulful singing, was showcased in her 1983 RCA hit "Baby I Lied." Three more chart successes followed in 1984.

Allen cultivated a disarmingly open sexual image, posing in unclothed innocence and holding an apple on the jacket of her 1980 CAPITOL debut album *Trouble in Paradise.* This trend continued with the Allen-in-bed cover photo of her 1984 RCA album *Let Me Be the First.* In 1987 Allen's RCA album *Telepathy* featured a Madonna-like image and a title tune by the artist then known as Prince.

In 1992 Allen re-emerged in the country field on the GIANT label, using her blended Memphis-Nashville style to good effect. *—Mary A. Bufwack*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Cheat the Night (RCA, 1983); *Delta Dreamland* (Giant, 1993)

Jules Verne Allen

b. Waxahachie, Texas, April 1, 1883; d. 1945

Jules Verne Allen was one of the few early SINGING COWBOYS who had actually been a working cowboy. His classic performances of songs such as "'Long Side the Santa Fe Trail," "The Dying Cowboy," and "The Days of '49" are considered to be some of the finest examples of authentic traditional cowboy songs ever captured on record.

Allen began ranch work at age ten in his native Ellis County, Texas. He worked at a number of jobs, including horse wrangler, and eventually became an experienced all-around "hand." He participated in a number of trail drives from the Mexican border to the railroad shipping centers in Montana. During this time he began to play guitar and learn cowboy songs, which he would perform for his fellow ranch hands. After a stint in the military during World War I, he returned to ranch work, but decided to try singing professionally instead. During the 1920s he began performing over radio stations WFAA in Dallas, KFI and KNX in Los Angeles, and WOAI and KTSA in San Antonio, calling himself "the Original Singing Cowboy," "Longhorn Luke," and "Shiftless." His San Antonio sponsor, the Longhorn Portland Cement Company, published a little songbook titled *Cowboy Songs Sung by Longhorn Luke and His Cowboys.*

Allen began his brief recording career in 1928, cutting three songs, "Little Joe the Wrangler," "Jack O' Diamonds," and "Po' Mourner," for Victor. His six Victor sessions of 1928–29 resulted in a total of twenty-four recorded performances. In 1933 the Naylor Company published *Cowboy Lore,* a book Allen had put together of thirty-six cowboy songs along with tidbits of information about ranch life. Though his recording contract was not renewed, Allen continued to perform on the radio and appear at rodeos for a number of years. *—Charlie Seemann*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Jules Allen, The Texas Cowboy (Folk Variety, 1973)

Red Allen

b. Pigeon Roost, Kentucky, February 12, 1930; d. April 3, 1993

A singer-guitarist with a high, mountain-flavored voice, Harley "Red" Allen was an influential figure in BLUEGRASS from the 1950s onward. His early career, centered in the Dayton, Ohio, area, included small-label recordings, and radio and club appearances with mandolinist Frank Wakefield and banjo player Noah Crase. Allen teamed with the OSBORNE BROTHERS in 1956, performing on the WWVA JAMBOREE. Before their partnership ended in 1958, they recorded sixteen sides for MGM RECORDS, among which "Once More" is considered a landmark in the development of sophisticated three-part vocal harmony.

In the 1960s Allen moved to Washington, D.C., often working and recording with Wakefield, including a 1963 performance at CARNEGIE HALL. His hard-driving style attracted young urban bluegrass enthusiasts DAVID GRISMAN, BILL KEITH, and Peter (Roberts) Kuykendall, who were members of Allen's Kentuckians before launching their own careers. In the 1960s Allen worked with EARL SCRUGGS during LESTER FLATT's recuperation from surgery; in 1969 Allen performed and recorded in Lexington, Kentucky,

with banjo player J. D. CROWE and mandolinist DOYLE LAWSON.

Before failing health forced his semiretirement in the 1980s, Allen recorded with his sons, Neil (d. 1974), Ronnie, Greg, and Harley (now a Nashville singer-songwriter), and with later versions of the Kentuckians.

—Frank and Marty Godbey

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

The Osborne Brothers, 1956–1968 (Bear Family, 1995); *Bluegrass* (Folkways, 1963) with Frank Wakefield

Rex Allen

b. Willcox, Arizona, December 31, 1920; d. December 17, 1999

The last, and arguably the best vocalist (although EDDIE DEAN and KEN CURTIS could justifiably contend) of the SINGING COWBOYS, Rex Elvie Allen possessed a voice of astonishing range and strength. Allen first found work as an entertainer during World War II, before being called to fill the singing cowboy slot (following in the illustrious footsteps of GENE AUTRY, EDDIE DEAN, and BOB ATCHER) at the *NATIONAL BARN DANCE* in 1945.

A trip to Hollywood followed, and the first of Allen's nineteen films for Republic, *The Arizona Cowboy*, was released in 1950; his last, *The Phantom Stallion* (1954), is considered the final singing cowboy film, marking the end of an era in American music and film. He later starred in a television series called *Frontier Doctor*, and his resonant, authoritative speaking voice became one of the most familiar in America thanks to a long association with Walt Disney as a narrator of more than fifty films and television shows, as well as hundreds of commercials. In his last years, living in semiretirement in his native Arizona, and as a founder of the Western Music Association, he served as an elder statesman of western music.

Allen's recording career began with MERCURY in Chicago in 1945, and although his voice was best suited to western ballads, he occasionally appeared on the country charts, notably with "Crying in the Chapel" (1953) and "Don't Go Near the Indians" (1962).

Each of Rex Allen's three sons entered the entertainment business, and his eldest, Rex Jr. (born August 23, 1947), made a significant mark on the country charts in the 1970s and 1980s. Rex Jr. is still actively recording and touring and has six Top Ten hits on WARNER BROS. RECORDS. In 1995 Rex Sr. and Rex Jr. teamed up for the Warner Western album *The Singing Cowboys.*

—Douglas B. Green

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Rex Allen: The Hawaiian Cowboy (Bear Family, 1986); *Under Western Skies* (Decca, 1956, reissued on Stetson, 1987); *Rex Allen Jr. & Rex Allen Sr.: The Singing Cowboys* (Warner Western, 1995)

Rosalie Allen

b. Old Forge, Pennsylvania, June 27, 1924; d. September 23, 2003

Known as the Queen of the Yodelers, Rosalie Allen was born Julie Marlene Bedra, one of eleven children of Polish parents living in the coal fields of Pennsylvania.

Her story is a classic tale of the Depression. At the age of nine she worked and boarded in a restaurant and sent her earnings home. Fascinated with singing and listening to the radio, she defied her parents and hit the road with a hillbilly band at age thirteen, after winning a contest.

At nineteen Allen was becoming known for her elaborate yodeling. Her arrival in New York City in 1943 with DENVER DARLING's Swing Billies cowboy troupe marked the start of her solo career. With many male entertainers drafted, she became one of the female radio pioneers, finding popularity as the first female country disc jockey with her *Prairie Stars* show on New York's WOV (1944–56). She made the transition to TV with a country program (1949–53) and was the owner of New York City's first country record shop. She also wrote columns for fan magazines.

Allen made soundies (short films of performances) in the mid-1940s, and she also appeared in a 1949 feature film *Village Barn.* She recorded with RCA VICTOR in the late 1940s; titles included "Guitar Polka," "Yodel Boogie," and her biggest hit, "He Taught Me to Yodel." Her yodeling was at its decorative best in duets with ELTON BRITT.

—Mary A. Bufwack

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Queen of the Yodelers (Cattle, 1983); *The Cowboy's Sweetheart* (Cowgirlboy, 1990)

Allen Brothers (Austin and Lee)

Austin Ambrose Allen b. Sewanee, Tennessee, February 7, 1901; d. January 5, 1959

Lee William Allen b. Sewanee, Tennessee, June 1, 1906; d. February 24, 1981

One of the first successful BROTHER DUETS in country recordings, the Allen Brothers combined the blues, vaudeville, and folk music of the Chattanooga area into a distinctive style that made them one of the most influential old-time acts. Unlike later brother acts such as the BLUE SKY BOYS or the MONROE BROTHERS, who featured sentimental and gospel songs, the Allens preferred rowdy, double-entendre material such as their biggest hit, "Salty Dog Blues." In fact, the Allens were so adept at performing white blues that in 1927, Columbia mistakenly released their "Laughin' and Cryin' Blues" in the "race" series instead of the "old-time" series. (Not seeing the humor in it, the Allens sued and promptly moved to the Victor label.)

The Allens toured widely, and between 1926 and 1934 they recorded for COLUMBIA, Victor, and ARC, a total of some eighty-nine sides that included hits such as "Roll Down the Line" (1930) and "Jake Walk Blues" (about the Jamaica Ginger poisoning scare, 1930). After 1934, on the heels of an unsuccessful stint in legitimate theater, both brothers left the business. Reissues of their work in the 1970s spurred new interest in their music, and Lee Allen made a brief comeback before his death in 1981. Austin died in 1959.

—Charles Wolfe

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Chattanooga Boys (Old Timey, circa 1975); *Whiter Shade of Blues* (Sony Legacy, 1993)

Shelly Lee Alley

b. Colorado County, Texas, July 6, 1894; d. June 1, 1964

Remembered chiefly today as the writer of JIMMIE RODGERS's 1931 classic "Traveling Blues," and for his 1930s

western swing recordings, fiddler Shelly Lee Alley was a pop bandleader who switched to country at midcareer.

After leading a military orchestra in San Antonio during World War I, Alley spent the 1920s fronting early radio and dance orchestras in the Dallas–Fort Worth area. After he made Rodgers's acquaintance and the latter recorded "Traveling Blues" (with Alley and brother Alvin providing twin fiddles) and "Gambling Barroom Blues," Alley began to concentrate on string music. He led the original SWIFT JEWEL COWBOYS in Houston in 1933 and then took his own Cowboys to XEPN at Eagle Pass. The emergence of western swing in the mid-thirties provided Alley with an opportunity to combine his pop/jazz sensibilities with stringband instrumentation.

Alley recorded an odd mix of ballads ("My Precious Darling") and off-color blues ("She Just Wiggled Around") for Vocalion, OKEH, and BLUEBIRD, using musicians such as CLIFF BRUNER and TED DAFFAN, but never attained the level of success he felt his talent merited. He gave up performing after 1946, but wrote songs until his death, including MOON MULLICAN's "Broken Dreams" (1947) and BIFF COLLIE's and Little Marge's "Why Are You Blue?"(1950), and as late as 1955 had a single release on the Jet label. "Traveling Blues" was revived by LEFTY FRIZZELL (1951) and later MERLE HAGGARD. Alley's stepson is multi-instrumentalist western swing legend Clyde Brewer, who now leads the Houston-based Original River Road Boys. —*Kevin Coffey*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Wanderers Swing (Krazy Kat, 1994), British reissue containing a 1946 recording by Alley; *Nite Spot Blues* (Krazy Kat, 1998) (British various-artists reissue containing two 1937 recordings by Alley)

Joe Allison

b. McKinney, Texas, October 3, 1924; d. August 2, 2002

As radio personality, publishing and recording executive, and songwriter, Joe Marion Allison made numerous contributions to country music from the late 1930s to the mid-1970s. After attending an Oklahoma junior college, he broke into radio as a country and pop announcer and manager for several Texas stations during the late 1940s, broadening his musical education during several tours with TEX RITTER. In 1949 he moved to Nashville to become an influential disc jockey on WMAK.

Through the early 1950s Allison divided his time between Nashville and Pasadena, California, where for a time he succeeded TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD on KXLA. In Nashville Allison worked TV and radio on WSM and WSIX. In 1953 he helped to found the Country Music Disc Jockeys Association (CMDJA), forerunner of CMA. Late in the decade he moved to Hollywood to co-produce *Country America*, a first-class country-pop TV show aired over the ABC network.

Early in the sixties, Allison held down two jobs: professional manager for the Hollywood-based publishing company CENTRAL SONGS, and country recording chief for LIBERTY RECORDS, where he produced early recordings by HANK COCHRAN and WILLIE NELSON, among others, and helped to revive BOB WILLS's career as well. During these same years, Allison not only began a long-running international radio show over the Armed Forces Radio Network but also wrote and produced a series of sales presentations for CMA, which helped convince conventions of advertisers and broadcasters to program country music and thus played a vital role in country radio's expansion. For this he received CMA's Founding President's Award in 1964.

By 1967 Allison had become an independent producer and began to turn out hits such as "The Tips of My Fingers" and "Yesterday When I Was Young" with ROY CLARK and "Smoky the Bar" with HANK THOMPSON. From 1970 to 1972, Allison headed the country department for Paramount in Nashville, and signed both Tommy Overstreet and JOE STAMPLEY. From 1972 to 1974 Allison worked in a parallel capacity with CAPITOL, developing RED STEAGALL and producing *Tex Ritter: An American Legend*, the star's final LP.

Allison was also instrumental in launching both CMA and the Country Music Foundation (CMF). Allison was a 1978 inductee into the NSAI Songwriter's Hall of Fame for numbers such as the FARON YOUNG hit "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young" and the JIM REEVES classic "He'll Have to Go." By the early 1980s Allison retired from music and worked as an antiques dealer. —*John Rumble*

Amazing Rhythm Aces

Though they were one of the most innovative bands of the 1970s and early 1980s, the commercial span of the Memphis-based Amazing Rhythm Aces was relatively brief. They are best remembered for a handful of hits for ABC Records, including "Third Rate Romance" (which made both the pop and country Top Twenty in 1975), "Amazing Grace (Used to Be Her Favorite Song)" (1975), and "The End Is Not in Sight (The Cowboy Tune)" (1976). The group's distinction came from its blend of country, rock, and r&b.

Founding members included Russell Smith (b. Nashville, Tennessee, June 17, 1949) on guitar and lead vocals; Barry "Byrd" Burton on guitar and dobro; Billy Earhart III on keyboards; Jeff Davis on bass; and Butch McDade on drums. In 1976 the act won a Grammy for Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal. Guitarist Duncan Cameron joined the band in 1977 and later became a member of SAWYER BROWN.

In 1979 the Amazing Rhythm Aces moved briefly to COLUMBIA RECORDS and the following year to WARNER BROS. RECORDS, but they had no more hits and had disbanded by 1981. Since then, Russell Smith has flourished as a Nashville songwriter and has made occasional solo outings (for CAPITOL in 1984, and for Columbia in 1989). In the 1990s he recorded and performed in the humorous country band Run C&W along with ex-EAGLE Bernie Leadon, Vince Melamed, and Jim Photoglo. In 1996 Smith, Earhart, Davis, McDade, and newcomer Danny Parks re-formed the Aces and began to record and tour. Their recent albums, released through Smith's Breaker Productions, are *Ride Again, Volume 1* (1996) and *Out of the Blue* (1997).

—*Bob Allen*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Too Stuffed to Jump (ABC, 1976); *The Amazing Rhythm Aces* (ABC, 1979)

American Federation of Musicians (*see* AFM)

American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (*see* AFTRA)

American Record Corporation

New York–based American Record Corporation (ARC) had a life span of ten years (1929–38). Founded in July 1929 (primarily through a merger of the Regal and Cameo label complexes), ARC, in turn, was bought by Consolidated Film Industries (CFI) in October 1930. As an autonomous subsidiary, ARC acquired the Brunswick Record Corporation (BRC) division from Warner Brothers Pictures' Brunswick *Radio* Corporation entity (December 1931) and purchased the Columbia Phonograph Company from Grigsby-Grunow (1934).

Via BRC came rights to the Vocalion and Melotone labels, in addition to the Brunswick name itself. While Vocalion and BRUNSWICK label product was marketed under BRC's banner, ARC disregarded such rights to the COLUMBIA and OKEH names, conveyed through Columbia Phonograph, and chose instead to market recordings on Melotone, Perfect, Banner (sold by W. T. Grant stores), Oriole (McCrory's), and Romeo (S. H. Kress). Each ARC release featured identical song couplings on the relevant labels. Sears Roebuck also leased ARC/BRC-derived product for its CONQUEROR label from the early to late 1930s, but Conqueror's couplings often differed from those on the ARC/BRC labels.

During its heyday, ARC/BRC was a major marketer of recorded pop, blues, and country performances, competing successfully with RCA, DECCA, and others. ART SATHERLEY and his protégé, DON LAW, headed up A&R responsibilities for country and blues product, establishing an artist slate of such stalwarts as ROY ACUFF, GENE AUTRY, Big Bill Broonzy, Bill & Cliff CARLISLE, CHUCK WAGON GANG, AL DEXTER, RED FOLEY, Blind Boy Fuller, Robert Johnson, the LIGHT CRUST DOUGHBOYS, PATSY MONTANA, the PRAIRIE RAMBLERS, and BOB WILLS, to name several.

In December 1938, CFI sold its ARC/BRC subsidiary to Columbia Broadcasting System, thus allowing CBS to acquire rights to the COLUMBIA record label name, as well as OKeh. CBS then retired the ARC labels. Due to a licensing violation, Brunswick/Vocalion reverted to WARNER BROS., in 1940, which subsequently sold those label names and catalogues to Decca the following year. —*Bob Pinson*

American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (*see* ASCAP)

Americana Record Chart

established January 20, 1995

Instituted by *Gavin,* a weekly San Francisco–based music trade publication, the Americana chart gives radio exposure to country and roots-oriented performers whose music is perceived by programmers as not suited to either mainstream country stations or the Adult Album Alternative (AAA) format.

The brainchild of former *Gavin* editor Rob Bleetstein, the Americana chart first appeared on January 20, 1995, with forty-seven radio stations reporting from across the United States. The number of Americana stations—those that play at least twelve hours of alternative country music each week—has since grown to seventy-nine, two thirds of these being commercial stations, the remaining one third broadcasting as public radio affiliates. By contrast, approximately 2,600 U.S. stations play mainstream country music.

Geared more toward artists and artist development than narrowly defined, hit-seeking playlists, the music heard on Americana stations is considerably diverse. During one particular week, for example, pioneering cowpunks JASON & THE SCORCHERS appeared on the Americana chart alongside country legend JOHNNY CASH, Texas songster ROBERT EARL KEEN, and bluegrass sensation ALISON KRAUSS. But other than Krauss and Cash (whose music used to be a staple of mainstream country radio), few Americana artists have had much of a commercial impact. In contrast to mainstream country superstars such as GARTH BROOKS and ALAN JACKSON, whose albums sell in the millions, Americana artists typically register sales of 5,000 to 100,000 units.

Although *Gavin*'s Americana chart has thus far made only a modest impression on the record industry, it nonetheless has named and given expression to a grassroots movement within country music—one that is attracting a growing number of listeners. —*Bill Friskics-Warren*

Bill Anderson

b. Columbia, South Carolina, November 1, 1937

Equally successful as singer and composer, James William Anderson III has thirty-seven Top Ten *Billboard* singles as artist and has earned more than fifty BMI songwriter awards. His breathy, conversational tenor earned him the nickname "Whisperin' Bill," a sobriquet bestowed by comedian Don Bowman.

While earning a degree in journalism, Anderson worked his way through the University of Georgia as DJ (WJJC Commerce), sportswriter *(DeKalb New Era),* and performer. In 1957 Anderson recorded "City Lights" for TNT Records in San Antonio, Texas. This honky-tonk-themed song found its way to COLUMBIA'S RAY PRICE, whose May 29, 1958, recording became a #1 country hit on the *Billboard* charts.

Signed within weeks to DECCA, Anderson recorded his first session for the label in August 1958 and joined the

Bill Anderson

GRAND OLE OPRY in 1961. He wrote many of his #1 hits, including "Mama Sang a Song," "Still" (a pop Top Ten), "I Get the Fever," and "My Life." He helped discover CONNIE SMITH and wrote her #1 breakthrough, "Once a Day" (1964), plus five Top Ten follow-ups. Others scoring substantial hits with Anderson tunes include JIM REEVES, ROGER MILLER, HANK LOCKLIN, KITTY WELLS, PORTER WAGONER, and CAL SMITH. His songs breathed new life into the careers of LEFTY FRIZZELL ("Saginaw, Michigan"), CHARLIE LOUVIN ("I Don't Love You Anymore"), and JEAN SHEPARD ("Slippin' Away"). His "Tip of My Fingers" made the Top Ten for himself (1960), ROY CLARK (1963), EDDY ARNOLD (1966), and STEVE WARINER (1992). Revivals of Anderson songs worked for MICKEY GILLEY ("City Lights," #1, 1974) and CONWAY TWITTY ("I May Never Get to Heaven," #1, 1979).

Anderson's hit "Po' Folks" inspired both his band name and a restaurant chain, for which he is spokesperson. His duet partners have included JAN HOWARD ("For Loving You," #1) and Mary Lou Turner ("Sometimes," #1). In 1995 Anderson coauthored "Which Bridge to Burn" with VINCE GILL.

The tall, versatile entertainer hosted his own syndicated 1960s TV series for nine years (1965–73); was the first country star to host a 1970s network game show (ABC's *The Better Sex*); and hosted TNN's *Fandango* for six years (1983–89). He now cohosts TNN's *Backstage at the Opry* show on Saturday nights. Anderson starred in several low-budget, country-oriented films such as *Las Vegas Hillbillies* (1966); is the author of a 1989 autobiography and a 1993 memoir, the humorous *I Hope You're Living As High on the Hog As the Pig You Turned Out to Be;* and still writes a *Country Song Round-Up* magazine column.

Anderson's last hit as an artist was "I Can't Wait Any Longer" (#4, 1978). After nearly twenty-five years at Decca/MCA, he left the label in 1982 and has since recorded for Southern Tracks and Curb. —*Walt Trott*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Still (Decca, 1963, out of print); *For Loving You* (MCA, 1969, with Jan Howard); *The Bill Anderson Story* (MCA, 1972, out of print); *Bill Anderson's Greatest Hits, Volume 2* (MCA, 1973); *Best of Bill Anderson* (Curb, 1991)

John Anderson

b. Orlando, Florida, December 13, 1954

John Anderson's voice and songwriting typify the NEW TRADITIONALISM with which he was first associated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. His vocal sound and songs have a distinct and modern quality while remaining firmly rooted in the honky-tonk music styles of the 1950s—most notably that of LEFTY FRIZZELL.

After playing with a rock band in high school, John David Anderson moved to Nashville in 1971. There he worked the Nashville club scene and signed as a writer with AL GALLICO. Anderson recorded one single for the independent Ace of Hearts label in 1974, then signed with WARNER BROS. in 1977. He did not enjoy a Top Ten hit until early 1981, however, when his "1959" went to #7.

Anderson's early- to mid-eighties Warner Bros. albums contained such solid modern material as his wonderful rendition of BILLY JOE SHAVER's "I'm Just an Old Chunk of Coal" (#4, 1981) and "I Just Came Home to Count the Memories" (#7, 1981), in addition to covers of honky-tonk classics such as Frizzell's "I Love You a Thousand Ways" (1983). Featuring hard-core country arrangements and highlighting Anderson's plaintive voice and distinctive phrasing, these albums were both commercially and critically successful, placing Anderson alongside contemporaries GEORGE STRAIT and RICKY SKAGGS as an effective purveyor of contemporary country music that remained traditional.

John Anderson

Anderson's biggest hit during this part of his career was the 1983 novelty song "Swingin'." Co-written by Anderson and Lionel Delmore, it became a chart-topping phenomenon, the CMA single of the year, and a jukebox favorite (it is currently the #30 jukebox hit of all time, according to the Amusement and Music Operators Association). That same year, Anderson won the CMA Horizon award.

Anderson's career faded during the late 1980s and early 1990s as his singles found little success on country radio and his albums began to stray more toward r&b and southern rock. A brief stint with MCA proved relatively unproductive, but in 1992 Anderson re-emerged as a force in country music with the impressive album *Seminole Wind.* Recorded for BNA ENTERTAINMENT, *Seminole Wind* spawned such hit singles as the title track (#2, 1992) and the wonderful chart-topper "Straight Tequila Night." He recorded three more albums for BNA—*Solid Ground* (1993), *Country 'til I Die* (1995), and *Paradise* (1996)—before leaving the label. A subsequent record deal with MERCURY resulted in the 1997 release *Takin' the Country Back,* hailed by some as signaling yet another career comeback for Anderson.

—*Mark Fenster*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Greatest Hits (Warner Bros., 1984); *Seminole Wind* (BNA, 1992)

Liz Anderson

b. Roseau, Minnesota, March 13, 1930

Best known for her songwriting, Elizabeth Jane Haaby Anderson penned, among many other tunes, the MERLE HAGGARD classics "(My Friends Are Gonna Be) Strangers" and "The Fugitive" (co-written with her husband, Casey).

Anderson played mandolin at age eight and performed duets with her brother. She married Casey at age sixteen and had daughter LYNN ANDERSON at seventeen. The Andersons moved to California in 1951, and though Liz wrote often, she didn't do so commercially until 1958. JACK MCFADDEN worked with Casey and was able to get Liz's songs to DEL REEVES and ROY DRUSKY. Her success with Haggard's "(My Friends Are Gonna Be) Strangers" (also a hit for Drusky) brought her a BMI award in 1965 and gained the attention of RCA's CHET ATKINS, who signed her to the label. The Andersons soon moved to Nashville.

Anderson's image as a sweet, domestic mother contrasted with her witty songwriting and performances. Top Ten hits included "The Game of Triangles" (1966, with BOBBY BARE and NORMA JEAN) and "Mama Spank" (1967). She sang about her husband as "Ekcedrin Headache #99," and her divorce songs "Go Now, Pay Later" and "So Much for Me, So Much for You" were unashamedly tough and spirited.

Five of Lynn Anderson's early hits were penned by Liz, and in 1968 the mother-daughter team recorded a duet, "Mother May I." In the 1980s Liz and Casey co-hosted a Nashville Network TV travel show, *Side by Side.*

—Mary A. Bufwack

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Cookin' Up Hits (RCA, 1967); *Husband Hunting* (RCA, 1970)

Lynn Anderson

b. Grand Forks, North Dakota, September 26, 1947

Lynn (Rene) Anderson's 1970 hit "Rose Garden" ushered in a decade in which women country performers achieved significant crossover success and national fame.

Raised in Sacramento, California (and an accomplished equestrienne since childhood), Anderson was offered a contract with the Chart label after performing backup with her mother, the singer and songwriter LIZ ANDERSON, on recordings for RCA. Lynn had her first Top Ten record, "If I Kiss You (Will You Go Away)," in 1967, and she performed regularly on TV, on *The Lawrence Welk Show,* in 1967 and 1968.

In 1968 Lynn married Glenn Sutton, the Grammy-winning songwriter who also produced her hit records. Her 1970 COLUMBIA recording of "Rose Garden," a JOE SOUTH song, became her first country chart topper. The record also hit #3 pop and earned Anderson a Grammy award. This was followed in 1971 by recognition of Anderson as the COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION's Female Vocalist of the Year. To date, "Rose Garden" has sold 16 million copies worldwide.

Anderson's chart success was substantial, with nearly sixty chart singles and eighteen Top Ten hits. Divorced from Sutton in 1977, she continued to throw herself into her career. As the decade progressed she stretched stylistically from upbeat songs such as "What a Man My Man Is" to more poignant fare such as "I've Never Loved Anyone More."

Always photogenic, Anderson found additional popularity on TV and in her stage shows with designer costuming. In 1977 she had her own TV special on CBS, and in 1980, as she donned a skintight, white satin cowgirl outfit, she was to be Columbia's answer to DOLLY PARTON and BARBARA MANDRELL. However, Anderson married Louisiana oilman Harold Stream and retired to raise a family. She filed for divorce in 1982, citing physical abuse, and returned to performing. Custody litigation was no help to her career, though she released two quality albums in 1983 and 1988. Her 1992 *Cowboy's Sweetheart* album is a compilation demonstrating her love of western music.

—Mary A. Bufwack

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Lynn Anderson's Greatest Hits (Columbia, 1972, 1992); *What She Does Best* (Mercury, 1988)

Pete Anderson

b. Detroit, Michigan, July 23, 1948

Originally a blues player, Pete Anderson became known as a country musician and producer when he and DWIGHT YOAKAM joined forces in the early eighties. Anderson says that he remembers seeing ELVIS PRESLEY on Ed Sullivan's television show and deciding "that would be a good job to have," but that he was really drawn to the playing of guitarist Scotty Moore.

Anderson started playing seriously a few years later, during the folk revival of the 1960s, beginning in a jug band. "As a teenager," he has said, "my interests passed through the folk blues, discovering who all the names on the records were, from Robert Johnson to Bobby 'Blue' Bland." Moving to Los Angeles in 1976, he produced a single for Fantasy Records by the r&b vocal group the Gliders and issued blues singles under his own name on his Dem-O label. He made a living playing in country bars around Los Angeles, and it was at one such gig, at J. R.'s in Chatsworth, that Yoakam first sat in with Anderson's band. "He was real young as a vocalist, then, but his writing was great," Anderson has remarked. The two started working together in 1981. Yoakam's *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.* EP was released on the tiny Oak label in 1984, and the following year Yoakam signed with WARNER BROS. RECORDS, beginning a very successful string of albums all produced by Anderson. Anderson also co-produced the two *A Town South of Bakersfield* compilations of young Los Angeles–based country performers, and subsequent full albums by George Highfill and ROSIE FLORES and an unreleased project by JIM LAUDERDALE—all, like Yoakam, alumni of those influential collections.

In addition to producing and playing on all of Yoakam's albums to date, Anderson has produced albums by Michelle Shocked, the Meat Puppets, Steve Forbert, Danny Tate, and Blue Rodeo. Anderson also produced the duet "Crying" by ROY ORBISON and K. D. LANG, which won a 1988 Grammy Award for the Best Country Vocal Collaboration. Starting his own Little Dog imprint in 1994, Anderson has released his own solo album *(Working Class)* on the label, as well as albums by rock singer Anthony Crawford and country singer JOY LYNN WHITE. *— Todd Everett*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Working Class (Little Dog, 1994); *Dogs in Heaven* (Little Dog, 1997)

The Andy Griffith Show

The Andy Griffith Show, a popular comedy about life in mythical Mayberry, North Carolina, premiered on CBS-TV in 1960. A spin-off from an episode of Danny Thomas's *Make Room for Daddy* that featured Griffith as a small-town sheriff, it garnered several Emmys during its eight-year run.

The program's peaceful, southern setting made it easy for Griffith and his producers to work traditional music into the script. Griffith, a North Carolina native, had a deep-rooted love of folk music and was featured playing his D-18 Martin guitar in countless episodes. Professional musicians also guested on the show frequently. Fiddler CURLY FOX, Salty Holmes, and the California-based Country Boys all appeared in the "Folk Music Collector" episode. The Country Boys—consisting of CLARENCE AND ROLAND WHITE, Leroy Mac, and Roger Bush, who played four fictional brothers on the program—made a second appearance later that year.

Proof of the show's impact on folk and bluegrass was evident when the DILLARDS succeeded the Country Boys as the show's occasional musical guests. Exposure as the Darling Family sent sales of the Dillards' ELEKTRA album *Back Porch Bluegrass* through the roof and helped bluegrass gain a crop of young, new fans. The show signed off in 1968 but is syndicated and appears several times a day throughout the United States. —*Chris Skinker*

ARC (*see* American Record Corporation)

Arista Records

established in New York, New York, 1974

One of the first major labels to open a Nashville office during country's popularity boom in the late 1980s, Arista Records was soon also one of the most successful. A subsidiary of the New York–based Bertelsmann Music Group (BMG), Arista was founded by its current CEO, Clive Davis, in 1974. Davis named TIM DUBOIS head of Arista Nashville in 1989, and the label found immediate success with ALAN JACKSON's *Here in the Real World.*

DuBois concentrated on signing and developing new artists, and by mid-1995 Arista had received gold, platinum, or multiplatinum certifications for seventeen of the label's approximately three dozen albums. The label's roster has included, among other acts, PAM TILLIS, BROOKS & DUNN, DIAMOND RIO, STEVE WARINER, BLACKHAWK, the TRACTORS, and BR5-49. In its first five years Arista Nashville sold more than 40 million copies of thirty-four releases.

Arista launched Arista Texas, based in Austin, Texas, in 1993, with a roster that included Tejano band La Diferenzia, FREDDY FENDER, and FLACO JIMENEZ. In early 1995 Arista spun off a sister label, Career Records, with former Arista artist LEE ROY PARNELL and new signee Brett James; the Career imprint folded in October 1997. Arista also acquired Christian label Reunion Records (later sold to Zomba in 1996), which included Michael W. Smith and Kathy Troccoli on its roster. —*Brian Mansfield*

Aristocratic Pigs (*see* Fisher Hendley)

Arkie the Arkansas Woodchopper

b. near Knob Noster, Missouri, March 2, 1907; d. June 23, 1981

After previously working at KMBC in Kansas City, Luther W. Ossenbrink joined the WLS *NATIONAL BARN DANCE* in 1929 as Arkie the Arkansas Woodchopper. He was still performing on the show when it went off the air in 1960, and he was one of several *National Barn Dance* veterans who moved to WGN to work the *WGN Barn Dance* until that show also folded in about 1971. A fiddler, guitar player, singer, and square dance caller, he endeared himself to audiences with his ability (and sometimes inability) to maintain his composure while fellow musicians good-naturedly heckled him. His recordings of mostly cowboy songs between 1928 and 1941—for COLUMBIA, GENNETT, ARC, and OKEH—sold well but failed to establish him as a major recording artist. —*Wayne W. Daniel*

Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (*see* AFRS)

Eddy Arnold

b. Henderson, Tennessee, May 15, 1918

Perhaps more than any other artist, Eddy Arnold personifies country music's adaptation to the modern, urban world, and its transition from folk-based sounds, styles, and images to pop-influenced ones. He is also one of country music's most prolific hitmaking artists, regularly placing songs high in the charts from the 1940s through the 1960s, and scoring Top Ten hits as late as 1980.

Richard Edward Arnold came from a large farming family in Chester County, Tennessee, which accounts for

Eddy Arnold

his later stage name, the "Tennessee Plowboy." He took an interest in music early on. His cousin lent him a Sears, Roebuck Silvertone guitar, which he learned to play with help from his mother and an itinerant musician, and he listened to records by GENE AUTRY, Bing Crosby, and JIMMIE RODGERS on a wind-up Victrola. Often Arnold slipped away to some private spot to sing. He also sang at school near Jackson, Tennessee, and in church. "I discovered I could speak to people through songs in a way I never could by just talking," Arnold later reflected.

Arnold's father died when Eddy was eleven, and the next fall, creditors auctioned the family farm; thus the Arnolds became sharecroppers during the Great Depression. Arnold's singing at candy pulls, socials, and barbecues for $1 a night helped supplement the family income while providing some relief from daily toil. In these circumstances he jumped at the chance to pursue music professionally. Beginning at age seventeen, he worked on radio and in beer joints in Jackson, Tennessee, while also serving as as an undertaker's driver. Next he moved to radio work in Memphis and St. Louis, singing and performing rube comedy as well.

Arnold's prospects brightened when he joined PEE WEE KING's Golden West Cowboys as a featured singer in 1940. With King, he worked the GRAND OLE OPRY and the famous CAMEL CARAVAN tour of military bases in the United States and Central America. With his popularity rising, he struck out on his own in 1943, broadcasting on WSM daytime shows and eventually the Opry. WSM station manager HARRY STONE also worked with Chicago publisher Fred Forster to bring Arnold to the attention of RCA RECORDS, and the singer recorded his first session for the label in WSM's studios in December 1944. Meanwhile, he began to work show dates at churches and schools.

Arnold's early releases sold well, and he dominated the *Billboard* country charts for the remainder of the decade with hits such as "That's How Much I Love You" (1946), "I'll Hold You in My Heart (Till I Can Hold You in My Arms)" (1947), "Anytime" (1948), and "Bouquet of Roses" (1948). Many of his hits crossed over into the pop market, thus paving the way for later crossover acts, such as JIM REEVES and PATSY CLINE. With help from his then manager, TOM PARKER, Arnold became host of the Mutual Network's Purina-sponsored segment of the Opry and of Mutual's *Opry House Matinee,* a noontime show shared with Ernest Tubb and broadcast from a Nashville theater. Recorded radio shows widened Arnold's exposure, as did the live CBS Network series *Hometown Reunion,* undertaken with the DUKE OF PADUCAH after Arnold left the Opry in 1948 following a salary dispute. In 1949 and 1950 Arnold appeared in the Columbia films *Feudin' Rhythm* and *Hoedown,* respectively. Soon his earnings from recordings and road shows—together with a lucrative publishing arrangement with HILL AND RANGE SONGS—enabled him to diversify his investments and build a fine home in Brentwood, Tennessee. He was determined never to be poor again, and he succeeded.

By the time he played the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas in 1953—making him one of the first country stars to work the Vegas scene—Arnold was also pioneering as a country television performer. He appeared on *The Milton Berle Show* in 1949 and hosted summer replacement series in 1952 and 1953 for Perry Como and Dinah Shore, respectively. *Eddy Arnold Time,* a series made in Chicago, appeared in 1955, and *The Eddy Arnold Show,* shot in Springfield, Missouri, followed in 1956.

During country music's late-1950s slump, Arnold's record sales fell off, as did his personal appearances, and he considered retiring from music. In fact, he was on the verge of a new wave of popularity, as he traded his Tennessee Plowboy image for an uptown, sophisticated one. By the mid-1950s his somewhat plaintive singing style had already begun to mellow, and songs such as "I Really Don't Want to Know" (1954), recorded without the earlier trademark steel parts of LITTLE ROY WIGGINS, and a new version of "Cattle Call" (1955), recorded with an orchestra, anticipated the pop-oriented groove he would later establish with hits such as "What's He Doing in My World" (1965), "Make the World Go Away" (1965), and numerous other #1 records. In the mid-1960s, under the management of Gerard Purcell, Arnold began to wear tuxedos and make personal appearances with orchestras. His nightclub and TV work increased markedly, and his discs charted abroad as well, paving the way for international tours.

In 1966 Arnold was elected to the COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME, in 1967 he won the CMA's coveted Entertainer of the Year Award, and in 1984 he received the ACM's Pioneer Award. In 1970 RCA honored him for reaching the 60 million figure in lifetime record sales, a number that reportedly topped 80 million by 1985. In 1993 RCA released the album *Then and Now,* marking Arnold's fiftieth year with the label, an association interrupted only briefly from 1973 to 1975, when Arnold recorded for MGM. He continued to tour heavily during the seventies and beyond, and as of 1998 Arnold, now with CURB RECORDS, was still playing occasional show dates. —*John Rumble*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

The Best of Eddy Arnold (RCA, 1966); *Legendary Performer* (RCA, 1983); *The Last of the Love Song Singers: Then and Now* (RCA, 1993)

Jimmy Arnold

b. Fries, Virginia, June 11, 1952; d. December 26, 1992

A tattooed mountain man whose outlaw ways often overshadowed his prodigious talent, James Edward Arnold was a bluegrass multi-instrumentalist whose most enduring legacy remains a Civil War concept album, *Southern Soul.*

The only son of a Pentecostal cotton mill hand, Arnold became a child prodigy on a Silvertone banjo ordered from a Sears catalog. At thirteen he recorded his first record, a cover of "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor," for Stark; at sixteen, his rendition of "Old Joe Clark" won first prize at the GALAX Old Time Fiddlers' Convention, held annually in southwestern Virginia near his native Fries. As a teen on the bluegrass festival circuit, Arnold fell under the spell of old-time fiddler TOMMY JARRELL, who taught him Civil War–era songs that Jarrell had learned from Confederate veterans. Stints with Cliff Waldron & the New Shades of Grass, CHARLIE MOORE & the Dixie Partners, and KEITH WHITLEY's New Tradition established Arnold's reputation as a brilliant multi-instrumentalist—and notorious boozer—of the Washington, D.C., bluegrass scene. He spent the later 1970s as a fiddler with Judy Lynn in Las Vegas; during rambling forays into Texas, New Orleans, and Mexico he added harmonica and Spanish dobro, among other instruments, to his vast musical arsenal. In the early 1980s Arnold relocated to the Washington, D. C. area, where his encyclopedic grasp of southern styles—from Appalachian reels to WESTERN SWING to New Orleans blues—

stunned audiences at shows that often included veteran fiddler Tex Logan. "Everything that's in me comes out through my music," Arnold told *Washingtonian* magazine at the time.

Arnold recorded several solo instrumental records on REBEL in the 1970s, including his banjo tour de force, *Strictly Arnold* (1974), and made frequent sideman appearances, most notably as fiddle player on master dobroist Mike Auldridge's *Eight-String Swing* (Sugar Hill, 1982). But Arnold's definitive work remains *Southern Soul* (Rebel, 1983), a Civil War concept album recorded near the Chancellorsville battlefield outside Fredericksburg, Virginia. Revealing himself a gifted singer and composer, Arnold weaved autobiographical fragments into a first-person song cycle about a Confederate soldier. The record featured original compositions, Civil War–era tunes, Charlie Moore's "Rebel Soldier," and The Band's "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." Using extensive studio overdubs, Arnold provided most of the instrumental back up on the critically acclaimed album, which proved a commercial dud. Bouts with the law and the bottle sabotaged Arnold's later career, which was littered with unfinished projects—including tribute sessions to idols JIMMIE RODGERS, Leadbelly, and HANK WILLIAMS—that may yet see posthumous release. Arnold was planning a comeback that included an East European tour when he died of heart failure at age forty. *—Eddie Dean*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Strictly Arnold (Rebel, 1974); *Jimmy Arnold Guitar* (Rebel, 1977); *Southern Soul* (Rebel, 1983)

Charline Arthur

b. Henrietta, Texas, September 2, 1929; d. November 27, 1987

Though none of her single releases—for BULLET, RCA, Republic, or any number of smaller labels—ever made the *Billboard* charts, Charline Arthur, with her gutsy, blues-flavored vocal style and brassy stage presence, had more influence on her times than her obscurity might suggest. Among her fans were ELVIS PRESLEY and PATSY CLINE.

Born Charline Highsmith to an impoverished Pentecostal preacher and his guitar-playing wife, Arthur began her career in the mid-1940s singing at radio station KPLT in Paris, Texas. In 1948 she married bass player Jack Arthur, who became her manager. In 1949 Bullet Records released her self-penned song "I've Got the Boogie Blues." When COLONEL TOM PARKER happened to hear Arthur singing at station KERM in Kermit, Texas (where she was also a DJ), he brought her to the attention of the influential New York music publishing firm HILL & RANGE. Hill & Range signed her as a songwriter in 1952 and in turn brought Arthur to RCA Records, which signed her in January 1953. She was produced at RCA first by STEVE SHOLES and later by CHET ATKINS, with whom the tempestuous singer claimed to have had a serious personality clash. Among the country boogie and honky-tonk records she recorded for RCA were "Kiss the Baby Goodnight," "I'm Having a Party All by Myself," "Leave My Man Alone," and "Just Look, Don't Touch, He's Mine." In 1955 she was named runner-up to KITTY WELLS in *Country & Western Jamboree* magazine's annual "DJ Choice" poll.

After she left RCA in 1956, the archly temperamental singer ceased to be a presence in country music, although she did continue recording sporadically into the 1970s.

When Arthur died in rural Idaho in 1987 she'd been living for quite a few years on a modest $335-a-month disability pension. *—Bob Allen*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Welcome to the Club (Bear Family, 1986)

Emry Arthur

b. Wayne County, Kentucky, ca. 1900; d. August 1966

As a vocalist, Emry Arthur cut more than eighty sides for Vocalion, Paramount, and DECCA from January 1928 to January 1935. More than half were solos, while on others he performed in duet with various partners and as part of his own Arthur's Sacred Singers group. Arthur played guitar and harmonica; one Vocalion release of his harmonica solos labeled him "The Jack Harmonica Player."

Arthur's music was folk-rooted in his southern Kentucky family heritage. His father, Harry B. Arthur, was a locally known bass singer, and a brother, Henry (who assisted Emry on some cuts), played fiddle and steel guitar. Another relation, William Rexroat, led the locally based Cedar Crest Singers, who also recorded in January 1929 for Vocalion.

Although born in Kentucky, Arthur lived most of his life in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he died in 1966.

—Bob Pinson

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow (Old Homestead, 1987)

ASCAP

established in New York, New York, February 1914

The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers—ASCAP—was founded in New York City in February 1914. Modeled upon France's SACEM, ASCAP sought to enforce the stipulation of the 1909 Copyright Act that requires payment to creators of music (composers, lyricists—which "Authors" is taken to mean—and publishers) for the "public, nondramatic performance" of their works. ASCAP collects license fees from music users (hotels, clubs, restaurants, motion picture producers, broadcasters, and now commercial users of the Internet) on behalf of its members, to whom it distributes all income above operating expenses—half to writer members and half to publisher members. ASCAP negotiates its license fees with music users, and these fees vary widely: local radio stations pay less than broadcast networks, and a tavern pays less than a big-city hotel. Distribution is based on the number and kind of music performances logged with the ASCAP survey. Performances of a song on radio stations that pay ASCAP a $25,000 per year license will be worth five times as much as performances on a station that pays $5,000 per year.

ASCAP began with 170 writers and twenty-two publishers and has grown in its eighty-plus years to a total membership in excess of 40,000. ASCAP now licenses all kinds of music but strongly emphasized classical music and Tin Pan Alley pop in its early years. Within the country field, its biggest early writers were GENE AUTRY, FRED ROSE, and BOB WILLS. ASCAP still licenses such country standards as "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain," "Cattle Call," and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds."

ASCAP came to Nashville in the 1950s with a branch office for Alabama and Tennessee headed by Asa W. Bush in the West End building. Juanita Jones led a Nashville branch office when it was established in 1963, the same year ASCAP gave its first country music awards. By that time various forces, including competition from rival BMI, had led ASCAP to open up its membership policies and broaden its logging procedures. Plans were announced for the first ASCAP building on MUSIC ROW in October 1968, about the time Ed Shea became southern regional director for ASCAP. This building, at the corner of Seventeenth and Division opened in 1969 and was replaced by a newer, multistory complex at the same site in January 1992. Shea became national coordinator of public affairs for ASCAP in 1980–81, at which time CONNIE BRADLEY replaced him as southern regional director.

In recent years ASCAP has strengthened its country music presence with songs from such writers as RODNEY CROWELL, Rory Bourke, Bob Morrison, Randy Goodrum, DON SCHLITZ, CLINT BLACK, GARTH BROOKS, Bill Rice, PAT ALGER, DON HENRY, Jon Vezner, ALAN JACKSON, and Bob McDill. —*Ronnie Pugh*

Clarence "Tom" Ashley

b. Bristol, Tennessee, September 29, 1895; d. June 2, 1967

A respected musician and comedian from eastern Tennessee, Clarence "Tom" Ashley recorded as a soloist and with various bands during the late 1920s and early 1930s; he successfully resumed his career during the urban folk revival of the early 1960s.

Although Ashley (born Clarence Earl McCurry) was taught banjo and traditional ballads by his aunts at an early age, his musical education largely stemmed from itinerant musicians who lodged at his mother's boardinghouse. By 1913 he was an all-around entertainer, telling jokes, singing, and playing banjo and guitar with horse-drawn medicine shows throughout the Cumberlands. Young ROY ACUFF reportedly served an apprenticeship under Ashley during one tour in the early 1920s.

Ashley first recorded for GENNETT in February 1928. Country record producers quickly recognized his abilities as a utility singer and musician. VICTOR's RALPH PEER recruited him for four CAROLINA TARHEELS sessions in 1928–29; COLUMBIA recorded him in 1929–30 as a soloist and with Byrd Moore and His Hot Shots. During the early 1930s he recorded for the AMERICAN RECORD CORPORATION labels. Ashley basically retired from entertaining by 1943, although he occasionally worked as a comedian with the CHARLIE MONROE and STANLEY BROTHERS shows.

After meeting old-time music enthusiasts RALPH RINZLER and Eugene Earle at the 1960 Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention, Ashley realized that many young folk musicians and collectors treasured his original recordings. He resumed singing and playing banjo; for his first recording session in nearly thirty years, Ashley recruited a guitarist neighbor, DOC WATSON, to accompany him. In 1961 Ashley, Watson, Clint Howard, and Fred Price formed a band to play at colleges, clubs, and folk festivals.

—*Dave Samuelson*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

The Original Folkways Recordings of Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley (Smithsonian/Folkways, 1994), 2 CDs

Ashley's Melody Makers

Ashley's Melody Makers, an Ozark stringband, were also known as Ashley's Melody Men. The group played for local occasions in the Arkansas Ozarks, with a fluid lineup that changed slightly at almost every performance. Their leader was steel guitarist Hobart Ashley (1895–1969) of Marshall, Arkansas. Other members included Anson Fuller (1907–36), fiddle; Homer Treat (b. 1910), banjo; Vern Baker (1905–73), guitar; Hugh Ashley (b. 1915), guitar; and Gerald Ashley (b. 1917). The latter two were Hobart's sons. This band had three recording sessions: the first two in Memphis in October 1929 and June 1930, the last in Dallas in February 1932. At these sessions they recorded mainly songs written by Hugh Ashley (who later wrote "One Step at a Time" for BRENDA LEE, "The Old Fiddler" for BILL MONROE, and "What Would You Do? (If Jesus Came to Your House") for PORTER WAGONER, although the band did record the traditional song "Methodist Pie." Ashley's Melody Makers are important representatives of the Ozark stringband tradition. —*W. K. McNeil*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Echoes of the Ozarks, Volume 1 (County, 1970) reissue of 1929 sides: "Bath House Blues" and "Searcy County Rag"

Jesse Ashlock

b. Walker County, Texas, February 22, 1915; d. August 9, 1976

Jesse Thedford Ashlock was already a well-known, revered western swing fiddler by the time BOB WILLS & His Texas Playboys recorded his first songwriting efforts, in 1941. Ashlock's "Please Don't Leave Me" and "My Life's Been a Pleasure" produced a double-sided smash for Wills and established him as an important songwriter as well as musician.

In 1930, at age fifteen, Ashlock was apprenticing behind Wills at Crystal Springs, west of Fort Worth. In addition to Wills, Ashlock idolized and emulated jazz violinist Joe Venuti. In 1932 Ashlock became a member of MILTON BROWN's seminal Musical Brownies. With CECIL BROWER, Ashlock formed the first significant twin fiddle team in western swing and helped pioneer the genre. By 1935 he was in Tulsa with Wills and, from then until 1941—except for a brief stretch in Texas with BILL BOYD, ROY NEWMAN, and others—his hot fiddling was an important element in Wills's early sound.

Ashlock worked intermittently with Wills after World War II and recorded with Sam Nichols, PORKY FREEMAN, and others. He continued to score as a songwriter, penning Wills's classics "The Kind of Love I Can't Forget" (1946) and "Still Water Runs the Deepest" (1947). A capable vocalist, Ashlock also recorded under his own name for COLUMBIA in 1947. He drifted into obscurity until the western swing revival of the seventies. Based in AUSTIN at his death, he guested with youngsters such as Alvin Crow and ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL and performed with the reformed Texas Playboys. —*Kevin Coffey*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys: The Golden Era (Columbia Historic Edition, 1987); *Bob Wills: Fiddle* (Country Music Foundation, 1987); *Hillbilly Fever, Volume One: Western Swing* (Rhino, 1995, reissue contains one 1947 recording by Ashlock)

Ernie Ashworth

b. Huntsville, Alabama, December 15, 1928

Ernest Bert Ashworth made his mark as a songwriter and GRAND OLE OPRY performer in the 1950s and early 1960s. His first radio job was at his hometown station of WBHP in 1948; he moved up to Nashville two years later. WESLEY ROSE signed him as an ACUFF-ROSE songwriter and placed him with the MGM label in 1955, where he recorded as "Billy Worth" into 1957 with no chart impact. During this time Ashworth also wrote songs recorded by JIMMY DICKENS, CARL SMITH, and JOHNNY HORTON. After a more successful stint with DECCA (1960–62) that led to three Top Twenty hits, Ashworth signed with the Acuff-Rose subsidiary label HICKORY. Between 1957 and 1964 he commuted to Nashville from Huntsville, where he worked by day at the Redstone Arsenal defense plant. In 1963 he scored his first (and only) #1 hit with JOHN D. LOUDERMILK's "Talk Back Trembling Lips," which showcased his yearning tenor to great effect. The bouncy breakthrough record earned him Most Promising Artist awards from *Cashbox* and *Billboard* in 1963. Nevertheless, he hung on to his Huntsville day job until he joined the Grand Ole Opry in March 1964. The following year he appeared in the musical comedy film *The Farmer's Other Daughter.* Though he placed records on the charts through 1970, they came with decreasing frequency and impact. He continues to perform at the Grand Ole Opry and now owns radio station WSLV in Ardmore, Tennessee. —*Walt Trott*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Greatest Hits (Curb, 1991)

Asleep At The Wheel

Though known for their pivotal role in the western swing revival, Asleep At The Wheel was the brainchild of two high school rock musicians: Ray Benson Siefert (b. March 16, 1951) and Reuben "Lucky Oceans" Gosfield (b. April 22, 1951). They formed Asleep At The Wheel in about 1969, when they moved from the Philadelphia area to tiny Paw Paw, West Virginia, and played locally. The bands' musicians came and went, but a young Virginia high school graduate named Chris O'Connell and singer-songwriter Leroy Preston stayed on. The group drew inspiration from both honky-tonk music and BOB WILLS–styled western swing.

A 1972 move to Berkeley, California, brought two years of playing bars, and their meeting pianist Jim Haber, known professionally as "Floyd Domino." They signed with United Artists Records that year, but the group's debut LP wasn't successful. In 1974 they moved to AUSTIN, TEXAS, just as that city's music scene was gaining national attention. A 1974 LP for EPIC fizzled. But after they signed with CAPITOL in 1975, they had a hit single with *The Letter That Johnny Walker Read* and released their classic *Texas Gold* LP, which revealed their matured mix of country, r&b, and western swing. The band expanded with a full horn section and added big band swing to their sound, spreading western swing's appeal nationwide. In 1978 their Capitol LP cut of Count Basie's instrumental "One O'clock Jump" won them a Grammy for Best Country Instrumental Performance.

Through the 1980s, they recorded for MCA, Stony Plain, Epic, and ARISTA, where they were the first to record the future BROOKS & DUNN hit "Boot Scootin' Boogie." They next moved to LIBERTY, where they recorded their acclaimed 1993 all-star tribute to Bob Wills with various former Texas Playboys. One instrumental from that album, *Red Wing,* won them another Grammy.

With only Benson remaining from the original band, the act left Liberty (renamed Capitol Nashville) in 1995. Asleep at the Wheel also celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary that year with an AUSTIN CITY LIMITS special, reuniting many former band members. In addition, the group won a Grammy, Best Country Instrumental Performance, for a song off their album *The Wheel Keeps on Rollin':* "Hightower," a song that features BÉLA FLECK, JOHNNY GIMBLE, and others.

The group recently signed with a new Sony imprint called Lucky Dog and released a live album called *Back to the Future Now: Live from Arizona Charlie's, Las Vegas* (1997). —*Rich Kienzle*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Texas Gold (Capitol, 1975); *A Tribute to the Music of Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys* (Liberty, 1993); *Comin' Right At Ya* (United Artists, 1973); *Collision Course* (Capitol, 1978); *Still Swingin'* (Liberty, 1993), 3 CDs

Association of Country Entertainers (*see* ACE)

Asylum Records

established 1970; Nashville branch established 1992

Asylum Records began under the wing of ATLANTIC in 1970 and entered the country marketplace in 1992 with an unusually strong commitment to artistic vision. With record producer KYLE LEHNING heading the operation in its early years, the label signed such critically acclaimed acts as GUY CLARK and EMMYLOU HARRIS as well as soon-to-be acclaimed artists such as BOB WOODRUFF.

Emphasis on the artist had been Asylum's hallmark especially since 1971, when entertainment mogul David Geffen—then still in his twenties—formed the label. Asylum quickly became a company of note with a roster that included the EAGLES, Jackson Browne, and Joni Mitchell, as well as LINDA RONSTADT, who scored numerous country/pop crossover hits with Asylum during the 1970s.

An affiliate of ELEKTRA RECORDS, Asylum became Elektra's first country outlet in nearly a decade when the Nashville office opened in 1992. The label's penchant for art came with a price, however, as it earned only one Top Ten single—BROTHER PHELPS' 1993 release "Let Go"—during its first three years in business. Asylum's commercial fortunes later improved with the success of BRYAN WHITE and KEVIN SHARP, while MANDY BARNETT's 1996 debut found favor with critics. Also in 1996, Joe Mansfield came on board as Asylum's co-president (with Kyle Lehning) and CEO. Lehning and Mansfield left Asylum in 1998; their successor, Evelyn Shriver, became the first female president of a major Music Row label. —*Tom Roland*

Bob Atcher

b. Hardin County, Kentucky, May 11, 1914; d. October 31, 1993

Robert Owen Atcher is best remembered through his hit recordings of the early 1940s and later appearances on Chicago's WLS *NATIONAL BARN DANCE.* Adept at folk, country, and cowboy material, he typically prefaced each song

with a descriptive story while softly strumming open chords on his guitar.

Early successes on Louisville radio brought Atcher to Chicago in 1932; he remained there for most of his career. In 1939 he began recording for Vocalion. His first hit was a cover of "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," punctuated by sobs and screams; other successes included "Cool Water" and "You Are My Sunshine." Many of Atcher's early records were duets with Loeta Applegate, who was billed as "Bonnie Blue Eyes."

In 1942 Atcher shared billing with popular bandleader Ben Bernie on CBS Radio's *Wrigley Spearmint Show.* He later hosted many Chicago-based network radio shows of his own, and in 1949 he joined the *National Barn Dance.* For years he remained one of Chicago's busiest performers. He eventually cut back his performing schedule, although he remained a *Barn Dance* regular through the show's 1960–71 tenure on WGN. From 1959 to 1975 he served as mayor of Schaumburg, Illinois.

Atcher's brother Randy (b. December 7, 1918; Tip Top, Kentucky) worked with Bob before World War II, then later developed a strong regional following of his own around Louisville. —*Dave Samuelson*

Chet Atkins

b. Luttrell, Tennessee, June 20, 1924; d. June 30, 2001

No single country instrumentalist has achieved the notoriety and respect that Chester Burton Atkins has. He influenced country, rock, and jazz musicians—from JERRY REED to George Harrison, Duane Eddy, and Earl Klugh—for nearly half a century. Many hit records he produced during his days at RCA are now classics.

Atkins grew up in the hills near a tiny, remote eastern Tennessee town called Luttrell. James Atkins, his father, was an itinerant music teacher who had previously been married. His wife Ida, Chester's mother, sang and played piano. After the Atkinses divorced, Ida Atkins remarried, in 1932, and Chester began to learn guitar and fiddle, often playing with his brother and sister and their stepfather, Willie Strevel. A 1936 asthma attack forced Chester to relocate to the improved climate at his father's Georgia farm, where, on one night in the late 1930s, he first heard MERLE TRAVIS playing guitar over WLW in Cincinnati. Travis's thumb-and-finger-picking style fascinated Atkins, who created his own thumb-and-two-finger variation.

Chet Atkins

After attending high school in Georgia, Atkins landed a job at WNOX in Knoxville, fiddling for the team of singer BILL CARLISLE and comic ARCHIE CAMPBELL. WNOX executive Lowell Blanchard heard Chester's guitar playing and began featuring him on the *MIDDAY MERRY-GO-ROUND,* the station's popular daily barn dance show. Atkins broadened his repertoire though listening sessions in the station's music library. In 1945 he briefly joined WLW in Cincinnati; then in early 1946 he worked with JOHNNIE & JACK in Raleigh, North Carolina, before moving to Chicago, where RED FOLEY, leaving the WLS *NATIONAL BARN DANCE* to host the GRAND OLE OPRY's *Prince Albert Show,* hired Atkins and took him to Nashville. There he made his first solo recording, "Guitar Blues," for the local BULLET label.

Moving on to KWTO in Springfield, Missouri, Atkins received his nickname "Chet" from station official SI SIMAN. Other officials there, believing that his style was too polished for "hillbilly" music, eventually fired him. Meanwhile, however, Siman tried to interest record companies in Atkins, and RCA Victor's STEVE SHOLES signed him as a singer and guitarist in 1947. In about 1948 Chet returned to WNOX, working first with HOMER & JETHRO and then joining Maybelle and the CARTER SISTERS as lead guitarist. They subsequently worked at KWTO before relocating to Nashville to join the Opry in 1950.

With FRED ROSE's help, Chet became one of Nashville's early "A-Team" of session musicians, recording with everyone from WADE RAY to HANK WILLIAMS and WEBB PIERCE. He also appeared on the Opry as a solo act. His first chart hit, a cover of the pop hit "Mister Sandman," came in 1955, followed by a hit guitar duet with HANK SNOW on "Silver Bell."

Through the 1950s, Atkins's relationship with STEVE SHOLES evolved into that of trusted protégé. Initially Chet organized sessions, and if Sholes, who was based in New York, couldn't come to Nashville, Atkins produced the records himself. In 1955 Sholes made him manager of RCA's new Nashville studio, which eventually led to an RCA vice-presidential position.

After rock & roll set back country record sales, Atkins's production skills came to the foreground. Intent on making country records appeal to pop and country audiences, he—along with OWEN BRADLEY at DECCA, DON LAW at COLUMBIA, and KEN NELSON at CAPITOL—began to produce singers backed by neutral rhythm sections and to replace steel guitars and fiddles with vocal choruses, a style later known as the NASHVILLE SOUND. Atkins transformed hard-country RCA artists JIM REEVES and DON GIBSON by producing hits for both that successfully crossed over into the pop market. Among the many acts he produced successfully were EDDY ARNOLD, SKEETER DAVIS, BOBBY BARE, and FLOYD CRAMER. In 1965 Atkins took a major step forward by signing African-American country singer CHARLEY PRIDE to RCA. In that same year Atkins enjoyed his own biggest hit single with "Yakety Axe," an adaptation of Nashville studio musician BOOTS RANDOLPH's hit "Yakety Sax."

Atkins produced a constant stream of solo RCA albums during these years. As he hired additional producers at RCA, he cut back his own production work to focus on

recording, and Atkins made albums with other fine RCA guitarists: HANK SNOW, Jerry Reed, Merle Travis, and LES PAUL. In 1973 Atkins was elected to the COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME, and from 1967 to 1988 he won the CMA's Instrumentalist of the Year eleven times. In 1982 he relinquished his RCA executive role and left RCA to record for COLUMBIA in 1983. Frequent collaborations with younger players, such as British rock guitarist Mark Knopfler, reflected his desire to remain contemporary. In 1993 Atkins received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), placing him among such musical greats as Louis Armstrong, Ray Charles, Leonard Bernstein, and Paul McCartney. In 1997 Atkins won a Grammy award, Country Instrumental Performance, for the 1996 song "Jam Man."

—Rich Kienzle

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

The Essential Chet Atkins (RCA, 1996); *Galloping Guitar* (Bear Family, 1993) 4 CDs; *Chester and Lester* (with Les Paul) (RCA, 1976); *A Session with Chet Atkins* (RCA, 1954); *Alone* (RCA, 1973)

Atlantic Records

established in New York, New York, 1947

Atlantic Records began primarily as a jazz and r&b label; by the mid-1990s its Nashville branch epitomized the country music mainstream. TRACY LAWRENCE, NEAL MCCOY, and JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY comprised the label's core, each with albums selling more than 1 million copies. The Atlantic group CONFEDERATE RAILROAD also sold over 1 million.

Founded by Herb Abramson and Ahmet Ertegun, who were joined by Jerry Wexler in 1953, Atlantic occasionally flirted with country music, releasing singles by DOTTIE WEST and Dale Hawkins in 1962, for instance. The label first operated a Nashville office from 1972 to 1974 under the direction of Rick Sanjek; its roster included WILLIE NELSON, JOHN PRINE, Doug Sahm, and HENSON CARGILL. Prompted by BILLY JOE ROYAL's success on the Atlantic America subsidiary between 1985 and 1988, Atlantic reopened Nashville offices in 1989 with RICK BLACKBURN and Nelson Larkin at the helm; Blackburn later became president of the division. The initial roster also included Robin Lee and Girls Next Door.

Under Blackburn, Atlantic succeeded with a combination of marketing savvy and a small, radio-friendly roster. Lawrence and McCoy both joined in 1991, Montgomery and Confederate Railroad in 1992. Mila Mason's debut CD appeared on Atlantic in 1996. *—Brian Mansfield*

Austin, Texas

Ever since the early 1970s, when WILLIE NELSON and others made Austin, Texas, a well-known music locale, the city's musical history has been a healthy reminder that country is not synonymous with Nashville. Long before it attained national notoriety as a country music center, Austin had several country music clubs such as the Broken Spoke, Split Rail, and Skyline Club (where both HANK WILLIAMS and JOHNNY HORTON gave "last" performances). Threadgill's Bar, housed in a converted filling station on the edge of town in North Austin, was a bridge between the country music of the fifties and the eclectic, youth-oriented country-rock music of the seventies. Kenneth Threadgill, the proprietor, was a JIMMIE RODGERS-style yodeler who encouraged other people to sing. In the early sixties Threadgill's became a microcosm of the later country music scene when spillovers from the University of Texas folk music club (including Janis Joplin) began mixing their personas and repertoires with the older styles of country music that had long been present there.

In the late sixties the Vulcan Gas Company club became a meeting place for hippies and college students and such local rock bands as the Thirteenth Floor Elevators, Shiva's Headband, and others. When the Vulcan folded, the Armadillo World Headquarters, housed in a vacant armory building, replaced it in 1970 as the center of countercultural music activity. Musicians of varying stripes were already coming to Austin, and during the early 1970s remnants of the rock music scene (and a few ex-folkies such as JERRY JEFF WALKER) began to bring together the disparate strains of country, bluegrass, urban folk, blues, and rock music. Two groups, Greezy Wheels and Freda & the Firedogs (the latter headed by pianist and blues singer Marcia Ball), were pioneers in this attempt at musical fusion, but they were soon joined by Doug Sahm, MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHEY, B. W. Stevenson, Steve Fromholz, WILLIS ALAN RAMSEY, and others. The Armadillo World Headquarters became the central locus of the emerging fusion of rock and country music, but after February 1973, the Soap Creek Saloon also became an active arena for musicians. The performers began adopting cowboy names and dress in order to establish identities that seemed consonant with the Texas Hill Country. Jim Franklin, who had already been painting armadillo posters for Shiva's Headband, and Kerry Awn, who created the Soap Creek calendars, contributed greatly to the imagery that surrounded Austin music with their depictions of longhorn steers, cactus, sagebrush, armadillos, and longneck beers.

As the Austin musical mix gained notoriety, observers were hard-pressed to find a name that sufficiently encompassed the emerging musical culture. "Redneck rock" and "cosmic cowboy music" were terms that were sometimes affixed to the city's varied styles. The most often used term, "progressive country," was introduced in 1973 by Austin radio station KOKE-FM to describe the wide-ranging mixture of records played by its disc jockeys. A stockbroker and ardent music fan, Townsend Miller was also a strong contributor to the idea of Austin as a "musical colony." He began touting the city's music in a local newspaper column and in music magazines. A thriving music scene already existed, then, when Willie Nelson moved to the city in late 1971. He, Jerry Jeff Walker, Marcia Ball, ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL, Alvin Crow, KINKY FRIEDMAN, Steve Fromholz, and frequent visitor WAYLON JENNINGS made the laid-back Austin scene famous throughout the nation. Nelson's giant outdoor festivals, held first at nearby Dripping Springs and later at other Texas locations, lent even greater notoriety to the Austin musical culture while also bringing together musicians as diverse as LEON RUSSELL and ROY ACUFF.

Since 1987 Austin has hosted the annual South by Southwest Music and Media Conference, one of the nation's preeminent music industry gatherings. Nevertheless, Austin's prominence as a country music capital has declined since the 1980s, partly because the city never built a recording complex that could augment its numerous live performance venues. With the notable exceptions of Willie Nelson and Jerry Jeff Walker, very few of the Austin musi-

cians even had recording contracts during the highly publicized events of the seventies. Music, however, is still extremely popular in Austin, and some notable country music personalities, such as Walker, Asleep at the Wheel, the Austin Lounge Lizards, JUNIOR BROWN, JIMMIE DALE GILMORE, and TISH HINOJOSA still make the city their chief base of operations. —*Bill C. Malone*

Austin City Limits

established in Austin, Texas, summer 1975; first aired fall 1976

Austin City Limits is a long-running, influential music series produced for public television in Austin, Texas, and shot at the KLRU-TV studio on the University of Texas campus. The series was launched to help expose Austin's "cosmic cowboy" progressive country music to the world at large. It was developed by Bill Arhos, then program director for KLRU-TV (now general manager for the public station and executive producer of *Austin City Limits*). After a pilot featuring WILLIE NELSON, the first program paired ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL with a reunion of the Texas Playboys, BOB WILLS's famous band.

The series has since featured a wide range of Austin artistry extending well beyond country, along with nationally known performers in the country-folk, roots-music, and singer-songwriter veins. Among the most significant artists to have appeared on the program are RAY CHARLES, ROY ORBISON, B. B. King, EMMYLOU HARRIS, and NEIL YOUNG. Among the artists more commonly associated with Austin, NANCI GRIFFITH, JIMMIE DALE GILMORE, and Stevie Ray Vaughan were featured on the program well before they had achieved national notoriety.

"We try to come up with a mix or balance of original music that reflects a variety of styles that are uniquely American," explained Terry Lickona, who has been booking and producing the program since 1978.

The program has long been a favorite with artists, both for the concert format that keeps the focus on music and for the enthusiasm of the Austin audience. GARTH BROOKS, ALAN JACKSON, and VINCE GILL are among the many musicians who were regular viewers of the series long before they were invited to appear on it. During his years on the Texas club circuit, Lyle Lovett was such a regular in the audience that when he finally appeared as a performer, the program (as an insider joke) inserted a shot of him watching from the crowd.

Although *Austin City Limits* was once among the primary vehicles of television exposure for country artists, the boom in the music's popularity and the proliferation of cable TV programming has meant more competition among TV shows for top country talent. The series has responded by featuring a wider variety of performers such as ROBBIE FULKS, the Indigo Girls, and HAL KETCHUM. Country music continues to be an essential element in its programming, but in diminished concentration. —*Don McLeese*

Gene Autry

b. Tioga, Texas, September 29, 1907; d. October 2, 1998

While he was unquestionably the best-selling c&w artist from the early days of the Depression through the close of World War II, Gene Autry was also much more. His status as a top box-office attraction in motion pictures brought his music to the attention of a vast audience otherwise unfamiliar with country music. In addition, his success as a

Gene Autry

SINGING COWBOY launched an entire genre of movies and paved the way for successful rivals such as ROY ROGERS and TEX RITTER.

Orvon Grover Autry, grandson of a Baptist minister, was born in a farmhouse near Tioga to Delbert and Elnora Autry. He first performed as a boy soprano in his grandfather's church choir. Subsequently he mastered a $12 Sears mail-order guitar, which he used to accompany his singing at local events. When the Autrys moved to Oklahoma, young Gene took a job as relief telegrapher for the St. Louis & Frisco railroad, where he eventually met Jimmy Long, an older fellow railroader who also made music on the side and had ideas about cutting records. Inspired by Long (and possibly by a chance, encouraging encounter with humorist Will Rogers), nineteen-year-old Autry took a leave of absence from his job to make the rounds of New York City record companies, auditioning with his versions of the current Gene Austin and Al Jolson hits.

Befriended by fellow Oklahomans Johnny and FRANKIE MARVIN, then pop singers recording in New York, Gene made test records for EDISON and VICTOR before being urged to return home and gain experience as a performer. He spent two years (1928–29) on Tulsa's KVOO, billed as "Oklahoma's Yodeling Cowboy" and singing JIMMIE RODGERS's then-current hits before returning to New York in October 1929, just days before the market crashed. He began recording with a vengeance, cutting masters for five different companies, each of which issued records on sev-

eral labels for chain-store distribution. For two years he recorded prolifically, covering Rodgers's hits and performing other songs in that style. Ironically, stardom came the first time he broke away from the Rodgers mold, recording "That Silver-Haired Daddy of Mine" as a duet with Jimmy Long for the ARC family of labels and its A&R man ART SATHERLEY. Lilting and sentimental in the tradition of the turn-of-the-century parlor ballad, the song became a major hit and propelled Autry to a radio career on Chicago's WLS, beginning with his first morning broadcast on December 1, 1931, on his own show *Conqueror Record Time.* Urged by Satherley, Autry focused on western songs and attire, and recorded his first western songs in 1933. In addition, WLS announcer Anne Williams created skillful word-pictures building Autry's cowboy image, which was reinforced by his hit recordings of "The Last Roundup" and "Cowboy's Heaven."

In the summer of 1934 Gene and his wife, Ina (Jimmy Long's niece), and his friend Lester "SMILEY" BURNETTE, musician-composer-comedian with the Autry radio troupe, drove to California, where the singing cowboy was to make a guest appearance in the Republic Pictures western movie *In Old Santa Fe.* His own series of films began the following year (with the science fiction serial *The Phantom Empire*), and by 1937 exhibitors voted Autry the #1 box-office attraction in westerns, a position he would retain for years to come.

Hit records, such as "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," "Mexicali Rose," "Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle," "Gold Mine in the Sky," "South of the Border (Down Mexico Way)," "Back in the Saddle Again," and "Be Honest With Me," abounded. His smooth, relaxed baritone voice extended his appeal to devotees of mainstream pop music, while the down-home warmth of his delivery assured the country audience he never ceased to be one of them. The virtual antithesis of today's vocalists, he adhered to the melody line with a total absence of vocal gymnastics or bluesy embellishments, with his clear, emotionless delivery evoking both sincerity and serenity.

His screen presence, as gentle and reassuring as his singing style, offered comfort and inspiration to a Depression-weary audience. Invariably cast as himself—that is, Gene Autry—a good-natured and unassuming country singer, he was no superhero, but rather a guileless young man who triumphed over all odds by virtue of his innate goodness. Charismatic and handsome astride his horse Champion, Autry filled his movies with humor (Smiley Burnette was his usual comic sidekick), music, and a minimum of gunplay. In 1940 he was voted the fourth most popular Hollywood star, outpolling Tyrone Power and James Cagney.

Wrigley sponsored the Autry CBS radio series *Melody Ranch* from 1940 through 1956, interrupted only during Autry's service in the Army Air Corps during World War II (he joined voluntarily on July 26, 1942, during a *Melody Ranch* broadcast and served as a transport plane pilot in the Pacific Theater for three years). The postwar years brought more million-selling records, including "Here Comes Santa Claus" (1947), "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" (1949), and "Peter Cottontail" and "Frosty the Snow Man" (both 1950). Autry produced his own feature films from 1947 through 1953 and, shrewdly judging the importance of the new medium (television), became the first major star to appear in his own filmed TV series. *The Gene Autry Show,* produced by Autry's Flying A Productions, was sponsored on CBS-TV by Wrigley from July 23, 1950, through August 7, 1956.

Fulfilling a lifelong fantasy, Autry became owner of the Los Angeles (now Anaheim) Angels baseball team in December 1960. Although he continued to perform sporadically during the next five years, he left the arena before country singers' personal appearances were termed "concerts" and before it became commonplace to attribute artistic genius to country or rock artists. Lavish praise for his talent and his impact on our popular culture has been slow in coming, but he continues to be idolized by generations, including many younger country singers who patterned their lives after his and who cheered his 1969 induction into the COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME.

—Jonathan Guyot Smith

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Blues Singer, 1929–1931: "Booger Rooger Saturday Nite!" (Columbia/Legacy, 1996); *Essential Gene Autry, 1933–1946* (Columbia/Legacy, 1992); *The Christmas Cowboy* (LaserLight, 1993); *Back in the Saddle Again* (Encore, 1977); *22 Legendary Hits* (Sony/Time Warner, 1996)

Hoyt Axton

b. Duncan, Oklahoma, March 25, 1938; d. October 26, 1999

Singer-songwriter and movie actor Hoyt Wayne Axton came by his talent and ambition quite naturally. His mother, Mae Boren Axton (b. Bardwell, Texas, September 14, 1914; d. April 9, 1997) wrote the early ELVIS PRESLEY hit "Heartbreak Hotel" as well as tunes recorded by PATSY CLINE, HANK SNOW, CONWAY TWITTY, and others. For years Mae Axton was a fixture in Nashville's music community as a TV and radio personality, public relations person, journalist, and friend to the stars.

Hoyt Axton began his career as a country-flavored folksinger in the Southern California coffeehouse scene. He made his first significant mark as a songwriter with "Greenback Dollar," an early 1960s hit for the Kingston Trio that has since become a modern folk standard (several other, unrelated folk- and country songs have shared this title). Another Axton original, "The Pusher," was a major hit for the rock group Steppenwolf and was prominently featured in the soundtrack of the 1969 film *Easy Rider.*

Axton recorded for several small record labels beginning in 1961 but had no significant chart action until the mid-1970s. His highest entry in the country charts came with his 1974 Top Ten hit "Boney Fingers" on A&M Records.

Axton flourished in the early 1970s, recording for A&M, MCA, and later his own label, Jeremiah. His songs "Joy to the World" and "Never Been to Spain" were big pop hits for the rock group Three Dog Night. Axton also produced country-rockers Commander Cody & The Lost Planet Airmen's album *Tales from the Ozone.* He signed briefly with ELEKTRA in the early eighties but had scant chart action. Through the years Axton also appeared in a number of feature films, most notably *The Black Stallion* (1979) and *Gremlins* (1984).

—Bob Allen

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Joy to the World (Capitol, 1971); *Snowblind Friend* (MCA, 1977)

The Bailes Brothers

Kyle O. Bailes b. Kanawha County, West Virginia, May 7, 1915; d. March 3, 1996
John Jacob Bailes b. Kanawha County, West Virginia, June 24, 1918; d. December 21, 1989
Walter Butler Bailes b. Kanawha County, West Virginia, January 17, 1920; d. November 27, 2000
Homer Abraham Bailes Jr. b. Kanawha County, West Virginia, May 8, 1922

The Bailes Brothers carried the harmony duet tradition of the thirties into the next two decades. Though there were four brothers, they usually worked in combinations of two. Reared in poverty by a proud, determined, widowed mother on the outskirts of Charleston, West Virginia, various brothers struggled to make it on radio stations in their home state but had little success until John and Walter worked at WSAZ-Huntington in 1942. Two years later ROY ACUFF helped them secure a spot on the GRAND OLE OPRY and a contract with COLUMBIA RECORDS. Their original songs, such as "Dust on the Bible" and "I Want to Be Loved," also helped further their popularity.

At the end of 1946 the brothers went to KWKH in Shreveport, where they helped initiate the *LOUISIANA HAYRIDE* and gave support to the fledgling career of HANK WILLIAMS. By this time brother Homer had joined on fiddle and Kyle on bass. When Walter joined the ministry in 1947, Homer replaced him in the duo. The act broke up at the end of 1949, but John and Walter reformed as a gospel duo in 1953 and recorded for King. In later years various combinations of the brothers got together for occasional recordings and appearances, especially Kyle and Walter, the latter releasing material on his Loyal and White Dove labels. At different times, Homer, John, and Walter also did solo sessions. —*Ivan M. Tribe*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

The Bailes Brothers (Johnnie & Homer): Early Radio Volumes I & II (Old Homestead, 1975, 1976); *The Bailes Brothers (Johnnie & Walter): Early Radio Favorites* (Old Homestead, 1977)

DeFord Bailey

b. Smith County, Tennessee, December 14, 1899; d. July 2, 1982

A pioneer member of the GRAND OLE OPRY and the program's first black star, DeFord Bailey was one of the Opry's most popular early performers. GEORGE D. HAY dubbed him the "Harmonica Wizard" and reported that Bailey's "Pan American Blues"—a country blues rendition of a fast-moving locomotive, the Pan American Express—inspired the actual naming of the Opry.

A harmonica virtuoso, Bailey recorded in 1927 for COLUMBIA (unissued) and BRUNSWICK, and in 1928 for VICTOR, in the first recording sessions that ever took place in Nashville. There, as almost always, he used the simple Hohner Marine Band harmonica. His "harp" classics included "Ice Water Blues," "Old Hen Cackle," "Fox Chase," "Lost John," "Muscle Shoals Blues," "Up Country Blues," "Evening Prayer Blues," and his train tunes. When he played the guitar and banjo, he did so in a unique left-handed, upside-down style.

The grandson of a skilled Smith County fiddler, Bailey moved to Nashville in 1918. His introduction to radio broadcasting came in 1925 on WDAD, Nashville's pioneer station. A few weeks later, with strong encouragement from harmonicist DR. HUMPHREY BATE, he came to WSM ra-

DeFord Bailey

dio, and except for a brief period in 1928–29 on WNOX in Knoxville, he was an Opry regular for nearly fifteen years.

One evening in 1927, following an NBC radio network broadcast of classical music over WSM, Hay introduced a live performance by Bailey by saying that for the past hour listeners had been hearing "grand opera," but now they would be treated to something more down-home, a "Grand Ole Opry." The term stuck, and WSM's *Barn Dance* had a new name.

Bailey performed virtually every Saturday night while frequently going out during the week on road shows throughout the South and Midwest with UNCLE DAVE MACON, the DELMORE BROTHERS, BILL MONROE, ROY ACUFF, and other WSM artists. Bailey was always well received by the white audiences they entertained, but in this heyday of Jim Crow, Bailey faced real hardships in finding accommodations and meals.

Bailey was able to adjust to and deal with the indignities of segregation, but his firing by WSM in 1941 was more devastating to him; although still extremely popular, he had become victim of a BMI-ASCAP performance licensing conflict that disallowed his playing his favorite tunes on the air. Having previously shined shoes, operated a barbecue stand, and rented out rooms in his home for extra money, he now turned to these activities to make a living for himself, his wife, and their three children. He never stopped playing his harp, but rarely performed publicly for the next forty years. When he agreed to perform on the Opry in February 1974, it became the occasion for the first annual Old Timers Show. *—David C. Morton*

Razzy Bailey

b. Five Points, Alabama, February 14, 1939

The musical style that took Rasie Michael Bailey to the top of the charts in the early 1980s reflects what he heard while growing up on his family's southern farm. The singings held in Bailey's house were country, but he also became fascinated with the rhythm & blues of the black farmhands. The genres would later merge in Bailey's singing, guitar playing, and songwriting.

Bailey played with a country band after graduating from high school but later worked in sales during a musical dry spell. He formed a pop trio called Daily Bread in 1958 and recorded for MGM RECORDS in the early 1970s. In 1976 Bailey's song "9,999,999 Tears" provided a career jolt when DICKEY LEE took it to #3 on the country charts. After efforts on small labels, Bailey signed as an artist with RCA RECORDS, and his first RCA release, "What Time Do You Have to Be Back to Heaven," reached the Top Ten in 1978. That ignited an eleven-year chart run that peaked in 1980–81 with five #1 hits, including "Loving Up a Storm" and "She Left Love All Over Me." Bailey later recorded for MCA and SOA Records. *—Gerry Wood*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Greatest Hits (RCA, 1983)

Baillie & the Boys

Kathie Baillie b. Morristown, New Jersey, February 20, 1951
Michael Bonagura b. Newark, New Jersey, March 26, 1953

Kathie Baillie was among a group of women who fronted country-rock bands in the 1980s. Her yearning soprano voice led Baillie & the Boys into the country Top Ten in 1987 with "Oh Heart," co-written with DON SCHLITZ. The group scored a total of seven Top Ten records between 1987 and 1991.

Baillie & the Boys began as a trio consisting of Baillie, Michael Bonagura, and Alan LeBoeuf. Bonagura and LeBoeuf had been in a group together in 1968, and when Bonagura met Baillie, their voices blended well. The trio got its start in 1973 in New York City, providing studio backup and singing commercials.

Baillie and Bonagura married in 1977 and decided to try for success in Nashville in 1980. LeBoeuf joined them later. Many years of work followed, in which Bonagura waited tables and Baillie was an aerobics instructor and receptionist. Each had songwriting contracts, and they found opportunities to sing back up on records by ANNE MURRAY, VINCE GILL, and RANDY TRAVIS. Their efforts resulted in an RCA recording contract in 1986.

After LeBoeuf left in 1988, Baillie and Bonagura were billed as a husband-wife duo, with both writing more extensively. *Lovin' Every Minute*—a 1996 recording project with Roger McVay—is on Intersound. *—Mary A. Bufwack*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

The Best of Baillie and the Boys (RCA, 1991)

Kenny Baker

b. Jenkins, Kentucky, June 26, 1926

For nearly twenty years, bluegrass patriarch BILL MONROE introduced sideman Kenneth Baker as "the greatest fiddler in bluegrass music." Monroe wasn't exaggerating simply because Baker worked for him. Few musicians have had the impact on bluegrass Baker has had. His jazzy, swinglike arrangements of traditional numbers, smooth long-bow technique, and ability to write freshly original tunes have made him a favorite on the bluegrass circuit for four decades.

A third-generation fiddler from the coal mining town of Jenkins, Kentucky, Baker picked up the family fiddle at about age eight but soon switched over to guitar. Baker's father, Thaddeus, reportedly did not think his son capable of doing justice to old-time fiddle tunes such as "Grey Eagle" and "Lost John."

After dropping out of high school while in his teens, Baker enlisted in the navy during World War II and served in the Pacific Theater. After his discharge, Baker returned to Jenkins and took a day job with Consolidated Coal Company. He was playing local dances when DON GIBSON hired him in 1953. Bill Monroe first saw Baker while working with Gibson on Knoxville's *Tennessee Barn Dance* and promptly offered Baker a job.

In 1956 Baker joined Monroe's band. Two years later he and Bobby Hicks twin-fiddled on the Monroe instrumentals "Scotland" and "Panhandle Country." Baker also cut a handful of sides with Austin Wood for the Sure label.

With the responsibilities of raising a family, Baker left the band and returned to the mines, where income was steady. He rejoined Monroe's band for less than a year, in 1962–63—just long enough to bring singer DEL MCCOURY and banjo player BILL KEITH into the fold. Baker left in about June 1963 and rejoined for the final time in 1967.

That same year Baker recorded the album *High Country* with Joe Greene for COUNTY RECORDS. Baker's first solo al-

bum, *Portrait of a Bluegrass Fiddler,* was released on County in 1968. His most popular recording is probably his tribute album to his boss, *Kenny Baker Plays Bill Monroe* (County, 1976).

Baker left Monroe in 1985 and joined forces with dobro player JOSH GRAVES. He toured and recorded with Graves, banjo player Eddie Adcock, and mandolinist Jesse McReynolds as The Masters. Still touring and recording with Graves, Baker spends his spare time working on his farm just outside of Nashville. —*Chris Skinker*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Portrait of a Bluegrass Fiddler (County, 1968); *Kenny Baker Plays Bill Monroe* (County, 1976)

Bakersfield

Bakersfield, in California's Kern County, spawned and exported so much country music from the 1940s through the 1970s that, by the late 1960s, some observers called it "Nashville West." (BUCK OWENS countered: "We call Nashville Bakersfield East.") The seeds for this phenomenon were sown by the Depression-era tide of migrants from Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas into the agriculture- and oil-rich San Joaquin Valley (as author Nicholas Dawidoff has noted, today Kern County grows more crops than all but two of America's counties and produces more oil than all but three of the world's *countries*). By the time their Texas-born hero BOB WILLS settled in the San Fernando Valley in 1945, Bakersfield had such dance halls as the Beardsley Garden & Rhythm Rancho to host the era's western swing bands and the huge crowds they drew. Radio station KGEE began broadcasts of BILL WOODS & the Orange Blossom Playboys in 1946, and the local scene perked up with the opening of such "drinking and fighting" clubs as the Corral and the Blackboard. It was in such places that the scaled-down, amped-up version of western swing and honky-tonk later dubbed the "Bakersfield sound" was honed in the 1950s. This harder-edged musical style contrasted with—and commercially rivaled—the smoother NASHVILLE SOUND, then in its ascendancy in the East. Bill Woods's band was a proving ground through which BILLY MIZE, Buck Owens, and MERLE HAGGARD passed. Other key players on the scene were FERLIN HUSKY, TOMMY COLLINS, and the influential but underrated WYNN STEWART.

The 1950s was the era when the creative spark ignited Bakersfield. However, it wasn't until the mid-sixties, when Buck Owens built his Bakersfield-based empire (radio stations, publishing companies, and the management of local talent, including Merle Haggard for a time), that the notion of Bakersfield as an upstart country music center spread. For all Buck's local boosterism, he and his hometown's finest musicians still made the one-hundred-mile drive south to Hollywood to record. RED SIMPSON and a few other Bakersfield-based artists enjoyed hits well into the 1970s, but the hopes of "Nashville West" were never realized. However, the Los Angeles alternative country artists of the 1980s viewed 1960s Bakersfield as the embodiment of a golden age. As a tribute, producer Pete Anderson delivered two anthologies of L.A. alternative country acts called *A Town South of Bakersfield Volumes I & II* in 1985 and 1988. The crowning glory of the Bakersfield consciousness of the 1980s was the DWIGHT YOAKAM–Buck Owens duet "Streets of Bakersfield," a # 1 hit in 1988.

—*Mark Humphrey*

Dewey Balfa

b. Grand Louis, Louisiana, March 20, 1927; d. June 17, 1992

Dewey Balfa and his brothers provided some of the best examples of traditional Cajun music ever put on record. Their unique style of toning down the accordion and featuring the fiddles, and of taking the words of old ballads and putting them to dance hall–type arrangements, made their music richly varied and broad in scope.

Dewey Balfa and his eight brothers and sisters were born into the family of sharecropper Charles Balfa, and it was from their father and grandmother Marie Richard that Dewey and his brothers learned much of their music. In 1948 Dewey, Will, and Harry Balfa formed a band, the Musical Brothers, with accordionist Hadley Fontenot. They played at local dances, and for many years hosted a live weekend radio program at Mouche's Lounge in Basile.

In 1964 Dewey Balfa performed at the Newport Folk Festival in Rhode Island; three years later he returned to the festival with brothers Will and Rodney (both of whom would die in a car wreck in 1979), along with daughter Nelda and Hadley Fontenot. The Balfas recorded for Swallow and other labels, and Dewey Balfa became known as a major ambassador of the Cajun culture. —*Ann Allen Savoy*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

The Balfa Brothers Play Traditional Cajun Music Volumes 1 & 2 (Swallow, 1987); *J'ai Vu le Loup* (Rounder, 1988)

David Ball

b. Rock Hill, South Carolina, July 9, 1953

After years on the fringes of Austin's and Nashville's progressive music scene, David Ball finally found commercial success in the mid-1990s with a solid brand of Texas honky-tonk music exemplified by his 1994 WARNER BROS. album *Thinkin' Problem.*

The son of a Baptist minister, Ball began appearing on the folk festival circuit while still in high school. During the 1970s, he joined forces with Walter Hyatt and DesChamps Hood in an eclectic Austin-based trio, Uncle Walt's Band, which played a blend of stringband, swing, and pop harmony music that was ahead of its time; Ball played string bass in the band. In Austin Ball became deeply enamored of RANDY TRAVIS's 1985 breakthrough album *Storms of Life,* and of the western swing bands that he heard around Austin.

Ball's initial attempt to enter the Nashville scene in the late 1980s was disastrous. Signed to RCA RECORDS in 1987, he cut nearly two albums' worth of material in 1988 and 1989, most of which went unreleased at the time. None of his three RCA singles that were released went higher than #46.

But after a hiatus, Ball found new life, and a new sense of direction in the honky-tonk vein as both a writer and a musician. *Thinkin' Problem* was produced by Blake Chancey, and the honky-tonk title tune, which hit #2 on the *Billboard* country chart, was one of 1994's surprise hits. Unfortunately, Ball's equally strong follow-up album, *Starlite Lounge,* did not produce any hits to rival the impact of "Thinkin' Problem." —*Bob Allen*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

David Ball (RCA, 1994); *Thinkin' Problem* (Warner Bros., 1994); *Starlite Lounge* (Warner Bros., 1996)

Ballads

In modern country, the term *ballad* is often used (rather vaguely) to refer to any slow, emotive love song, a usage borrowed from popular music of the big band era. In a more holistic sense, however, the term *ballad* refers to a specific song type that has been a staple of country music from its earliest days. In the folk music that formed the foundation for much country music, the ballad was a narrative song—one that told a story. Many originated in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and ballads such as "Barbara Allen," "The House Carpenter," and "The Wexford Girl," many of which dealt with murder and romance, became as popular in America as in England. By the early nineteenth century Americans were developing their own native ballads, some circulated orally, others by broadsides (sheets of paper or small cards) and in cheap songsters, or songbooks. These pieces have been studied and classified by scholar Malcolm Laws and are generally known as Laws ballads.

In the 1920s a new type of ballad emerged, one written by commercial songwriters for specific use on the first generation of country records, and referred to by the record industry as the "event song." Many of these were first cousins to the older broadside ballads, which often dealt with recent historical or topical events. As early as 1924, with ERNEST STONEMAN's OKEH recording of "The Sinking of the Titanic" and VERNON DALHART's Victor recording of "The Wreck of the Old 97," pioneer country recording artists had set the stage for this new style. When Dalhart's disc went on to become country's first million-seller, the companies began falling all over themselves to find and issue more such ballads.

The year 1925 was the high-water mark for such efforts, with Dalhart's recording of "The Death of Floyd Collins," about a caver trapped in a Kentucky sand cave, and "Little Mary Phagan," about a sensational murder in Georgia, selling more than 300,000 copies for COLUMBIA. In fact, of the seven best-selling Columbia records for 1925, only two did not have some sort of event song. These ranged from "The Scopes Trial" to "The Santa Barbara Earthquake," both events that were still dominating the headlines. Among the songwriters who specialized in these songs were Atlanta evangelist REV. ANDREW JENKINS, Memphis native BOB MILLER, and then Dalhart partner CARSON ROBISON.

The commercial boom in event songs was short-lived, and within a couple of years other types of country songs were dominating the field. Through the 1920s and 1930s, companies and singers repeatedly tried to resurrect topical songs, with pieces such as "The Death of Jimmie Rodgers" (GENE AUTRY), "The Fate of Will Rogers and Wiley Post" (Bob Miller), and "Amelia Earhart's Last Flight" (RED RIVER DAVE). In the 1940s, folk-based murder ballads such as "The Hills of Roane County" (the BLUE SKY BOYS, BILL MONROE) and "Tragic Romance" (GRANDPA JONES, the MORRIS BROTHERS, COWBOY COPAS) achieved widespread popularity.

In the 1960s, on the heels of the folk music revival, a new cycle of ballads began appearing on the charts. Sometimes called "saga songs," they included items such as "The Battle of New Orleans" (JIMMY DRIFTWOOD, JOHNNY HORTON) and MARTY ROBBINS's remarkable "El Paso." LEFTY FRIZZELL's "The Long Black Veil" so successfully copied the old folk ballad style that many assumed this commercially written number was a genuine traditional folksong.

Though most modern country songs are technically lyrics—songs that express emotion and are highly subjective—the older ballad forms and techniques continue to infuse and influence modern songwriters, as evidenced in DON SCHLITZ's "The Gambler," a monster hit for superstar KENNY ROGERS. And many of the ballads themselves continue to survive in repertoires of bluegrass and more traditional country singers. —*Charles Wolfe*

A. V. Bamford

b. Havana, Cuba, April 5, 1909; d. July 8, 2003

Alfred Vincent Bamford was a major promoter of concerts during the surge in popularity of country music in the 1950s. He came to the United States at age fourteen. After attending military school in Pennsylvania, the University of Alabama, and New York University, Bamford sold radio advertising and managed radio stations before entering the concert booking field in San Francisco in the late 1930s. He promoted shows for Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, and others before switching to country music in the late 1940s, when he worked for BOB WILLS. Promoter OSCAR DAVIS introduced Bamford to JIM DENNY, who represented GRAND OLE OPRY acts, and Bamford soon became one of country music's top promoters. He was promoting HANK WILLIAMS's shows at the time of Hank's death, and he handled early country music dates for ELVIS PRESLEY. In later years, Bamford owned and managed several country music radio stations. —*Al Cunniff*

Moe Bandy

b. Meridian, Mississippi, February 12, 1944

From the time he made his breakthrough record "I Just Started Hatin' Cheatin' Songs Today" in 1974 and until he left the COLUMBIA label in 1986, Marion Franklin Bandy Jr. seldom strayed from the Texas honky-tonk style on which he was nurtured. With a smooth and crisply articulated vocal style, performed to the accompaniment of fiddles and pedal steel guitar, Bandy thrived commercially at a time when most country musicians were experimenting with country-pop sounds and striving for crossover acceptance. His clean-cut, choirboy looks stood in dramatic contrast to the long string of songs about hurting, drinking, and cheating that he placed on the country charts.

Bandy grew up in San Antonio listening to the music of visiting country stars and to his father's band, the Mission City Playboys. His first commercially released recording was the self-penned "Lonely Lady" on the Satin label in 1964. Ten years later he was working as a sheet metal worker and playing music in local clubs at night, when Nashville producer Ray Baker became his manager. Baker and Bandy independently produced a recording of "I Just Started Hatin' Cheatin' Songs Today" on the Footprint label and eventually got it released on the independent Atlanta label GRC, where it became a Top Twenty hit. After signing with Columbia Records in 1975, several hits followed, including "It Was Always So Easy to Find an Unhappy Woman" and "Bandy the Rodeo Clown," both written by WHITEY SHAFER, and "Hank Williams, You Wrote My Life," from the pen of PAUL CRAFT. In the post-Columbia years, Bandy has strayed often from the honky-tonk style and has enjoyed only indifferent success. His recordings with JOE STAMPLEY (1979–85), which exploited the stereotype of the southern "good ole boy," were marked gener-

ally by good humor and self-mockery. Bandy now appears at his own Americana Theater in BRANSON, Missouri.

—Bill C. Malone

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Greatest Hits (Columbia, 1982); *Greatest Hits* (Curb, 1990)

Banjo

Generically, banjos are plucked or strummed stringed instruments whose distinctive tone stems from the strings being supported by a bridge that rests on a tightly stretched skin membrane. Historically, American banjos are descendants of a broadly related family of lutes developed in West Africa from earlier Middle Eastern models. The slave trade brought banjo prototypes to the New World, where such powerful transforming forces as nineteenth-century minstrelsy and mass manufacture changed the banjo and its associated playing styles many times over.

The family of banjos today includes four-string tenors (similar to the standard banjo but with a shorter neck and no fifth string), plectrums (so called because they are played with a plectrum, and in form identical to the standard banjo but with no fifth string), and six-string guitar-banjos. Most common now is the five-string banjo, on which the "fifth string" is a short string usually tuned to function as a high drone or "chanterelle." Five-string banjos may be found in open-back folk or old-time types using gut or steel strings and also in resonator-backed variations, almost always steel-strung. Banjos may be fretted or fretless, acoustic or electric, mass-manufactured or individually handcrafted.

The banjo is visually and aurally one of the most recognizable instruments associated with country music. To early recordings and broadcasts of country music the banjo brought not only its distinctive frailing or finger-picked sounds, but also its African and minstrel connotations. In both the nineteenth-century minstrel show and the early twentieth-century country music show, banjo players typically played comedy roles and were often musically marginal, although they were significant symbolically and for their tonal contributions within an ensemble. Beginning in the 1940s, Pete Seeger's revival of the five-string banjo to accompany folk music began to introduce the instrument to new northern and urban audiences. At the same time, the emergent sound of bluegrass music, built in large part around the stylistic breakthrough into a smooth three-finger picking style of EARL SCRUGGS, began to stimulate yet another renaissance for this ancient instrument. Today the banjo is enormously popular around the world, particularly the five-string form played in bluegrass and other forms of folk and country music.

—Thomas A. Adler

Bar X Cowboys

Founded by fiddler Ben Christian (1885–1956) in Houston in 1932, the prolific and long-lived Bar X Cowboys were the city's first organized country dance band. More musically conservative than most western swing bands in the area, the Cowboys responded less to jazz and blues than their contemporaries, and their straightforward approach ensured their popularity, especially in the German communities west of Houston. The band first recorded for DECCA in 1937. It recorded for BLUEBIRD in the years 1940–41, by which time steel guitarist-composer TED DAFFAN had been added to its lineup. Bandleader Ben Christian departed in 1940 to form his own group, with his brother Elwood "Elmer" Christian (1892–1970) taking the helm, although JERRY IRBY, who replaced guitarist-vocalist Chuck Keeshan in 1941, was the band's front man until 1947. Irby's replacement, Paul Brown (b. 1911), bought the Bar X Cowboys from Elmer Christian in 1949 and kept a band going through the early fifties. The group recorded for several small concerns after the war, including Globe, Macy's, and Nucraft, its biggest hit coming with "Cocain Blues [*sic*]," on the Eddy's label in 1948.

—Kevin Coffey

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

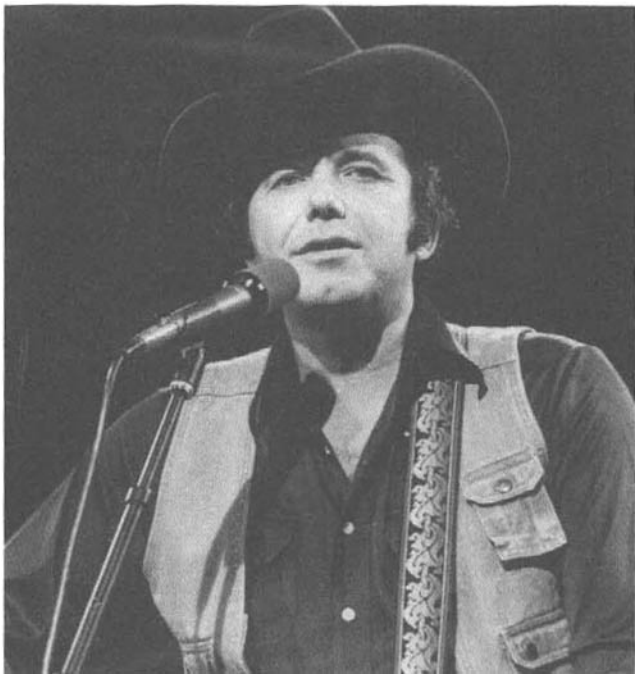
Stompin' at the Honky-Tonk (String, 1978) (various-artists reissue containing a 1937 recording by the Bar X Cowboys); *Western Swing, Volume Three* (Old Timey, 1975) (various-artists reissue containing a 1940 recording by the Bar X Cowboys); *Cat'n Around* (Krazy Kat, 1992) (various-artists reissue containing a 1949 recording by the Bar X Cowboys)

Bobby Bare

b. Lawrence County, near Ironton, Ohio, April 7, 1935

Innovative and smart, funny and very laid back, Robert Joseph Bare has taken an eclectic approach to music that has variously identified him as a storyteller, humorist, folkie, and country OUTLAW. In addition, his instinct for songs (he is described by longtime friend WAYLON JENNINGS as "the best songhound in the world") has led to associations with many of country music's greatest songwriters, including KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, BILLY JOE SHAVER, MICKEY NEWBURY, BOB MCDILL, TOM T. HALL, HARLAN HOWARD, and RODNEY CROWELL. Numerous collaborative efforts with the eccentric songwriter-author-cartoonist SHEL SILVERSTEIN are among Bare's most notable artistic achievements.

Born and raised on a hillside farm at the southernmost tip of Ohio, Bare moved to Springfield as a teenager, and



Bobby Bare

it was there that his musical career began. Arriving in the Los Angeles area in December 1953, he soon became friends with steel guitarist SPEEDY WEST, songwriter Harlan Howard, and singer-songwriter WYNN STEWART.

Bare recorded briefly for the CAPITOL and CHALLENGE labels in the mid-fifties and was signed to write songs for Opal Music. He had just been drafted into the army in November 1958 when he agreed to help an old friend, Bill Parsons, record some demos for a possible record deal. At the session, Bare sang an unfinished song, "All-American Boy," intending for Parsons to learn and record it later. The acetates were copied at Cincinnati's Fraternity Records studio, and Fraternity decided to release the demo as it was. By the time Bare had finished basic training several weeks later, the record was a huge pop hit, eventually rising to #2. Ironically, Parsons was credited as both singer and writer because of Bare's preexisting contracts with Challenge and Opal.

Bare continued to record for Fraternity for the next several years until he signed with CHET ATKINS and RCA in early 1962. The following year, Bare's version of the MEL TILLIS-DANNY DILL song "Detroit City" became his first Top Ten country hit (also a Top Twenty pop hit) and earned him a Grammy for Best Country & Western Recording. Subsequent hits with "500 Miles Away from Home," "Miller's Cave," and "Four Strong Winds" closely associated him with the folk music movement of the early 1960s. He moved to Nashville in 1964.

During the sixties, along with his solo RCA albums, Bare recorded two LPs with SKEETER DAVIS, one with NORMA JEAN and LIZ ANDERSON, and another with the British country group the Hillsiders. He recorded for MERCURY in 1970–72, then returned to RCA. In 1973 he cut his first album with Silverstein, *Lullabys, Legends and Lies,* which produced a #2 hit duet with his five-year-old son, Bobby Jr. ("Daddy, What If"), and his first #1 song, "Marie Laveau."

Bare has since recorded for COLUMBIA and EMI, and in the mid-eighties he was the host of the critically acclaimed *Bobby Bare and Friends* TV show on THE NASHVILLE NETWORK. —*Dale Vinicur*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

All-American Boy (Bear Family Records, 1994) (4 discs); *Margie's at the Lincoln Park Inn* (RCA, 1969); *Lullabys, Legends and Lies* (RCA, 1973); *Hard Time Hungrys* (RCA, 1975); *Drunk & Crazy* (Columbia, 1980)

Benny Barnes

b. Beaumont, Texas, January 1, 1936; d. August 27, 1987

As a youth, Ben Milam Barnes Jr. sang for Beaumont civic groups, but family tradition coaxed him to become an oilfield roughneck during his teens. After an oil-rig injury, Barnes pursued his musical leanings and landed a job singing with guitar in a local lounge.

In 1956 Benny Barnes, now an exponent of classic honky-tonk country, was invited to participate on a STARDAY RECORDS session of fellow Beaumont resident GEORGE JONES, which prompted an on-the-spot audition for Barnes singing "Poor Man's Riches." Barnes's 1957 Starday release of the song charted #2 in *Billboard* and led to his late 1950s stint on Shreveport's *LOUISIANA HAYRIDE.*

Ultimately Barnes recorded for many companies, including MERCURY and RCA. "Poor Old Me," "Penalty," "Yearning," and "Gold Records in the Snow" (a tribute to BUDDY HOLLY, J. P. Richardson, and Ritchie Valens) are among his successful recordings. —*Bob Pinson*

Max D. Barnes

b. Hardscratch, Iowa, July 24, 1936; d. January 11, 2004

Max Duane Barnes emerged in the eighties as one of MUSIC ROW's leading songwriters with concise, miniature dramas such as "Storms of Life" and "Chiseled in Stone." Raised in Nebraska, Barnes attended Omaha South High. Jobs as a farmhand, carpenter, and long-distance trucker instilled in him an abiding respect for the struggles of the working class. His music career began in earnest with his self-penned record "Ribbons of Steel," released on John Denny's JED label in 1971. After signing a publishing contract with the Denny family's CEDARWOOD firm in 1972, Barnes moved to Nashville on May 1, 1973. His first song to hit the charts came in 1979 with CONWAY TWITTY's recording of "Don't Take It Away." It was followed by another Twitty hit, "Redneckin', Love Makin' Night" (1981), written with Barnes's friend and frequent co-writer Troy Seals. Other Barnes-Seals collaborations include "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes" (GEORGE JONES, 1985), "Storms of Life" (RANDY TRAVIS, 1985), "Ten Feet Away" (KEITH WHITLEY, 1986), and "I Won't Need You Anymore (Always and Forever)" (Travis, 1987). Barnes enjoyed particular success cowriting with VERN GOSDIN. Their compositions include "Do You Believe Me Now" (1987) and "Chiseled in Stone" (1988), the 1989 CMA Song of the Year. Barnes took the Song of the Year award again in 1992 with "Look at Us," written with VINCE GILL. Barnes attributed his long run of success to a simple rule of thumb: "I try to write so there's no confusion. Country music is for ordinary people. That's what I am, and I don't ever want to get above that."

Barnes's son Max Troy Barnes (b. October 25, 1962) is a successful tunesmith in his own right. Among his hit songs are "Love, Me" (COLLIN RAYE, 1991), "Before You Kill Us All" (Randy Travis, 1994), and "Way Down Deep" (Vern Gosdin, 1983), a collaboration with Barnes Sr.

—*Kent Henderson*

Mandy Barnett

b. Crossville, Tennessee, September 28, 1975

When twenty-one-year-old Amanda Carol "Mandy" Barnett celebrated the release of her debut album in 1996, she was already a country music celebrity, having found both critical and popular acclaim portraying PATSY CLINE in the RYMAN AUDITORIUM's theater production of *Always . . . Patsy Cline.* During her two-season run (1994–95), Barnett's vocal impression of Cline astounded many country fans and critics.

Although her childhood included a stint as secretary of a chapter of the Future Farmers of America and as a homecoming queen, Barnett's one goal was to sing. When she was ten, she won the Best Country Act contest at Dollywood, the famed Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, theme park. An offer of employment at Dollywood followed, and by the time she was twelve, Barnett was visiting Nashville regularly to sing on the ERNEST TUBB Record Shop's Midnite Jamboree.

After being invited by JUSTIN TUBB to perform on the GRAND OLE OPRY, Barnett began making the rounds of Nashville's clubs to sing for industry executives. By age

thirteen she had been signed to Universal Records by famed producer-executive JIMMY BOWEN, who subsequently took her with him to LIBERTY RECORDS. She spent five years in a developmental deal that allowed her the opportunity to learn what kind of music she wanted to sing.

Released from the Liberty contract, Barnett was signed to ASYLUM RECORDS in 1995 by label president KYLE LEHNING, the producer who had helped launch RANDY TRAVIS's career. Her debut Asylum album, *Mandy Barnett,* afforded her the opportunity to demonstrate the breadth of her vocal prowess and musical vision. Though not a major commercial success, the album was generally well received by critics.

In 1997 Barnett moved to the Sire label and was working on a new album with Hall of Fame producer OWEN BRADLEY before his death on January 7, 1998.

—Janet E. Williams

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Mandy Barnett (Asylum, 1996)

Bashful Brother Oswald

b. Sevier County, Tennessee, December 26, 1911; d. October 17, 2002

The shimmery cry of Bashful Brother Oswald's dobro was an essential part of the signature sound of ROY ACUFF's Smoky Mountain Boys for more than a half century. Oswald also sang high harmony with Acuff, frailed banjo, and did rube comedy with the Smoky Mountain Boys, but his distinctive dobro lines on such 1940s classics as "The Wreck on the Highway" are Oswald's true legacy. His Hawaiian-style playing underlined the pathos of such Acuff performances as "The Precious Jewel," and it was Oswald's persistent presence on radio, record, and stage that saved the dobro, a missing link between acoustic Hawaiian and electric steel guitars, from likely oblivion after World War II preempted production.

Beecher Ray Kirby was one of the eleven children of George Wesley Kirby, who provided for his brood by barbering, moonshining, and leading shape-note "singing schools." In 1929 Beecher, who preferred to be called Pete, left the Smoky Mountains for Flint, Michigan, to join an uncle working at the Buick factory. The Depression kept Kirby off the assembly line, but it was in Flint that he encountered a Hawaiian guitarist named Rudy Waikiki whose playing he emulated. He bought a metal National Hawaiian guitar and in 1933 was performing in Chicago-area bars, theaters, and burlesque houses by night while working as a cook at the Century of Progress Exposition by day.

Kirby was back on native turf in 1936, working at a Knoxville bakery and occasionally filling in for dobroist Clell Summey (a.k.a. Cousin Jody) in Roy Acuff's Crazy Tennesseeans. Acuff remembered him and sent for him from Nashville after Summey and other members of his band, renamed the Smoky Mountain Boys, quit on New Year's Day 1939. Kirby first appeared on the GRAND OLE OPRY on January 7, 1939. Later that year Acuff dubbed him Bashful Brother Oswald when singer-banjoist Rachel Veach ("Queen of the Hills") joined Acuff's troupe. An unescorted female was considered scandalous by enough of Acuff's audience to require the ruse of a "brother" in the band as Veach's guardian.

Bashful Brother Oswald was the sole member of the 1939 Smoky Mountain Boys still accompanying Acuff at the time of his death in 1992. Oswald was finally inducted into the Grand Ole Opry on January 21, 1995.

—Mark Humphrey

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Brother Oswald (Rounder, 1976); *The Best of Oswald* (Country Heritage, 1986; reissued by Rounder, 1995)

Dr. Humphrey Bate

b. Castalian Springs, Sumner County, Tennessee, May 25, 1875; d. June 12, 1936

GEORGE D. HAY called Dr. Humphrey Bate "the Dean of the GRAND OLE OPRY," and for the first decade of the show it was Dr. Bate's colorful band, the Possum Hunters, that served as the Opry's musical anchor. Dr. Bate's band was also the first to play country music over Nashville radio (in 1925) and the first to play on WSM radio. Dr. Bate was a close friend of Opry founder Hay and was responsible for getting on the show numerous other pioneer performers, such as the CROOK BROTHERS and DEFORD BAILEY.

Dr. Bate was a genuine country doctor, a graduate of Vanderbilt who enjoyed classical music. At heart, though, he was a skilled harmonica player who had learned much of his repertoire on his father's middle Tennessee plantation; by World War I he was running two or three separate bands. Dr. Bate's groups were large by stringband standards—often containing two fiddles, two guitars, a banjo, a harmonica, a cello, and a bowed bass. His repertoire, some of which he preserved on record for BRUNSWICK in 1928, included "Old Joe," "Greenback Dollar," and "Going Uptown" (the first sheet music published by an Opry star). Key members of the Possum Hunters included fiddlers Oscar Stone and Bill Barret as well as banjoist Walter Ligget. Dr. Bate's records, numbering only twelve sides, are generally considered to be among the finest and most complex of any in old-time music.

Dr. Bate died in 1936, though his band continued to play on the Opry. His son Buster performed on the show for a few years, and his daughter Alcyone Bate Beasley remained a singer on WSM throughout the 1950s.

—Charles Wolfe

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Nashville: The Early String Bands, Volumes 1 and 2 (County, 1976)

Eddie Bayers

b. Pautaxant, Maryland, January 28, 1949

One of the top studio drummers of country music's modern era, Edward Howard Bayers Jr. received his career break when he was employed by record producer JIM ED NORMAN to work on the soundtrack for the movie *URBAN COWBOY.* Bayers played on MICKEY GILLEY's "Stand By Me" and ANNE MURRAY's "Could I Have This Dance," both #1 hits from *Urban Cowboy,* and his more recent credits have included ALAN JACKSON's "Here in the Real World" and VINCE GILL's "When I Call Your Name." At one time Bayers was the drummer on the top eleven country albums and top thirteen country singles listed in *Billboard.*

The son of a fighter pilot, Bayers grew up living in such varied locations as a Maryland air force base (where he was born), San Diego, and North Africa. Originally a keyboard

player, he shifted to drums as his primary instrument once he became a fixture on the Nashville music scene in the mid-1970s.

In the mid-1980s Bayers nearly lost his place among the top session players when he suffered a broken left wrist. The injury kept him out of work for a year, and after his recovery several producers were reticent about hiring him, believing his skills had deteriorated.

Most of the industry disagreed. During the 1990s Bayers received the ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC's top drummer honor five straight years, and he was nominated as the COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION's musician of the year four times. —*Tom Roland*

Bean Blossom

established in Bean Blossom, Indiana, June 1967

The event now referred to as the Granddaddy of Bluegrass Festivals started when BILL MONROE staged his first weekend event in June 1967 at his music park in Bean Blossom, Indiana. In planning the festival, Monroe was following the lead of promoter CARLTON HANEY, who staged similar events in 1965 and 1966. Washington, D.C.–area DJ and promoter Don Owens and BILL CLIFTON had also organized one-day bluegrass events, in 1960 and 1961, respectively.

Prior to the founding of Bean Blossom, the local Brown County Jamboree, started by area businessmen, had been entertaining the populace since 1931. Local talent usually played the weekend shows. In 1951 Monroe purchased the Jamboree's property and hired his brother Birch as the Jamboree's manager. Bill Monroe booked many of his peers at the GRAND OLE OPRY, including ROY ACUFF, ERNEST TUBB, and KITTY WELLS. He also provided a venue for older artists such as FIDDLIN' ARTHUR SMITH and CLAYTON MCMICHEN.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Monroe expanded the festival to ten days. Beginning in about 1977, Monroe added a second annual festival, usually scheduled near his birthday, on September 13.

Bill Monroe's Bean Blossom festival, continued by his son James since Monroe's 1996 death, is the longest-running bluegrass festival in the United States and has inspired countless others. —*Chris Skinker*

BeauSoleil (*see* Michael Doucet & BeauSoleil)

Jim Beck

b. Marshall, Texas, August 11, 1916; d. May 3, 1956

Jim Beck was a Dallas recording engineer who, but for a tragic accident, might well have changed the course of country music. As it was, his brief stint in the limelight, 1950–56, made an important impact on a number of artists, including LEFTY FRIZZELL, RAY PRICE, BILLY WALKER, and others; indeed, any singer from the Southwest who came up in the 1950s knew of Beck's legendary Dallas studio and the hits produced there. When COLUMBIA A&R man DON LAW began his work to revamp the old Columbia catalogue in the early 1950s, he recorded more in Beck's studio than in Nashville or New York, and for a time it seemed that Dallas might emerge as the country recording center.

By all accounts, Beck was something of a self-taught engineering genius who had built a working radio station in his bedroom by the time he was fourteen. During World War II he got more experience in the army with broadcasting and recording techniques; in 1945 he returned to Dallas and built his first recording studio to do contract work. At first his main client was the army itself, but soon, to support his studio, he had to go to work as an announcer at KRLD, then developing into a powerful country station through the *BIG D JAMBOREE*. It was there that Beck learned to appreciate country music.

Beck eventually borrowed enough money to open a regular studio on Ross Avenue in Dallas, where he made the first demo recordings of Lefty Frizzell. These not only launched Frizzell's career (the singer would use the Beck studio to do most of his early hits) but also brought Beck to the attention of Columbia's Don Law, who began to use his operation as the primary base for Columbia's country product. The word spread, as Beck also engineered for Nashville's BULLET label, SYD NATHAN's KING label, as well as for IMPERIAL and DECCA. Artists going through his studio ranged from Ray Price to Fats Domino, and from Sid King to classical pianist Gregor Sandor. His contacts allowed Beck to make regular trips to New York to look over the latest innovations in sound technology there; often he would return to Dallas, reproduce the changes, and make improvements in them.

Beck's star in the music industry was still rising when he died tragically in 1956; he had been cleaning his recording machine heads with carbon tetrachloride and had forgotten to open the windows for ventilation. The poison lodged in his system, and he died a few weeks later.

—*Charles Wolfe*

Barry Beckett

b. Birmingham, Alabama, February 4, 1943

After a lengthy stint as a member of the acclaimed house rhythm section at the Fame recording studio in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, keyboardist Barry Edward Beckett went on to become a prominent Nashville-based producer, with credits ranging from Etta James and Bob Seger to CONFEDERATE RAILROAD, LORRIE MORGAN, and EMILIO.

Beckett was playing in a lounge band in Pensacola, Florida, when he met "Papa Don" Schroeder, a local disc jockey and sometime record producer. Schroeder brought Beckett to Muscle Shoals, where Beckett's first hit session was James and Bobby Purify's "I'm Your Puppet" (Bell Records, 1966). "About a year later," Beckett recalled, "[producer] Rick Hall was about to expand Fame studios, and the musicians asked me if I'd like to come up and play with them, full-time."

The Fame rhythm section, which then included Jimmy Johnson, David Hood, Roger Hawkins, Junior Lowe, and Beckett, played on hits including Wilson Pickett's "Land of 1,000 Dances," Aretha Franklin's "I Never Loved a Man," and Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman." Later, Beckett, Johnson, Hawkins, and Hood opened their own Muscle Shoals Recording Studios, where they backed Paul Simon (*There Goes Rhymin' Simon*), BOB DYLAN (*Slow Train Coming*), and Bob Seger (*Night Moves*).

After producing hits including Mary MacGregor's "Torn Between Two Lovers" (Ariola America, 1976) and the Sanford-Townsend Band's "Smoke from a Distant Fire" (Warner Bros., 1977), Beckett moved to Nashville in 1982, where he became director of A&R for WARNER

BROS.'s country division and co-produced HANK WILLIAMS JR. with JIM ED NORMAN.

After leaving Warner Bros. to produce independently, Beckett worked with ALABAMA, ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL, Kenny Chesney, JASON & THE SCORCHERS, DELBERT MCCLINTON, NEAL MCCOY, K. T. OSLIN, LEE ROY PARNELL, and EDDY RAVEN, among others. In the early 1990s Beckett began producing international rock acts, including Brendan Croker, Feargal Sharkey, and the Waterboys. —*Todd Everett*

Bob Beckham

b. Stratford, Oklahoma, July 8, 1927

Robert Joseph Beckham has been active in Nashville publishing circles since he began as a song plugger for LOWERY MUSIC in 1961. After a stint with SHELBY SINGLETON Music, he joined COMBINE MUSIC in 1964, becoming president in 1966. There he helped build the careers of DOLLY PARTON, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, RAY STEVENS, JERRY REED, Dennis Linde, and TONY JOE WHITE, among others.

Beckham started in entertainment with a traveling show at age eight. He worked in movies (*Junior G Men, Star Maker*) in California but returned to Oklahoma in 1940, attending school before he became an army paratrooper at seventeen. After a postwar stint as an electrician, he worked in radio with Arthur Godfrey, enjoyed two Top Forty pop hits as a singer ("Just As Much As Ever," "Crazy Arms"), and toured with BRENDA LEE before settling in Nashville in 1959.

Through hard work and shrewd, pioneering deals for uses of songs in commercials, he built Combine into a major publishing company before its 1986 sale to the SBK music publishing firm. In 1990 he established HoriPro Music, a part of Taiyo Music, Japan's biggest publisher, and has operated it since then. —*John Lomax III*

Carl Belew

b. Salina, Oklahoma, April 21, 1931; d. October 31, 1990

Carl Robert Belew is best remembered for writing "Am I That Easy to Forget," "Lonely Street," "Stop the World (And Let Me Off)," "What's He Doing in My World," and "That's When I See the Blues (In Your Pretty Brown Eyes)." As a farm boy, he began playing guitar as a pastime and worked his way to the West Coast in the early 1950s. After stints at *TOWN HALL PARTY* and *The CLIFFIE STONE Show* in 1956, he joined the cast of the *LOUISIANA HAYRIDE* in 1957. As an artist, Belew began his recording career with FOUR STAR RECORDS in 1955, moving on to DECCA in 1958, RCA in 1962, and MCA in 1970. His three biggest hits as a recording artist were "Am I That Easy to Forget" (#9, 1959), "Hello Out There" (#8, 1962), and "Crystal Chandelier" (#12, 1965). He died of cancer in 1990. —*Walt Trott*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Twelve Shades of Belew (RCA, 1968, out of print)

Bellamy Brothers

Homer Howard Bellamy b. Darby, Florida, February 2, 1946
David Milton Bellamy b. Darby, Florida, September 16, 1950

For many years one of country music's most popular duos, the Bellamy Brothers first made their mark with the smooth and upbeat crossover hit "Let Your Love Flow," which peaked at #1 on the pop charts in 1976. As their career veered toward country in the late 1970s, they enjoyed one more big crossover hit, the craftily titled "If I Said You Have a Beautiful Body Would You Hold It Against Me." The title came from a line David Bellamy heard Groucho Marx use on his TV series *You Bet Your Life.*

The Bellamys grew up in west-central Florida, in an area surrounded by cattle ranches and orange groves. Homer Bellamy, their father, was a musician who encouraged his sons to take up music. They were also influenced by the records of ELVIS PRESLEY, BUDDY HOLLY, RICKY NELSON, and the EVERLY BROTHERS, by migrant Jamaican orange-pickers, and by the Beatles-led "British Invasion" of the 1960s.

The Bellamy Brothers first performed in 1958 with their father at the Rattlesnake Roundup in San Antonio, Florida. They later formed various groups in which they played Top Forty, country, and soul music. In the late 1960s they migrated to Atlanta, where they saw such acts as the Allman Brothers and Frank Zappa. "Oddly enough," recalled Howard, "that era was probably the most influential in our lives."

Eventually the brothers returned to the ranch, where David concentrated on songwriting. One night they came home late, and rather than wake their parents, they spent the night in the adjoining bunkhouse. Howard woke up with a chicken snake in his sleeping bag. That gave David the idea for "Spiders and Snakes," which became a major pop hit for JIM STAFFORD in 1974.

Encouraged by the song's success, the Bellamys moved to Los Angeles, where Howard became Stafford's road manager. Stafford's manager Phil Gernhard helped the brothers work out a record deal on Warner/CURB RECORDS. "Let Your Love Flow" quickly became an international hit.

The Bellamys' country career grew slowly, however, until "Beautiful Body" hit #1 in 1979. Subsequent singles ran an eclectic gamut from "Redneck Girl" (1982) to such cultural explorations as the probing and sensitive "Old Hippie" (1985) and "Kids of the Baby Boom" (1987).

Seeking complete artistic freedom and control of their music, Howard and David formed Bellamy Brothers Records in 1992 and continued their chart presence with such singles as "Cowboy Beat." They also stage an annual Snake, Rattle & Roll Jam near their Darby, Florida, home, a charity fund raiser in behalf of such recipients as the Children's Miracle Network and efforts to save the endangered manatee and Florida panther. —*Gerry Wood*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

The Bellamy Brothers (Warner/Curb, 1976); *Greatest Hits, Volume 1* (Warner/Curb, 1982); *Rebels Without a Clue* (MCA/Curb, 1988); *Rip off the Knob* (Bellamy Brothers, 1993)

Richard Bennett

b. Chicago, Illinois, July 22, 1951

Richard Bennett has made his mark on modern country music as a session guitarist and as a producer. In both cases he has combined a strong respect for country's traditions with a knack for remaking those traditions afresh.

Born in Chicago, Bennett was reared in a household full of music. His mother sang light opera on the radio; his father was an amateur accordionist. At age eight, the fam-

ily moved to Phoenix, where young Richard began taking guitar lessons from music shop owner Forrest Skaggs, former host of the *Arizona Hayride* barn dance. Through Skaggs's connections and those of session guitarist Al Casey, Bennett began playing guitar in Los Angeles recording sessions in 1968. Among the hundreds of pop and rock artists he backed on record through 1975 were Peggy Lee, Johnny Mathis, Barbra Streisand, Helen Reddy, Billy Joel, and Neil Diamond.

In the early 1980s, Bennett began making semiregular trips to Nashville to play sessions for BRENDA LEE, ROSANNE CASH, GEORGE STRAIT, and others. In 1985, at STEVE EARLE's urging, Bennett moved to Nashville to participate on Earle's *Guitar Town* album as lead guitarist and coproducer. *Guitar Town* proved to be a watershed in Bennett's career, as his muscular guitar playing received notice in the press and in the Nashville music industry. Since that critically acclaimed work, Bennett has produced or coproduced records for JO-EL SONNIER, MARTY BROWN, EMMYLOU HARRIS, Bill Miller, KIM RICHEY, and MARTY STUART. He has continued to make appearances as a session guitarist for a number of artists and has recorded and toured with rock artist Mark Knopfler. —*Paul Kingsbury*

Ed Benson

b. Nashville, Tennessee, February 18, 1945

Edwin W. Benson Jr. became executive director of the CMA in January 1992, following the retirement of JO WALKER-MEADOR. Benson had joined the CMA in August 1979 as its first associate executive director. He also opened the first international office for the CMA in London in 1982.

Benson is a native Nashvillian who comes from the prominent Benson music family; his great-grandfather John T. Benson established the first gospel music publishing company in Nashville, in 1902. Later the family established Benson publishing and recordings. Ed Benson worked for the Benson Company from 1970 to 1978. Benson graduated from Vanderbilt in 1967 with a B.A. in business administration.

In addition to his work with the CMA, Benson has served on numerous civic and business boards and has been a longtime member of most of Nashville's music organizations. —*Don Cusic*

Matraca Berg

b. Nashville, Tennessee, February 3, 1964

Though a respected performer in her own right, Matraca Maria Berg has found greater success writing songs for other artists. Country stars ranging from REBA MCENTIRE ("The Last One to Know," 1987) to DEANA CARTER ("Strawberry Wine," 1996) have topped the charts with Berg's material, and her songs have been covered by nearly every contemporary female country singer, including PATTY LOVELESS, TRISHA YEARWOOD, SUZY BOGGUSS, and LINDA RONSTADT.

One of the few performer-songwriters to grow up in Nashville, Berg is the daughter of the late session singer-songwriter Icee Berg. From the time Matraca had her first #1 hit as a songwriter in 1982 (T. G. SHEPPARD and KAREN BROOKS's "Faking Love," co-written with BOBBY BRADDOCK), she's been one of the most successful songwriters in Music City, ultimately winning the CMA's Song of the Year award in 1997 for "Strawberry Wine" (co-written with Gary Harrison).

As an RCA recording artist, Berg has fared less well, at least commercially. Her first two singles, "Baby, Walk On" and "The Things You Left Undone," both peaked at #36 in 1990, but subsequent RCA releases failed to reach the Top Forty. Her album *Sunday Morning to Saturday Night* appeared on Rising Tide in 1997. Berg is married to Jeff Hanna of the NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND. —*Brian Mansfield*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Lying to the Moon (RCA, 1990); *The Speed of Grace* (RCA, 1993)

Byron Berline

b. Caldwell, Kansas, July 6, 1944

A fiddle virtuoso, Byron Berline has been a prominent figure in bluegrass circles since the 1960s. He was reared on a Kansas farm near the Oklahoma border. His mother played the piano, and his father was an accomplished old-time fiddler in the Texas contest tradition. Byron was playing the fiddle by age five and won his first contest when he was ten. He grew up listening to the great southwestern fiddlers, such as Benny Thomasson and ECK ROBERTSON. While he was a student at the University of Oklahoma he formed his first band, the Cleveland County Ramblers, with three classmates, and began learning to play bluegrass. He joined the DILLARDS in 1963, with whom he recorded the classic *Pickin' and Fiddlin'* for Elektra. In 1967 he became a member of BILL MONROE's Bluegrass Boys for a few months before joining the army. After he left the service in 1969 he became a much-sought-after session musician in Los Angeles, where he even recorded with the Rolling Stones. He later played with a series of groups, including Hearts and Flowers, the Dillard and Clark Expedition, and most notably COUNTRY GAZETTE. He has continued to have a successful career as session musician, composer, and fiddler in some of the hottest West Coast bluegrass aggregations. —*Charlie Seemann*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Pickin' and Fiddlin' (Elektra, 1965); *Jumpin' the Strings* (Sugar Hill, 1990); *(California) Traveler* (Sugar Hill, 1992)

John Berry

b. Aiken, South Carolina, September 14, 1959

Had John Edward Berry, a chart-topping 1990s country artist, begun his career in the 1970s, he likely would have been regarded as a rock singer-songwriter in the vein of Peter Frampton. By the 1990s, country had absorbed many of the musical values of 1970s pop, and few singers showed the influence as dramatically as Berry. His concerts regularly featured covers of songs by the Doobie Brothers and Bruce Springsteen, and the performance of HANK SNOW's 1963 hit "Ninety Miles an Hour (Down a Dead End Street)" that appeared on his second album owed as much to Meat Loaf as it did to the Singing Ranger.

A native of South Carolina but raised in Georgia, Berry began playing guitar at twelve and writing songs at seventeen, but not until a motorcycle accident crushed both his legs at age twenty-two did he decide to pursue a music career seriously. His shows became a regular part of post-football-game life in the university town of Athens, Geor-

gia, and he won his region's competition in the Marlboro Country Music Roundup two years running. Also, Berry released six albums independently before signing with LIBERTY RECORDS. (CAPITOL RECORDS eventually reissued two of them.)

In the spring of 1994 Berry had another harrowing medical experience not long after the release of his first Liberty album, when a brain cyst was diagnosed after he passed out at the hospital following the birth of his second child. On the night of the surgery to drain the cyst, his wife, Robin (who often worked as his backup singer), learned that "Your Love Amazes Me" had become Berry's first #1 single. The song went on to win Song of the Year honors from the TNN/Music City News Songwriters Awards and the Nashville Songwriters Association International. (Berry received a Grammy nomination for his performance of the song.)

John Berry, the singer's first album for Capitol/Liberty, was certified gold, and his second contained the singles "If I Had Any Pride Left at All" and "I Think About It All the Time." He released a Christmas album, *O Holy Night*, in 1995, and *Faces* in September 1996. —*Brian Mansfield*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

John Berry (Liberty, 1993); *Standing on the Edge* (Capitol, 1994)

Hattie Louise "Tootsie" Bess (*see* Tootsie's)

The Beverly Hill Billies

From their initial appearance over station KMPC on April 6, 1930, the Beverly Hill Billies quickly became the most popular country music act in Southern California, and this popularity opened the door to a much wider acceptance of country music on the West Coast. They were the creation of KMPC station manager/announcer Glen "Mr. Tallfeller" Rice and fellow announcer John McIntire. Beginning with that first group appearance, Rice informed the listening audience that a band of hillbillies had been found far back in the hills of Beverly, adding that he had persuaded them to ride in each night to perform on his radio station—a myth that was accepted at face value by many of the station's listeners.

Combining the talents of accordionist "Zeke Manners" (Leo Mannes), guitarist Tom "Pappy" Murray, vocalist "Ezra Longnecker" (Cyprian Paulette), and fiddler "Hank Skillet" (Henry Blaeholder), the Hill Billies were a sensation soon after taking to the air, drawing crowds into the tens of thousands with their old heart songs, striking solos, strong harmonies, and comedy routines. The group made its first recordings for the Brunswick label on April 25, 1930, and continued to record for the label through September 1932. That same month the Hill Billies left KMPC for KTM. The group also appeared in several western movies with Charles Starrett, RAY WHITLEY, GENE AUTRY, and TEX RITTER.

Changes, brought about by friction within the group, and the appearance of two strong L.A.-area competitors, STUART HAMBLEN's Lucky Stars and the SONS OF THE PIONEERS, caused interest in the Hill Billies to wane, although they continued to have a following until near the start of World War II. Other talents featured at some point with the group were singer ELTON BRITT (Jimmy Baker), guitarist "Lem Giles" (Aleth Hansen), guitarist "Charlie Slater" (Charles Quirk), guitarist and singer Ashley Dees, and singers Hubert Walton, Marjorie Bauersfeld, Stuart Hamblen, and Lloyd Perryman.

In 1963 members of the group sued and won a settlement from the TV producers of CBS's *THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES* for name infringement. —Ken Griffis

The Beverly Hillbillies

CBS-TV's *The Beverly Hillbillies* is one of the most successful situation comedies in television history. Premiering in the fall of 1962, it exposed millions of Americans to bluegrass music each week via its theme song, performed by FLATT & SCRUGGS. Initially the duo was ambivalent about doing "The Ballad of Jed Clampett," as the word "hillbilly" had a derogatory connotation among country musicians. After viewing the pilot episode, however, Flatt & Scruggs decided to record the song for television broadcast. Then, at the suggestion of Scruggs's wife, Louise, they recorded and released "The Ballad of Jed Clampett" as a COLUMBIA RECORDS single in 1962. The song went to the top of the *Billboard* charts, making it the first bluegrass song to reach #1. Through 1968 Flatt & Scruggs made yearly appearances on the program. As a result of the show, the duo's popularity increased dramatically and banjo sales soared.

Singer-guitarist ROY CLARK made a handful of guest appearances after Flatt & Scruggs disbanded in 1969. As Cousin Roy, Clark would appear wearing an outrageous plaid suit and armed with a guitar full of hot licks. Superbly cast, the show's principals included actor-dancer Buddy Ebsen as widower Jed Clampett, Irene Ryan as Granny, Donna Douglas as Elly May, and Max Baer Jr. as the nitwit nephew Jethro. Raymond Bailey as banker Milburn Drysdale and Nancy Kulp as Drysdale's assistant Jane Hathaway provided excellent support. In 1971 the show ceased production, but it continues to air in syndication.

—*Chris Skinker*

Shelia Shipley Biddy

b. Scottsville, Kentucky, October 2, 1952

In 1993, Shelia Shipley Biddy became the first woman to run a major country record label when she was named senior vice president/general manager of the newly revived DECCA RECORDS. (Decca, whose roster once included KITTY WELLS, LORETTA LYNN, and PATSY CLINE, had been folded into parent company MCA in 1973.) Known for her expertise in radio promotion, Shipley Biddy is responsible for daily label operations as well as guiding the careers of such acts as MARK CHESNUTT, RHETT AKINS, Gary Allan, Lee Ann Womack, and Chris Knight.

In 1976 Shipley Biddy joined MONUMENT RECORDS as an administrative assistant and worked there for three years before moving to RCA. She joined MCA in 1984 as director of sales and marketing and was named director of national promotion a year later. She became senior vice president of national promotion in 1992, working with such acts as VINCE GILL, REBA MCENTIRE, WYNONNA JUDD, and GEORGE STRAIT. During her tenure at MCA Nashville, the label increased its chart share from 11 percent to 28 percent and was named Country Label of the Year by *Billboard* for seven years. Shipley Biddy helped the label earn more than 120 #1 singles. —*Beverly Keel*

The Big Bopper (J. P. Richardson)

b. Sabine Pass, Texas, October 24, 1930; d. February 3, 1959

Jiles Perry Richardson Jr., a.k.a. the Big Bopper, is chiefly remembered for perishing in the same plane crash that took the lives of Ritchie Valens and BUDDY HOLLY; as a result, Richardson's accomplishments as a singer and country songwriter have been overlooked.

A career DJ, Richardson joined KTRM in Beaumont, Texas, in about 1949. He first recorded for J. D. MILLER in Crowley, Louisiana, although the tracks went unissued at the time. Then he recorded "Beggar to a King" (later a hit for HANK SNOW) and "Crazy Blues" for Mercury-Starday Records (1957).

In June 1958, as the partnership between Mercury and Starday was dissolving, Richardson recorded "Chantilly Lace" for PAPPY DAILY's D Records. The record was issued under the pseudonym "The Big Bopper" (a name Richardson used to host an r&b show on KTRM). After strong sales in Texas, Mercury leased it, and it rose to #6 on the pop charts. Richardson quit KTRM in December 1958 to work show dates; two months later, he was dead.

Richardson also wrote "Running Bear" for Johnny Preston, as well as "White Lightnin'" and "Treasure of Love," both recorded by GEORGE JONES. —*Colin Escott*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Hellooo Baby! The Best of the Big Bopper (Rhino, 1989)

Big D Jamboree

established in Dallas, Texas, fall 1948

Not as long-lived nor as fabled as many of country music's Saturday night barn dances, Dallas's *Big D Jamboree* was nevertheless an important regional broadcast that propelled several artists toward national prominence and proved a key venue for both touring acts and area talent.

Begun in 1946 as the *Texas State Barn Dance* by radio personality Uncle Gus Foster and Dallas club owner Slim McDonald, and using coproducer Ed McLemore's wrestling arena, the Sportatorium, the show was rechristened the *Lone Star Jamboree* when it began airing on WFAA radio, probably in late 1947. The show was renamed *Big D Jamboree* when it began broadcasting on KRLD in the fall of 1948. Hosted and coproduced by KRLD's Johnny Hicks and its original host, KLIF disc jockey Big Al Turner (who would be replaced by John Harper), the show featured regional stars such as the CALLAHAN BROTHERS, Riley Crabtree, and Gene O'Quin.

Over the next decade, on both radio and television, the *Jamboree* served as springboard for artists such as O'Quin, BILLY WALKER, and SONNY JAMES, as well as providing a valuable outlet for regionally based stars such as HANK LOCKLIN and CHARLINE ARTHUR and for national touring acts. The LIGHT CRUST DOUGHBOYS, usually billed as the Country Gentlemen, served as house band for many years. Johnny Hicks left the show in 1959, but it continued in some form into the mid-1960s; its subsequent hosts included LAWTON WILLIAMS and former *LOUISIANA HAYRIDE* host Horace Logan. In 1963 STARDAY RECORDS released an album of live recordings from the show, which enjoyed a brief but unsuccessful revival in about 1970. —*Kevin Coffey*

Binkley Brothers Dixie Clodhoppers

Amos Binkley b. Cheatham County, Tennessee, March 30, 1895; d. October 1985

Gale Binkley b. Cheatham County, Tennessee, May 7, 1896; d. April 1979

One of JUDGE GEORGE D. HAY's famed "hoedown bands" that helped start the GRAND OLE OPRY, the Binkley Brothers brought to the Nashville media the clean, precise instrumental style of west-central Tennessee—the same area that later produced artists such as ARTHUR SMITH and HOWDY FORRESTER. They were watchmakers and jewelry repairmen by day, but they were featured on both WSM and rival station WLAC from 1926 until 1938. Gale was a contest-winning fiddler, while brother Amos was a banjoist. Their guitar player was Tom Andrews, and for much of their career their vocalist was Jack Jackson the Strolling Yodeler, the single most popular radio singer in Nashville during the early 1930s.

In 1928 the Binkley Brothers earned a footnote in history by becoming the first artists to make commercial records in Nashville. They recorded for VICTOR in the YMCA building, doing numbers such as "Watermelon Hanging on the Vine" and "Give Me Back My Fifteen Cents." These first sides were rejected, however. A few days later they joined forces with Jack Jackson and recorded a series of more successful sides, including a classic of old-time music, "I'll Rise When the Rooster Crows."

When the Binkleys decided to quit the Opry in 1939, their place was taken by a new stringband called BILL MONROE & the Blue Grass Boys. —*Charles Wolfe*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Nashville: The Early String Bands, Volumes 1 & 2 (County, 1976)

Clint Black

b. Long Branch, New Jersey, February 4, 1962

Clint Patrick Black possesses one of the finest honky-tonk voices ever to come out of Texas. His versatile baritone can croon smoothly up high and can growl ominously down low. He also has the square jaw and high cheekbones of a matinee idol. The first gift has given him the potential to be one of the finest traditionalist singers of his generation, but it has sometimes conflicted with the crossover stardom made possible by the second.

Black was born in New Jersey but raised in Houston, listening to everything from his father's favorites, such as GEORGE JONES and LEFTY FRIZZELL, to his schoolmates' heroes, such as Dire Straits and Yes. By age fifteen Black was strumming an acoustic guitar and singing for friends and neighbors. He dropped out of high school to work as an ironworker and fishing guide by day and as a one-man bar band by night.

By 1986 Black was working the Houston-Galveston circuit steadily and had formed a songwriting partnership with Hayden Nicholas, a fellow struggling singer. In 1987 Black was offered $250 to sell one of his songs outright, and though he needed the money, he decided he needed a manager more. A week later Houston record promoter Sammy Alfano introduced him to Z. Z. Top manager Bill

Ham, who was looking for a country act. Within six months Ham had signed Black with RCA.

Black wrote ten songs—five of them with Nicholas—on his 1989 debut album, *Killin' Time,* and co-producers JAMES STROUD and MARK WRIGHT gave it an old-fashioned honky-tonk and western swing feel, albeit with crisp, state-of-the-art fidelity. The album received glowing reviews, topped the country album charts for twenty-eight weeks, yielded four consecutive #1 singles ("Better Man," "Killin' Time," "Nobody's Home," and "Walkin' Away"), and was eventually certified triple-platinum.

On the strength of this showing, Black won the 1989 CMA Horizon Award and the 1990 CMA Award for Best Male Vocalist. He followed up those successes with 1990's *Put Yourself in My Shoes,* a double-platinum album that also produced two number-one singles: "Loving Blind" and "Where Are You Now." He was inducted as a member of the GRAND OLE OPRY in 1991.

After his 1990–91 New Year's Eve show at the Houston Summit, Black met TV personality Lisa Hartman backstage. They began to date, and in October 1991 they married. The following January, Black hired his mother-in-law, Jonni Hartman, as his personal assistant. A month later he announced a split with manager Ham. Black claimed Ham had trapped him into a contract with unreasonably high commissions and failed to provide proper accounting. Ham countered that he had taken an obscure Houston bar singer and turned him into one of the biggest stars in the music industry.

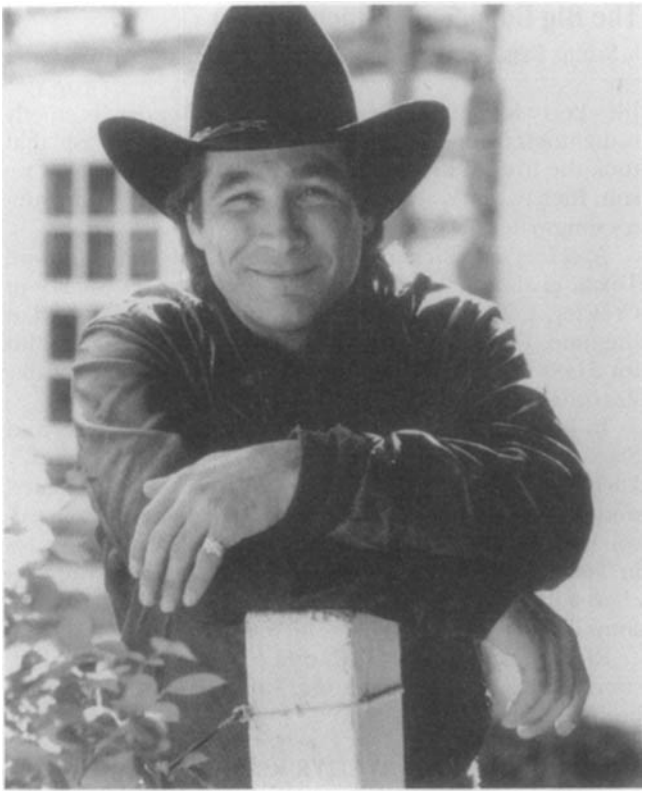
As the acrimonious split made its way through the lawyers, Black continued his career. *Put Yourself in My Shoes* had been criticized for containing too many country-pop numbers and too much filler, but *The Hard Way* was hailed as a return to form. Released in 1992 amid the lawsuits, it sent three singles to the Top Five: "We Tell Ourselves" (#2), "Burn One Down" (#4), and "When My Ship Comes In" (#1). *The Hard Way* was also the first album on which Black was credited as co-producer with Stroud.

By now, Black's tours had become multimedia extravaganzas. His 1992 tour, for instance, featured an elaborate Utah desert set and closed-circuit TV screens. Likewise, his albums had become balancing acts between his hard-country roots and his pop-country tendencies. When the album *No Time to Kill* was released in 1993, critics complained that the quality of the songwriting was tailing off as well. Nonetheless, Black enjoyed a #3 hit with the title track and a #2 hit on his duet with WYNONNA JUDD, "A Bad Goodbye." The two singers followed it up with the "Black and Wy" tour. Also in 1993, Black's version of "Desperado" became one of the most popular radio cuts from the tribute album *Common Thread: The Songs of the Eagles.*

In 1994 Black ventured into acting, appearing in *Wings* on TV and in *Maverick* in the movies. That same year he released two albums, *One Emotion* and *Looking for Christmas,* and the former yielded five Top Three singles: "Untanglin' My Mind," "Wherever You Go," "Summer's Comin'," "Life Gets Away," and "One Emotion." Nicholas, who had maintained his partnership with Black since the Houston bar days, co-wrote all but the first, which Black co-wrote with his hero MERLE HAGGARD.

After the supporting tour, however, Black decided to take a long vacation. The time off extended through 1996, when he released his *Greatest Hits,* which included a dozen old singles, three new songs, and a new, live version of "Desperado." In 1997 Black released the album *Nothin' but the Taillights.*

—Geoffrey Himes



Clint Black

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Killin' Time (RCA, 1989); *Put Yourself in My Shoes* (RCA, 1990); *The Hard Way* (RCA, 1992); *No Time to Kill* (RCA, 1993); *One Emotion* (RCA, 1994)

Black Artists in Country Music

When CHARLEY PRIDE first broke into the country charts in 1966, he was often asked how it felt to be a black man singing "white" music. His reply: "I'm not a black man singing white man's music. I'm an American singing American music." Although country music has been viewed as a white man's province, black influences in country have been profound, and black musicians have played prominent roles in its development. In fact, folklorist D. K. Wilgus has defined country music as a combination of black and white folk and popular styles that emerged as a commercial idiom in the 1920s.

Long before this, however, the process of black-white American musical interchange was well under way. Slave fiddlers were noted as early as the eighteenth century, and, of course, the banjo—later to become integral to old-time and bluegrass music—was of African origin. Black spirituals, plantation work songs, and minstrel songs all made their way into white folk and commercial traditions that nurtured early country music, just as ragtime, jazz, and blues were to do in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, black and white musicians—especially in the South, where the black population was most heavily concentrated—often shared songs and styles, especially in the realms of blues and stringband music. Judging from the southern origins of recent black country acts, the region's importance to racial musical interchange is still strong.

White country musicians influenced by blacks are numerous indeed. Two early examples are JIMMIE RODGERS, who absorbed the music of black railroad workers and recorded with such black musicians as Clifford Gibson and Louis Armstrong, and JIMMIE DAVIS, who borrowed heavily from blues and also recorded with black sideman Oscar Woods. During the 1920s, black Kentuckian Arnold Schultz, widely acknowledged as a major source of the modern thumb-style guitar, performed with BILL MONROE and other white country musicians and ultimately inspired CHET ATKINS and MERLE TRAVIS through his influence on white guitarists Kennedy Jones and MOSE RAGER. Black stringbands continued to influence whites into the thirties; Bo Chatman and his Mississippi Sheiks first popularized "Sittin' on Top of the World," later recorded by BOB WILLS and Monroe. By far the most significant black country star before World War II was the GRAND OLE OPRY's DEFORD BAILEY, a diminutive harmonica player whose song "Pan American Blues" inspired Opry founder GEORGE D. HAY's naming of the show in 1927.

After World War II, rhythm & blues proved to be a major source of inspiration for many country acts, including King Records' MOON MULLICAN, who recorded with black drummer Calvin "Eagle Eye" Shields and worked closely with black producer HENRY GLOVER. Artists like BILL HALEY, ELVIS PRESLEY, JOHNNY CASH, and CARL PERKINS, of course, made r&b a building block for rock & roll. Black artist BIG AL DOWNING joined in the ROCKABILLY trend as well, recording on his own and backing WANDA JACKSON.

In the early 1960s, r&b superstar RAY CHARLES broadened country's exposure in the pop mainstream by recording the albums *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music* and *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music, Volume 2*, which were filled with country standards such as DON GIBSON's "I Can't Stop Loving You." Esther Phillips, O. C. Smith, and numerous other black singers followed Charles's lead by scoring major pop hits with country material.

The first black artist to make it big as a modern country act, however, was Charley Pride, a Sledge, Mississippi, native who is the most successful black country artist ever. RCA was cautious in marketing him to country's largely white audience at first, but he went on to Grand Ole Opry stardom and mass acceptance with sixty-seven chart records between 1966 and 1992 (fifty-two of them Top Ten). With a gravelly voice reminiscent of ERNEST TUBB, Pride brought a grit and honesty to stage and studio that made him the CMA's 1971 and 1972 Male Vocalist of the Year and Entertainer of the Year in 1971. Pride's success paved the way for other black country singers such as LINDA MARTELL, who in 1969 became the first black female country singer to work the Opry.

Although Pride has been called the "Jackie Robinson of country music," no black country artist who followed him has approached his level of stardom. HONKY-TONK stylist STONEY EDWARDS, from Seminole, Oklahoma, had fifteen country chart singles between 1971 and 1980, including the moving "Blackbird," a black family's advice to a son to claim his musical and moral heritage as a country musician. Still, major stardom eluded Edwards, as it did Ruby Falls and singer-songwriter O. B. MCCLINTON.

Black artists active in country music during the eighties mainly crossed over from the pop field. Ray Charles hit with "I Didn't See a Thing" (a duet with George Jones) in 1983–84 and "Seven Spanish Angels" (a pairing with Willie Nelson) in 1984. Pop star Lionel Richie wrote the #1 country and pop hit "Lady" (1980) for Kenny Rogers and hit #10 country himself with "Deep River Woman" (recorded with Alabama) in 1987. Pop hitmaker Dobie Gray made a pop-to-country chart transition during the late eighties as well.

Despite these successes and the links they forged with wider audiences, black singers trying to come up through country music have fared poorly during the eighties and nineties. Nisha Jackson, of Tyler, Texas, was signed to Capitol after winning a TNN "You Can Be a Star" contest in 1987, but the label released only one recording and dropped her in 1990. Cleve Francis, a cardiologist from Jennings, Louisiana, caught Liberty mogul Jimmy Bowen's eye in 1991 and released three albums, but poor sales led to Francis's departure from the roster and return to medicine four years later. Although the uncertain fortunes facing any artist doubtless played their part, Jackson has explained black country singers' problems partly in terms of music executives' conservatism (if not racism) and failure to market black artists aggressively.

Early in 1995, however, Francis began to publicize recent survey data showing that some 17 percent to 24 percent of black adults over age eighteen listen to country music, a figure that reveals an underserved market of some 5 million to 7 million listeners. To what extent country music executives will seek to tap this potential—and use black artists to do so—remain to be seen but the recent signings of black recording acts Wheels (Warner Bros.) and Trini Triggs (Curb) are hopeful signs, as is the 1998 Warner Bros. boxed set *From Where I Stand: The Black Experience in Country Music*, which reviews the contributions of black performers to country music since the 1920s.

—John Rumble

Rick Blackburn

b. Cincinnati, Ohio, November 16, 1942

With the exception of about a year and a half, Rick Blackburn has helmed major labels in Nashville since 1980. He is currently president of Atlantic Records Nashville, where he oversees the entire operation and an artist roster that includes the multiplatinum acts JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY, TRACY LAWRENCE, CONFEDERATE RAILROAD, and NEAL MCCOY.

Blackburn's career began in 1964 when, after graduating from the University of Cincinnati, he worked in pop radio and distribution. He moved to Chicago in 1965 to promote pop records for MERCURY RECORDS and then EPIC RECORDS a year later. Blackburn transferred to Epic's New York office in 1968 to become director of merchandising, formed the CBS-distributed Ode Records (with Herb Alpert and Lou Adler) in Los Angeles in 1970, and moved back to New York as director of national sales and distribution. He then migrated to Nashville in 1974 as general manager of MONUMENT RECORDS. Two years later Blackburn accepted the position of vice president of marketing for CBS's Nashville division, and by 1980 he had climbed to vice president and general manager.

Under his leadership, CBS jumped from fourth in country market share to #1. Mainstays such as Ricky Skaggs, MERLE HAGGARD, ROSANNE CASH, EXILE, RICKY VAN SHELTON, CHET ATKINS, and VERN GOSDIN came to the label during his tenure. When Japanese conglomerate Sony bought CBS in November 1987, Blackburn had already decided to leave the label to form Venture Entertainment,

a publishing/management/production partnership with Blake Mevis.

But Blackburn did not stay away from the record business for long. On August 7, 1989, Atlantic opened its doors in Nashville, and Blackburn was named vice president of operations and head of the Nashville division. His utilization of research and music testing has helped the label launch four platinum acts: Montgomery, Lawrence, McCoy, and Confederate Railroad. —*Michael Hight*

Blackface Minstrelsy

In the 1830s Thomas D. Rice and George Washington Dixon established what became that century's most popular type of American popular theater when they masked their whiteness in blackface makeup and dressed, danced, sang, played, spoke, joked, and acted somewhat after the manner of African Americans. By so doing they were developing musical theater along racial lines, whereas class had figured prominently earlier in the century, principally in theater that featured the popular country rube stereotype. Quickly the form grew in size, and by midcentury a typical minstrel show featured a team of blackface performers (four to six initially; dozens or more later in the century) who presented whole evenings of entertainment. By this time, too, minstrelsy had become essentially derogatory in its representation of African Americans, especially to northern, urban audiences.

Although minstrelsy's heyday was in the nineteenth century, it enjoyed considerable popularity well into the middle years of the twentieth century. The influence of minstrelsy reached into many parts of popular culture, not least of which was the development of country music. In obvious ways, the hillbilly persona employed by many in country music (e.g., GRANDPA JONES, STRINGBEAN, ARCHIE CAMPBELL, even MINNIE PEARL) is a direct legacy of the rube plays. Several songs from the early minstrel tradition became barn-dance staples, especially "Zip Coon" (known more widely as "Turkey in the Straw") and "Old Dan Tucker." And many are the early stars of country music who gained valuable stage experience while performing (in blackface) in traveling medicine shows, which by convention included blackface performers. CLAYTON MCMICHEN of the Skillet Lickers frequently appeared in such shows. Both JIMMIE RODGERS and BOB WILLS were accomplished blackface performers, which gave them better reason to perform in blues-inflected styles. ROY ACUFF performed in blackface. BILL MONROE, like many other such artists, worked alongside blackface comics and may himself have appeared as such.

Minstrelsy's comedic style also came over to country music. Blackface humor typically featured a patter of low-order puns and jokes from complementary comics (typically named Bones and Tambo), a device that has served country music performance to the present. A popular early-period blackface Bones/Tambo duo, JAMUP & HONEY, headlined one of the popular GRAND OLE OPRY tent shows in the early 1940s. A midcentury comedy duo, HOMER & JETHRO, even sported something like "fright wigs" (popular among minstrels a hundred years earlier), although they performed exclusively in whiteface.

The format of minstrelsy directly influenced the performance of early country music as well. The *Boone County Jamboree,* broadcast by WLW-Cincinnati, often arrayed the performers in a semicircle onstage for the whole performance, exactly as the minstrel show did; a "shout," featuring all the performers concluded the evening in lively fashion, much like the "walkaround" ended a minstrel show. Lasses White, who organized the Friday night minstrel show for WSM in the 1920s, brought his craft to the Grand Ole Opry as its first blackface performer. By the mid-1930s the Opry had absorbed aspects of minstrelsy's performance conventions, many of which are still in evidence today. Country music's most obvious link to minstrelsy in its more recent history is provided by the television show *HEE HAW,* which in structure, humor, characterization, and, in many ways, music, was a minstrel show in "rube-face."

Blackface entertainment was endemic right at the time country music was being formed, so it is not surprising that many aspects of one genre would have migrated to the other. Minstrelsy, like country music, was also by, for, and about common people who occupied lower social echelons, one ostensibly about black people, the other about white. It is surely significant that both minstrelsy and country music were at their most expressive (and popular) when they acknowledged that American culture, especially among common people, follows from the races knowing and understanding each other, and giving expression to the possibility of accommodation. —*Dale Cockrell*

BlackHawk

Henry Paul b. Kingston, New York, August 25, 1949
David Ray "Dave" Robbins b. Atlanta, Georgia, May 26, 1959
Van Stephenson b. Hamilton, Ohio, November 4, 1953; d. April 8, 2001

When the trio BlackHawk released their first album in early 1994, syncopated rhythms marked the CD's smoothly crafted country-pop, and the band members ranged in age from thirty-four to forty-four. Lead vocalist–mandolinist Henry Paul had been a member of the southern-rock group the Outlaws and leader of the Henry Paul Band; keyboardist Dave Robbins and guitarist Van Stephenson had co-written songs for Restless Heart with TIM DUBOIS ("Let the Heartache Ride," "Bluest Eyes in Texas"), and for DAN SEALS, POCO, and Eric Clapton. Stephenson had also had a Top Forty pop hit in 1984 with "Modern Day Delilah."

Already songwriting acquaintances, the three began performing together at DuBois's suggestion and signed with ARISTA RECORDS. BlackHawk's first single, "Goodbye Says It All," debuted in *Billboard* on November 20, 1993. It and four more singles ("Every Once in a While," "I Sure Can Smell the Rain," "Down in Flames," and "That's Just About Right") from *BlackHawk* hit the Top Ten; "Every Once in a While" reached #2 *Billboard* in 1994. *BlackHawk* was certified platinum March 9, 1995; that same year, their follow-up album, *Strong Enough,* yielded the Top Five hits "I'm Not Strong Enough to Say No" and "Like There Ain't No Yesterday." —*Brian Mansfield*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

BlackHawk (Arista, 1994); *Strong Enough* (Arista, 1995)

Randy Blake (*see* Suppertime Frolic)

Frank Blevins

b. Smyth County, Virginia, February 25, 1911

The music of Walter Franklin Blevins not only embodies the traditions of Appalachian fiddling but also reflects the

influences of technology and social change that helped shape country music in the years preceding World War II. Raised in Ashe County, North Carolina, Blevins learned to play violin as a child and formed a stringband in his teenage years with his brother Edd on guitar and neighbor Fred Miller on banjo. The trio, billed as Frank Blevins & His Tar Heel Rattlers, traveled to Atlanta in 1927 and 1928 to record old-time mountain songs for the COLUMBIA Phonograph Company.

After moving to Marion, Virginia, in 1929, Blevins became a protégé of folklorist Annabel Morris Buchanan and was twice champion fiddler at the annual White Top Folk Festival. At the 1933 festival, Frank and Edd Blevins teamed with banjoist Jack Reedy in a special program for visiting First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who awarded them top honors for best band performance.

The group expanded in 1934 with the addition of guitarist Corwin Matthews, dubbing themselves the Southern Buccaneers. Led by Frank Blevins's dynamic fiddling and singing, the Southern Buccaneers reigned as the foremost country stringband in southwestern Virginia throughout the 1930s, with a diverse repertoire and frequent radio broadcasts. The death of Edd Blevins in 1944 signaled the end of Frank Blevins's professional fiddling career, though he continued to make music informally for another two decades. —*Marshall Wyatt*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

It'll Never Happen Again: Old Time String Bands, Volume 1 (Marimac, 1985), cassette; *Goin' Up Town: Old Time String Bands, Volume 2* (Marimac, 1985), cassette; *Music from the Lost Provinces* (Old Hat, 1997)

Blue Sky Boys

William A. Bolick b. Hickory, North Carolina, October 28, 1917
Earl A. Bolick b. Hickory, North Carolina, November 16, 1919; d. April 19, 1998

It is not enough to describe Bill and Earl Bolick as simply one of country music's many BROTHER DUETS. Their beautifully crafted vocal harmonies, tasteful mandolin and guitar accompaniment, and repertoire of mostly traditional ballads and gospel songs put them in a class by themselves. Their understated vocals, characterized by Earl's baritone lead and Bill's tenor harmony, nevertheless conveyed a pathos and sincerity that have rarely been equaled in country music, and their influence can still be heard in the singing of such modern duos as JIM & JESSE McReynolds and Charles & Robert Whitstein.

The Bolicks began singing on radio in North Carolina in 1935, and in 1936 began a recording career with RCA VICTOR that lasted (except for their military service during World War II) until their retirement in 1951. They named themselves the Blue Sky Boys in tribute to the Blue Ridge Mountains ("the Land of the Sky"), which lay west of the Bolicks' North Carolina home. After military service, they resumed their career in 1946 on WGST in Atlanta, but thereafter played on a series of radio stations and shows, including the *LOUISIANA HAYRIDE* in Shreveport. On their postwar recordings and radio shows, they also employed a fiddler, most often Curly Parker, who sang a third part in their trios. In the 1960s they gave concerts at a few university campuses and bluegrass festivals, and recorded some highly praised albums for STARDAY and CAPITOL. Excellent recordings made from home recordings or radio transcriptions also have been released on the COUNTY, ROUNDER, and Copper Creek labels. —*Bill C. Malone*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Are You from Dixie? Great Country Brother Teams of the 1930s (RCA, 1988); *In Concert, 1964* (Rounder, 1989)

Bluebird Cafe

Founded in 1982 as a lunch and music spot in a strip mall, the Bluebird Cafe quickly evolved into the premier Nashville listening room for singer-songwriters. KATHY MATTEA, PAM TILLIS, T. GRAHAM BROWN, TRISHA YEARWOOD, FAITH HILL, the Indigo Girls, and GARTH BROOKS all played to the 120-capacity room before moving on to national stardom. Longer, and harder to catalogue, is the list of songs first given a public performance at the club before going on to become major country and pop hits, among them the Grammy-winning "Where've You Been" written by Bluebird regulars Jon Vezner and DON HENRY.

CBS Television's *48 Hours* news program visited the club to document an audition for the Bluebird's renowned Sunday writers' night, and feature film *The Thing Called Love,* directed by Peter Bogdanovich and starring the late River Phoenix, set several scenes in the club. The Bluebird is popular with songwriters because owner Amy Kurland and her staff demand quiet attention to performances, and great care is given to the quality of sound reproduction. In-the-round sessions are regular features in which three or four songwriters play facing each other in the middle of the club and are surrounded by the audience. The arrangement creates intimacy between performers and the audience, and encourages the easy sharing of original work. The practice dates from 1987, when DON SCHLITZ, PAUL OVERSTREET, Fred Knobloch, and THOM SCHUYLER pioneered the presentation. A year and a half later, Pam Tillis, Ashley Cleveland, Karen Staley, and Tricia Walker countered with a popular women-in-the-round arrangement.

Owner Kurland also has taken Bluebird-style shows on the road: to the Disney Institute in Orlando, Florida, and to the Bottom Line in New York. "I want to make it clear to the world that songwriters are artists in themselves," Kurland says. —*Jay Orr*

Bluebird Records

established April 1933

Bluebird Records was a budget-line subsidiary of RCA VICTOR RECORDS. From the early 1920s, nonclassical 78-rpm records had been marketed to sell for as little as 20¢ to 35¢, but the RCA Victor label had held fast to a 75¢ retail price for all its records. As the Depression deepened, RCA Victor had second thoughts, and—after test-marketing the Sunrise, Timely Tunes, Electradisk, and Bluebird labels in various marketing styles—decided to sell Bluebird recordings at 35¢. The first regular release appeared in April 1933—six months before England's DECCA RECORDS debuted their American imprint, also priced at 35¢.

Bluebird's releases were a mix of dance bands, blues, and country reissues from the RCA Victor catalogue. Soon after RCA noted the strong sales response to Bluebird's low prices, all RCA "race" and country products appeared solely on Bluebird. RCA had no staff for this label; RCA

personnel in Camden, New Jersey, handled all Bluebird functions. The vast majority of Bluebird's country recordings were cut by remote recording touring units that ventured south four or five times annually. Country artists who contributed to the label's heavy sales were the BLUE SKY BOYS, DELMORE BROTHERS, the Mainers, BILL BOYD, the MONROE BROTHERS, the CARTER FAMILY, and ELTON BRITT.

The label continued an aggressive release program until 1942, when an AFM recording strike—along with a government ban against increasing list pricing—caused RCA to begin phasing out the budget label, which went out of existence in about 1950. RCA Victor's use of the Bluebird label name was far from over, however. In 1953 RCA used the Bluebird name for a budget line of classical 12-inch LPs, and in 1956 for a line of children's records. In 1970 Bluebird was once again revived as a label for a series of vintage music on long-playing records. The name is still in use for CD releases of mostly jazz and blues reissues.

—Brad McCuen

Bluegrass

Bluegrass is a traditionally oriented country music initially created as the stringband sound of BILL MONROE & His Blue Grass Boys, which became widely imitated and evolved into a distinctive musical genre. Singer, songwriter, and mandolin player Monroe (1911–96) formed his band in 1938, naming it in honor of his home state of Kentucky, the Blue Grass State. Monroe had intended simply to develop a sound that differentiated him from other performers, but he soon spawned admirers who patterned their music after his.

There has been considerable debate over what constitutes bluegrass, yet the music has certain recognizable characteristics. Its many varieties are all artistic descendants of Monroe's sound. Bluegrass combines elements of old-time mountain modal music and ballad singing, square dance fiddling (with some western swing influence), blues, gospel music, and Tin Pan Alley songwriting. It is a jazz-influenced performance format in which instrumental soloists take turns playing improvisational variations on the melody while at other times backing the vocals or instrumental solos. Bluegrass bands generally consist of a five-string banjo (played in a syncopated, finger-picking style), fiddle, mandolin, six-string guitar, and bass, with occasional use of resophonic slide guitar (dobro) or additional fiddles or guitars. Aside from occasional use of electric bass and/or harmonica, bluegrass is an acoustic stringband music. Vocalists typically also play an instrument and sing in keys pitched to their upper ranges. These pitches, bluegrass singers' austere, tight-throated style, and the mournfully lyrical themes that permeate much of the music have caused bluegrass to be dubbed "the high lonesome sound." Close-harmony duets, trios, and quartets are often featured. As in most country music, the upbeats (second and fourth beats) are emphasized, but bluegrass has a distinctive timing that surges slightly ahead of or anticipates the main beat to create an energized effect (the opposite of jazz or blues, often played slightly behind the main beat for drama).

The first Blue Grass Boys lineup contained fiddle, mandolin, guitar, and bass, and Monroe often stated that his band sound was built around fiddling and a surging tempo. However, some critics hold that bluegrass was truly defined by the addition of syncopated banjo picking, and that the 1946–48 edition of the Blue Grass Boys (combining Monroe with EARL SCRUGGS on banjo, LESTER FLATT on guitar, CHUBBY WISE on fiddle, and Joel Price or Birch Monroe on bass) was the first true bluegrass band and perhaps the finest.

The evolution of bluegrass into a recognizable genre started as early as 1946, when the STANLEY BROTHERS began performing covers of Monroe material while retaining the feel of old-time mountain music in their sound. In 1948 FLATT & SCRUGGS founded their own band, the Foggy Mountain Boys, emphasizing the banjo and smoother lead vocals while de-emphasizing Monroe-style mandolin and modal melodic or harmonic lines. Bluegrass developed regional shadings in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s: JIMMY MARTIN, RED ALLEN, and others adopted elements of honky-tonk music while playing in midwestern bars catering to transplanted southern industrial workers; in Washington, D.C., a geographical and political meeting point for the nation, the COUNTRY GENTLEMEN and the SELDOM SCENE mixed southern sensibilities and northern folk-pop influences; in Nashville, GRAND OLE OPRY bluegrassers such as the OSBORNE BROTHERS and JIM & JESSE employed elements of mainstream country; and California saw both the traditionalism of the Hillmen or High Country and the adventurous eclecticism of the DILLARDS.

Monroe did not name his music "bluegrass" (a term now written as one word). Although a 1950 songbook published by Bill Monroe Music, Inc., was titled *Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Country Songs,* until the mid- to late 1950s most Monroe-influenced performers referred to what they played simply as "country" or "hillbilly" music. But during this period disc jockeys and music historians recognized that Monroe's admirers were playing a distinctive style of roots-based acoustic music that was becoming rapidly differentiated from country as a whole. To describe this new category, they began using the word "bluegrass," a reference to the name of Monroe's band. There is also evidence that during this period fans of Flatt & Scruggs wished to hear songs the duo had performed with Monroe's group but, aware of frictions between the bands, did not mention Monroe's name but simply requested "some of those Blue Grass songs." Whatever the case, the term's late development bears witness to the fact that bluegrass, although traditionally rooted, is a modern commercial music. Thus the use of "bluegrass" as a generic label for mountain folk music is incorrect.

The market for bluegrass withered in the late 1950s due to the rise of rock & roll and electrified country, although individual bands, notably Flatt & Scruggs and the Osborne Brothers, prospered with their polished presentations and ability to appeal to crossover audiences. Bluegrass rebounded in the early 1960s, when it was embraced as a type of traditional music by the national folk music revival. The music also advanced with the development of bluegrass festivals as separate entities from country or folk shows that included only token bluegrass acts in their lineups.

Singer-promoter BILL CLIFTON staged an all-bluegrass program on July 4, 1961, in Luray, Virginia, but the three-day gathering at Fincastle, Virginia, on September 3–5, 1965, organized by country music promoter CARLTON HANEY with the assistance of folklorist RALPH RINZLER, is considered the first true bluegrass festival. As the festivals proliferated, they provided bands with increased bookings and record sales opportunities, reinforced the bluegrass community's sense of identity, and attracted many curious first-time listeners who became loyal fans. (As of this writing there are some 600 bluegrass festivals held around the

world each year.) Bluegrass has also benefited from grassroots clubs that promote shows and from such publications as *Bluegrass Unlimited* (founded in 1966), which disseminate information about performers, new recordings, and upcoming events. Although bluegrass has largely functioned as a niche music supported by hobbyists, the International Bluegrass Music Association, a trade organization founded in Owensboro, Kentucky, in 1985, has boosted the music's business activities and professional image.

Many of those who discovered bluegrass in the 1960s and 1970s were young, innovative musicians who mixed elements of jazz, pop, and rock with bluegrass to create what is broadly called "newgrass." Early practitioners were the NEW GRASS REVIVAL, the New Deal String Band, and Breakfast Special—all of whom built on earlier experiments of the Osborne Brothers, the Country Gentlemen, and the Dillards. To some, the movement helped prevent bluegrass from ossifying into a museum piece. To others, newgrass was dissonant and thoroughly unrelated to the music established by Monroe. Time has softened these positions as the progressive banjo stylings of BILL KEITH, Tony Trischka, BELA FLECK, and others have become familiar to mainstream fans, and young experimentalists have gained respect for the considerable technical virtuosity of Monroe, Scruggs, and other bluegrass pioneers.

An overseas bluegrass boom began in the 1970s, most notably in Japan and Europe. Monroe-Stanley-styled bluegrass reemerged as a vital force in the 1980s with the popularity of DEL MCCOURY, the JOHNSON MOUNTAIN BOYS, and other traditionally oriented acts, while the Nashville-influenced music of such groups as the Lonesome River Band represented another style of bluegrass. The most striking trend of the 1990s was the emergence of popular female performer-bandleaders in this previously male-dominated music, notably ALISON KRAUSS (the most successful bluegrass performer, male or female, of the decade), Kathy Chiavola, LAURIE LEWIS, and LYNN MORRIS.

—Richard D. Smith

The Bluegrass Alliance

In the late 1960s, the Louisville-based Bluegrass Alliance attracted young, urban audiences to bluegrass by means of their instrumental prowess and unusual mixture of material. Their adaptations of pop and rock songs excited a new generation of bluegrass fans for whom "cabins" and "mountains" had little relevance.

The definitive unit—Dan Crary, guitar; Danny Jones, mandolin; Lonnie Peerce, fiddle; Buddy Spurlock, banjo; and Harry "Ebo Walker" Shelor, bass—showcased Crary's lead guitar, a novelty at the time. The group's first nonregional performance of note was at Camp Springs, North Carolina, in 1969.

Recordings for American Heritage and appearances on the emerging festival circuit followed; by 1970, Crary, Jones, and Spurlock had left, replaced by Tony Rice, guitar; SAM BUSH, mandolin; and Courtney Johnson, banjo. In 1971, again at Camp Springs, Rice played the event with both the Alliance and the new band J. D. CROWE and the New South, of which he was a key member.

Soon replacing Rice in the Alliance was Curtis Burch, who then joined Bush, Shelor, and Johnson in forming the NEW GRASS REVIVAL in the fall of 1971. The Alliance still continued, with Peerce filling empty slots from a seemingly endless list of talented young musicians, among whom was future star VINCE GILL. The Bluegrass Alliance has not been active since the 1980s, however.

—Frank and Marty Godbey

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

The Bluegrass Alliance (American Heritage, 1970)

The Bluegrass Cardinals

Don Parmley b. Monticello, Kentucky, October 19, 1933
David Parmley b. Alameda, California, February 2, 1959

A popular bluegrass outfit since the 1970s, the Bluegrass Cardinals trace their origins to banjo player Don Parmley's move to Los Angeles in the 1950s. Parmley provided soundtrack banjo for the *BEVERLY HILLBILLIES* television program (although LESTER FLATT & EARL SCRUGGS played the show's famous theme), and he also worked with the Golden State Boys, an early sixties group that included Rex & VERN GOSDIN and CHRIS HILLMAN.

The Bluegrass Cardinals developed in the early 1970s when Parmley and mandolinist Randy Graham were playing together. Parmley's teenage son David sang and played bass, and the three worked local jobs, including Disneyland. When David moved to guitar, the group added fiddler Dennis Fetchet and bassist Bill Bryson.

Promoting their first album, released on Briar, the Cardinals toured the East in 1976. The Parmleys and Graham then relocated near Washington, D.C., a decision celebrated with the 1977 release of the ROUNDER RECORDS album *Welcome to Virginia.* Their instrumental skill, their vocals (Graham's intense tenor, David's rich lower lead, Don's harmony), and their ability to personalize any material into a distinctive Cardinal sound made them immediate bluegrass favorites. The band recorded a series of well-received albums for CMH and Sugar Hill, then formed their BGC label.

Among Cardinal alumni are fiddlers Warren Blair, Mike Hartgrove, and Tim Smith; mandolinists Herschel Sizemore, Larry Stephenson, and Norman Wright; and tenor-singing bass player Ernie Sykes. In 1992 David Parmley left the band, but the Cardinals, led by Don Parmley, continued on the bluegrass circuit until January 1997.

—Frank and Marty Godbey

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

What Have You Done for Him (BGC, 1992); *My Kinda Grass* (BGC, 1994)

BMG (*see* RCA Victor Records)

BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.)

established in New York, New York, 1940

BMI (the well-known acronym for Broadcast Music, Inc.) is one of America's largest music licensing firms, its purpose being to collect and distribute monies paid to the creators and publishers of music for public performance rights. For decades since its inception BMI was the major licenser of country music and remains, with ASCAP, one of the two major such licensers.

BMI was established with headquarters at New York City in 1940 by leaders of the national radio industry unhappy with that industry's stalled contract negotiations with ASCAP. Previously the only major U.S. licenser of musical

public performance rights, ASCAP had proposed doubling radio's payment rates. Rather than agree to the new terms, the broadcasters created their own music licensing firm, BMI, and ceased playing ASCAP tunes for most of 1941.

Late in 1941 the large radio stations and broadcast networks (NBC, CBS, and Mutual) settled with ASCAP, but BMI continued to grow by leaps and bounds because of its open-door policy toward music that had not gotten much support from ASCAP: primarily country, blues, and r&b. Country music prospered during and after World War II; meanwhile, BMI grew to 6,300 licensees and 1,362 affiliated publishers by 1950. BMI's logging system, which took into account more local programming (not only networks) and record plays (in addition to live performances) was also beneficial to country writers and publishers. Also, more than a few country writers and publishers got a start in the business with monies advanced from BMI in return for their affiliation.

BMI and ASCAP feuded in the courts and the trade press for much of BMI's first two decades, but all the while BMI established a strong position in those fields of music where ASCAP had once stood alone: motion picture soundtracks, pop, jazz, even classical. Rock & roll proved a big boost to BMI's fortunes during and after the mid-1950s; its worth as music was yet another bone of contention with ASCAP.

Attorney Sydney M. Kaye was BMI's founder, organizer, and first president, though several persons were influential in its early growth—Robert Sour, George Marlo, Carl Haverlin, Thea Zavin, and ROBERT J. BURTON among them. BMI has given country music awards since 1953, and its first Nashville offices were established in 1958 by FRANCES WILLIAMS PRESTON, a former WSM receptionist. Ground was broken by BMI in 1963 for what became the first Music Row office in Nashville of any music licensing firm. Ms. Preston became BMI's president and CEO in 1986, succeeding longtime president Edward Cramer. ROGER SOVINE is vice president in charge of the newly enlarged Nashville office, where much of BMI's overall operation moved in 1995.

BMI counts many country songwriters and publishers among its 160,000 members. Throughout much of its history, all of the best-known country publishers (ACUFF-ROSE, CEDARWOOD, FOUR STAR, HILL AND RANGE, Moss Rose, PAMPER, and TREE) and many of the most important country writers (BILL ANDERSON, HARLAN HOWARD, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, LORETTA LYNN, ROGER MILLER, WILLIE NELSON, DOLLY PARTON, ERNEST TUBB, and HANK WILLIAMS, to name a select few) affiliated with BMI. The majority of country music's best-known standards are lodged within BMI's growing catalogue of approximately 3 million songs. In recent years, however, ASCAP has become an equal competitor in many respects. —*Ronnie Pugh*

BNA Entertainment

established in Nashville, Tennessee, April 1991

BNA began as a sister label to RCA RECORDS, with Ric Pepin at the helm for three years. BMG executive JOE GALANTE reorganized BNA into part of the RCA Label Group, and it was run by Vice President and General Manager Randy Goodman until he was succeeded by Butch Waugh in 1996. The label experienced instant success with the comeback effort of JOHN ANDERSON (1991–96) and has developed a strong artist lineup that currently includes LORRIE MORGAN (1991–), Kenny Chesney (1994–), K. T. OSLIN (1996–), LONESTAR (1995–), MINDY MCCREADY (1996–), Ray Vega (1997–), and Jason Sellers (1997–). BNA has dropped the following acts: the Remingtons (1991–93), Lisa Stewart (1992–94), DOUG SUPERNAW (1993–95), the KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS (1996–97), and Kim Hill (1995).

—*Clark Parsons*

Dock Boggs

b. West Norton, Virginia, February 7, 1898; d. February 7, 1971

Dock Boggs was perhaps the most emotionally deep and certainly the least musically tractable of all traditional country singers—"hillbilly" or "old-time" they called his music when he first recorded it in 1927. His professional career as an entertainer ended in the early 1930s, with the onset of the Great Depression. Boggs went back to the coal mines of southwestern Virginia and eastern Kentucky, where he had worked since 1910 and where he would continue until 1954, when his age left him unable to find a job. In 1963 he was recorded again by Mike Seeger of the NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS, eventually cutting three albums for the Folkways label and performing around the country on the festival circuit of the folk revival. Boggs's story can be seen as typical of that of many performers of traditional music, black or white—the sort of artists whose generally forgotten but somewhat persistent work was first collected on Harry Smith's landmark 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music.* And yet Boggs's life and music raise the question of whether such categories as "traditional" or "folk" or even "country" are of any use at all when confronted with music as powerful and as strange as that Dock Boggs left behind.

He was born Moran Lee Boggs, the youngest of ten children, in West Norton, Virginia, in 1898, and died on his birthday in nearby Needmore in 1971. Both spots were on the edges of Norton, a coal mining center and in 1927 the site of a mass audition of "mountain talent" held by the BRUNSWICK label. Boggs's father, formerly a mountain farmer, was a blacksmith, and also a singer who could read music; various of Boggs's siblings sang and played the banjo, the instrument that would become his. Many of his most striking performances—"Pretty Polly," "Country Blues," and others—were utterly traditional in origin. In this sense Boggs personified the folk strain of country music in both his life and his art. When, after passing the Brunswick audition, he traveled to New York to record, he had never been out of his home mountains.

Nevertheless, Boggs's "Country Blues"—a variant of "Hustlin' Gamblers" or "Darlin' Corey"—is no more traditional in Boggs's performance than HANK WILLIAMS's 1949 "Alone and Forsaken." Boggs is not frailing his banjo, but picking the strings and sliding the notes toward blues, into discord and disharmony. The old song, it seems, is being sung for the first time, or the last. It is the same with "Down South Blues" or "Sugar Baby," performances Boggs derived from records by northern, urban blues singers such as Sara Martin. The momentum of the playing seems to overtake the singer's cadence, and the result is an awful suspense. *Get it over with,* the banjo says in the murder fable "Pretty Polly." *Not yet,* the singer replies.

In this sense, Boggs is no traditionalist, but again, like Williams, a modernist—that is, as a solitary individual who can no longer fall back on the comforts and assurances of an unquestioned religion; an immutable family; a stable,

rural society; or a predictable economy, Boggs confronted the world directly and as it was, naked, with a music so strong, cruel, and unforgiving of its own sinfulness that it could repel any belief brought to it. —*Greil Marcus*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Dock Boggs: His Twelve Original Recordings (1927 & 1929) (Folkways, 1983), produced by Mike Seeger with a comprehensive essay by Barry O'Connell; *Dock Boggs* (Folkways, 1963), produced by Mike Seeger.; *Dock Boggs, Volume 2* (Folkways, 1965), produced by Mike Seeger; *Dock Boggs, Volume 3* (Folkways, 1970), produced by Mike Seeger. These albums are out of print, but available on cassette, as single copies, from Smithsonian Folkways Records, Smithsonian Institution, 955 L'Enfant Plaza 2600, Washington, D.C. 20560 (tel. 202-287-3262). The following recording is available. *Dock Boggs: Country Blues, Complete Early Recordings, 1927–1929* (Revenant, 1998)

Noel Boggs

b. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, November 14, 1917; d. August 30, 1974

One of the smoothest and most influential western swing steel guitarists, Noel Edwin Boggs played and recorded with almost every major artist in the genre, from BOB WILLS and SPADE COOLEY to BILL BOYD, TOMMY DUNCAN, and HANK PENNY. Admired by his peers for his full tone and innovative tunings, Boggs was a supreme stylist.

His early experience was in Oklahoma, but he got his first big break in New Orleans, a job with Hank Penny's Radio Cowboys. Boggs recorded with the group for Vocalion in 1939, his solo work indicating he was already moving away from the established BOB DUNN style of western swing steel and into new territory. By 1940 Boggs was back in Oklahoma City, backing JIMMY WAKELY, with whom he worked often throughout his career.

In 1944 Boggs joined Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys in California and quickly established himself as a star sideman, recording the classic "Texas Playboy Rag" in January 1945. Boggs was with Spade Cooley's large western swing group by 1946 and worked several stints with Cooley over the next decade, recording classics such as "Boggs Boogie" (1947). He also recorded with T. TEXAS TYLER, WADE RAY, and others and became a charter member of Tommy Duncan's Western All-Stars in 1948. During the mid-fifties Boggs led his own trio and recorded for COLUMBIA, releasing his signature "Steelin' Home" in 1954. He drifted into obscurity in the 1960s, unfortunately dying just as western swing was experiencing a revival. —*Kevin Coffey*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Hillbilly Fever, Volume 1: Western Swing (Rhino, 1995) (various-artists reissue containing five recordings featuring Boggs); *Noel Boggs Quintet: Magic Steel Guitar* (Shasta, 1976) (reissue of 1958 release)

Suzy Bogguss

b. Aledo, Illinois, December 30, 1956

Susan Kay Bogguss took a unique route to her success in the country music field of the 1990s. Singing at age five and playing drums as a teen, she cultivated her folk brand of country listening to LINDA RONSTADT and EMMYLOU HARRIS. Bogguss majored in art at Illinois State University, planning to make jewelry. But exposed to art, drama, and music, she began performing. She eventually stayed on the road for five years, traveling in a camper from Massachusetts to Wyoming.

Suzy Bogguss

In 1984 Bogguss recorded an album to sell at performances. She traveled to Nashville and left the album at stars' homes, then returned in 1985 and got a job singing in a restaurant near Music Row. She made demo tapes for songwriters, and she married one of those songwriters, Doug Crider, in 1986. After Bogguss landed the headlining slot at the Dollywood theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, talent scouts from CAPITOL RECORDS heard her and the homemade cassette she was peddling from the Dollywood stage and offered her a contract.

Bogguss's 1989 Capitol debut album, *Somewhere Between,* had only minor success, as did the follow-up. But her third Capitol album, *Aces,* released in 1991, was her breakthrough. The fine songs showcased the strength and versatility of her voice, and "Outbound Plane" and "Aces" were Top Ten hits. "Drive South," from her 1992 *Voices in the Wind* album, climbed to #2 on the *Billboard* charts, and that year she received the CMA Horizon award.

Her 1994 album *Simpatico,* recorded with guitarist CHET ATKINS, was a critical success. Atkins had contributed liner notes for Bogguss's first Capitol album, and in 1990 they had collaborated on a holiday single. They had also spent many hours just playing together and swapping songs they loved. Their duet album covered material ranging from JIMMIE RODGERS to Elton John.

Bogguss's *Give Me Some Wheels* (1996) followed a two-year break during which she devoted time to raising her son Ben. —*Mary A. Bufwack*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Greatest Hits (Liberty, 1994); *Simpatico* (Liberty, 1994)

Bill and Earl Bolick (*see* Blue Sky Boys)

James Bonamy

b. Winter Park, Florida, April 29, 1972

James Bonamy has parlayed the necessary elements of style and substance for country success in the youth-oriented 1990s. Bonamy possesses a soft, romantic voice that fits his singing style, which blends country and pop leanings. The Florida-born vocalist is also a virtual "made-for-video" artist, with darkly handsome looks and a muscular, athletic build. The total package helped to earn him a spot in a summer musical revue at Nashville's OPRYLAND theme park, after first performing regularly in Orlando in his early twenties. Bonamy's debut album in 1995 on EPIC RECORDS, *What I Live to Do,* yielded only moderate chart success until the release of the single "I Don't Think I Will." The smooth ballad, at times delivered in a register barely above a whisper, became a #1 hit, supported by a well-choreographed and -executed music video.

"I Don't Think I Will" established Bonamy as an artist capable of tackling emotionally complex ballads, even with his relative youth and limited life experience. He's also shown other dimensions in choice of material, delving into occasional traditional and also dance club–inspired tunes. In 1997 Bonamy received a nomination from the ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC as Top New Male Artist. *—Bob Paxman*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

What I Live to Do (Epic, 1995); *Roots and Wings* (Epic, 1997)

Eddie Bond

b. Memphis, Tennessee, July 1, 1933

Edward James Bond was one of the few Memphis rockabillies actually born in the city. Being in the right place at the right time didn't translate into a successful recording career, though.

Bond led bands steadily from 1952 (early band members included future Nashville session musicians John Hughey and REGGIE YOUNG), and he began recording country music in 1955 for Ekko Records. Switching to MERCURY and to rockabilly in 1956, he briefly seemed to be a hepcat contender with records such as "Slip Slip Slippin' In," "Boppin' Bonnie," and "Rockin' Daddy." Continuing to record prolifically for ever-smaller labels, Bond started a parallel career as a DJ, concert promoter, club owner, and radio station owner.

Bond had a fascination with the career of lawman Buford Pusser from Finger, Tennessee, and eulogized him on several releases before the Pusser legend, such as it was, was enshrined in the 1973 movie *Walking Tall;* Bond contributed to the movie's soundtrack. In 1974 Bond ran unsuccessfully for sheriff of Shelby County (which includes Memphis). *—Colin Escott*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Rockin' Daddy (Bear Family, 1993)

Johnny Bond

b. Enville, Oklahoma, June 1, 1915; d. June 12, 1978

Laconic, humorous, and self-deprecating, Johnny Bond was one of the true gentlemen of western music as well as an important songwriter and musician. Reared in south-central Oklahoma, Cyrus Whitfield Bond moved in 1937 to Oklahoma City, where he formed a trio with JIMMY WAKELY and Scotty Harrell, known as the Bell Boys after their sponsor, the Bell Clothing Company. Regional success followed, and the inevitable move to Hollywood came in 1939, where they appeared in a ROY ROGERS film, *Saga of Death Valley.* They landed a spot on GENE AUTRY's CBS *Melody Ranch* radio show in 1940 and stayed together until Wakely's solo career took off. Meanwhile, they pulled a clever musical scam: They recorded for DECCA as the Jimmy Wakely Trio and for COLUMBIA as Johnny Bond & the Cimarron Boys.

Johnny Bond

Although he composed hundreds of songs ("I Wonder Where You Are Tonight," "Love Gone Cold," "Your Old Love Letters," "Tomorrow Never Comes," "Those Gone and Left Me Blues," and many others, mostly in the country idiom), Bond is best remembered for his western classic "Cimarron," which he composed in Oklahoma City as a theme song for the Bell Boys. As a recording artist he enjoyed moderate success, from his earliest recordings in 1941 through the 1950s, and even placed a few hits high on the charts during the late 1940s. In 1965 Bond's recording career briefly revived with STARDAY and the novelty drinking song "10 Little Bottles," which he had first recorded for Columbia in 1951.

Whereas Wakely's career was meteoric, Bond's was steadier: He remained a mainstay of the *Melody Ranch* cast until the show's end in 1956, and his distinctive acoustic guitar runs became an Autry trademark on radio and record. He had small parts in many films, recorded frequently, began a music publishing business with TEX RITTER, spent nearly a decade as host and writer on the television show *TOWN HALL PARTY,* and in his later years became an author as well, writing a brief autobiography and a biography of Tex Ritter. *—Douglas B. Green*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Johnny Bond's Best (Harmony, 1964, out of print)

Bonnie Lou

b. Towanda, Illinois, October 27, 1924

Singer Mary Kath was known throughout the tristate area of Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana simply as Bonnie Lou. The central Illinois native developed an interest in music at a young age. By age eleven she was playing both fiddle and guitar and began working on her Swiss yodel. Kath started her professional radio career at Peoria radio station WMBD in 1939. In 1940 she moved to WJBC in Bloomington, Illinois, and upon high school graduation in 1942 she moved to KMBC in Kansas City. Billed as Sally Carson, she performed as a soloist and as a member of the Rhythm Rangers on the *Brush Creek Follies.*

In the spring of 1945 Kath moved to WLW in Cincinnati. Station manager Bill McCluskey changed her name to Bonnie Lou and added her to the *MIDWESTERN HAYRIDE* cast. There she won many fans both as a soloist and as a member of the Trailblazers. By 1953 she had her first chart single, "Seven Lonely Days," on KING RECORDS. The follow-up, "The Tennessee Wig Walk," also broke into the country Top Ten. Bonnie Lou stayed with the *Hayride* until 1966.

WLW programmed several live shows from the 1950s through the mid-1970s. Bonnie Lou performed on several of these, including the station's morning variety program, *The Paul Dixon Show,* and Ruth Lyons's noontime program, *The 50-50 Club.* Bonnie Lou has lived in retirement for the most part since the early 1980s, occasionally appearing on local television and commercials. —*Chris Skinker*

Boone County Jamboree (*see* Midwestern Hayride)

Boone Creek (*see* Ricky Skaggs)

Border Radio

The term "border radio" refers to an American broadcasting industry that sprang up on Mexico's northern border in the early 1930s and flourished for half a century. High-powered transmitters on Mexican soil, beyond the reach of U.S. regulators, blanketed North America. Early on, hillbilly music proved to be one of the most effective mediums for pulling mail and moving merchandise; in turn, the border stations played a significant role in popularizing country music during the crucial pre– and post–World War II growth years.

Mexico accommodated these "outlaw" media folk, some of whom had been denied United States broadcasting licenses, because Canada and the United States had divided the long-range radio frequencies between themselves, allotting none to Mexico.

The first border station, XED, began broadcasting from Reynosa, Tamaulipas, in 1930. Owned for a time by Houston theater owner and philanthropist Will Horwitz, XED hosted occasional performances by Horwitz's friend JIMMIE RODGERS.

DR. JOHN R. BRINKLEY opened XER (later called XERA) in Villa Acuña, Coahuila, the following year. Brinkley also obtained XED, changing the name to XEAW. In 1939 he sold XEAW to Carr Collins, owner of CRAZY WATER CRYSTALS. According to Collins's son Jim, W. LEE "PAPPY" O'DANIEL was part owner of the station. The Mexican government confiscated XERA in 1941 and tried to confiscate XEAW shortly thereafter, but Collins moved his equipment north of the border.

Engineer Bill Branch and businessman C. M. Bres operated XEPN in Piedras Negras in the 1930s. And Iowan Norman Baker, whose experimental cancer treatments made him a controversial figure, broadcast from his station XENT in Nuevo Laredo.

Border station power generally ranged from 50,000 to 500,000 watts. Sometimes listeners claimed to enjoy the broadcasts without a radio, receiving the powerful signal on dental work, bedsprings, and barbed wire. American network programs were often lost in the ether when a Mexican border outlet was broadcasting near its frequency.

HANK THOMPSON, who grew up in Waco, Texas, in the 1930s, said the American-Mexican stations "were about the only ones where you could hear country music most all the time." Thompson and other listeners heard COWBOY SLIM RINEHART, PATSY MONTANA, the CARTER FAMILY, the PICKARD FAMILY, Pappy O'Daniel's Hillbilly Boys, Roy "Lonesome Cowboy" Faulkner, SHELLY LEE ALLEY, and others. Performers broadcast live and via transcription disc, sometimes syndicating a show on several of the maverick stations.

Important postwar stations included XEG in Monterrey and XERF in Ciudad Acuña. WEBB PIERCE, JIM REEVES, and other stars appeared live in the studio with XERF DJ Paul Kallinger. In a colorful exaggeration that could hold a nugget of truth, Pierce said country music "might not have survived if it hadn't been for border radio."

Some border musicians, such as Dallas "Nevada Slim" Turner, filled several functions, such as singing cowboy, evangelist, and pitchman. "Only three things will sell on the border," said Turner, "health, sex, and religion." Many country music shows on *la frontera* radio combined all three.

In 1986, after years of waning influence, the border stations were dealt a crippling blow by an international broadcasting agreement between the United States and Mexico that allowed both Mexican and American broadcasters to use the other country's clear-channel frequencies for low-powered stations in the evening. That meant that the signals of the border stations would be drowned out in many communities by local broadcasts, effectively putting an end to the era of high-powered, far-ranging radio. —*Gene Fowler*

Chris Bouchillon

b. Oconee County, South Carolina, 1895; d. early 1970s

One of the most enduring bits of country comedy is a spoken lyric that begins, "If you want to get to Heaven, let me tell you how to do it." Over the years it has been popularized by WOODY GUTHRIE, CURLY FOX, GRAND OLE OPRY star ROBERT LUNN, and many others. It is usually called "The Talking Blues" or "The Original Talking Blues," and it is a rare example of a song that became a musical genre. Though its ultimate origins probably lie in nineteenth-century vaudeville, the artist who first made it famous was a bespectacled, pipe-smoking comedian named Christopher Allen Bouchillon (pronounced BUSH-alon).

The son of a mountain banjo player, Bouchillon grew

up near an iron foundry in Greenville, South Carolina; as a teenager he performed with his brothers Uris and Charlie, recording briefly as the Greenville Trio. In 1926 Chris recorded his "Talking Blues" for COLUMBIA; A&R chief FRANK WALKER later claimed he told Bouchillon to talk through the song because he didn't like Bouchillon's singing voice. Friends, however, insist Bouchillon himself came up with the style after spending hours listening to African-American performers in the area. Issued in February 1927, the disc sold almost 100,000 copies—a huge hit by 1920s standards. Several of his later efforts also became best-sellers: "Born in Hard Luck" did well, as did "My Fat Girl" and a singing effort, "Hannah" (later revived by a MEL TILLIS rewrite as "Honey [Open That Door]" and turned into a #1 hit by RICKY SKAGGS).

Bouchillon seemed uninterested in exploiting his hit records and did not tour or try radio. In later years, seemingly unaware of how influential his work had been, he operated a dry cleaning shop and lived in relative obscurity. He died in a nursing home in the early 1970s.

—Charles Wolfe

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

Chris Bouchillon: The Original Talking Blues Man (Old Homestead, 1987)

Jimmy Bowen

b. Santa Rita, New Mexico, November 30, 1937

Few individuals have had as big an impact on the Nashville music industry as James Allen Bowen, an outspoken, controversial, and colorful maverick who relocated to Music City from Los Angeles in 1977. During his now forty-year career, he has been a DJ, hit pop artist, publishing employee, record label A&R head, record producer, and finally, the Nashville boss of such major labels as (in chronological order) MGM, MCA, ELEKTRA/ASYLUM, WARNER BROS., MCA (again), Universal, CAPITOL, LIBERTY, and PATRIOT RECORDS.

Bowen grew up in Dumas, Texas, starting his career as a teenage DJ. By eighteen he was playing bass and singing with Buddy Knox & the Rhythm Orchids, a rockabilly group that scored pop smashes with "Party Doll" (#1, 1957), sung by Knox, and "I'm Stickin' with You" (#14), sung by Bowen.

Bowen forsook performing in 1959 and moved to Los Angeles, where he had remarkable success with Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and Dean Martin. Bowen produced fifteen gold albums with Martin, including his best-known hit, "Everybody Loves Somebody" (#1 pop, 1964), and crafted legendary Sinatra records such as "Strangers in the Night" (#1 pop, 1966) and "That's Life" (#4 pop, 1967). He also started his own record label, A.M.O.S., where he worked with, among others, KENNY ROGERS and future EAGLES Don Henley and Glenn Frey.

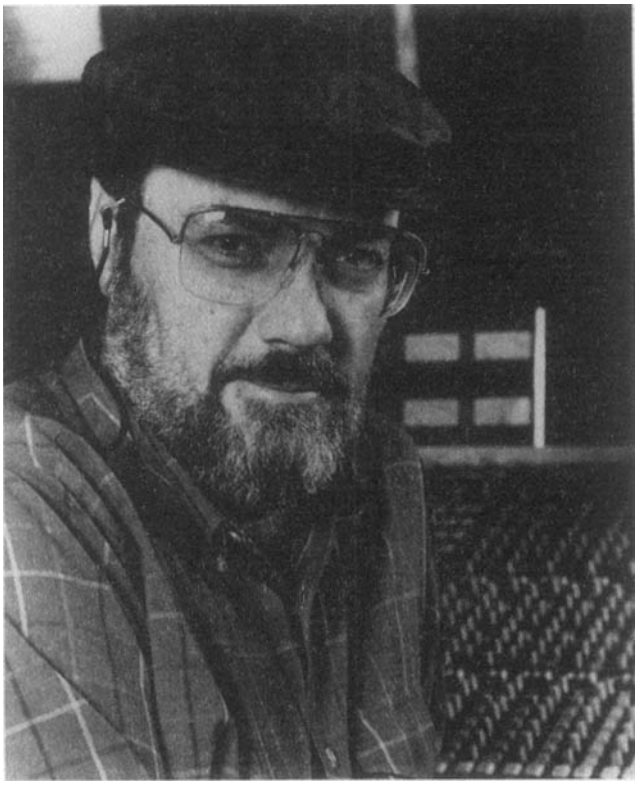
In 1977 Bowen moved to Nashville and apprenticed at TOMPALL GLASER's studio, then known as "Outlaw Central." Bowen spent about three years there, working first with MEL TILLIS and immediately scoring major hits with him. Shortly afterward he began producing HANK WILLIAMS JR. and helped launch that performer's career into a new, more commercial direction.

During the 1980s Bowen's production whirlwind peaked, delivering hits for a huge variety of artists, among them CONWAY TWITTY, GEORGE STRAIT, REBA MCENTIRE, the BELLAMY BROTHERS, CRYSTAL GAYLE, JOHN ANDERSON, and WAYLON JENNINGS. Known for dramatically slashing artist rosters upon taking control of a label (he let go twenty-nine of fifty-three acts on the combined Elektra/Warner roster in 1984), he nevertheless endeared himself to many artists. He set an important precedent in Nashville by co-producing most of the records with the artists above, giving them a key role in their recordings for the first time—"freeing the slaves," as he called it. As of late 1995, such collaborations had resulted in the incredible total of 227 Top Twenty singles, 197 of which landed in the Top Ten, with sixty-seven hitting #1. He also produced forty-five Top Ten albums, twenty of them #1s, earning at least twenty gold and a dozen platinum records, a total that will doubtless increase due to catalogue sales in subsequent years.

Bowen tried hard to help Nashville diversify its musical output and was, with BOB BECKHAM, an invaluable figure in the establishment of the Nashville Music Association (now the Nashville Entertainment Association), a group dedicated to stimulating Music City's noncountry side.

He was the key person in upgrading the sound quality of Nashville records to compete with pop recordings, boasting that he had "taught the hillbillies how to make a $40,000 album for $150,000." He was the city's most vocal early advocate for digital recording and began transferring the MCA label's country catalogue to CD as early as 1984. In addition, a number of Bowen employees have gone on to become major figures in the industry, among them JIM ED NORMAN, TONY BROWN, Martha Sharp, Nick Hunter, and JAMES STROUD.

He established the *MCA Masters Series* in 1986, empowering Brown to oversee recordings of deserving noncountry artists, primarily instrumentalists, then created his own label in 1988, Universal Records. When MCA terminated that venture, Bowen moved to CAPITOL RECORDS along with most of the Universal roster, renaming the Nashville divi-



Jimmy Bowen

sion Liberty Records. Bowen was instrumental in guiding the rise of GARTH BROOKS, working closely with the EMI corporate brass in New York to make Brooks a priority and overseeing the marketing of Brooks's second and third albums, *No Fences* and *Ropin' the Wind*, the two biggest-selling albums in country history.

Bowen had better working relationships with the corporate higher-ups on both coasts than other Nashville labels. However, late in 1994 his luck ran out. Despite the success both men had enjoyed, his relationship with Brooks soured, and he became entangled in disputes with EMI's top brass in New York. His time on the golf course increased as he seemed to lose interest in the label. Personal health problems (thyroid cancer) also took their toll. In early 1995 he put his Nashville house on the market and moved to Maui to recuperate and to work on his autobiography, *Rough Mix*, published by Simon & Schuster in 1997.

Throughout his nearly twenty years in Nashville, Bowen was remarkably skilled at delegating tasks. He frequently produced two or more acts simultaneously, working with a personally trained corps of recording engineers, often by directing the early recording stages from a mobile phone on his golf cart, then listening to the rough mixes at night, before showing up at the studio to immerse himself in the final mixing of the album. He always seemed to be the central figure in the Music City rumor mill and was not above starting some of the rumors himself, particularly toward the end of his various contracts. —*John Lomax III*

Boxcar Willie

b. Sterratt, Texas, September 1, 1931; d. April 12, 1999

Lecil Travis Martin was forty-four years old when he donned a hobo costume and turned down-home vocals and a throbbing railroad whistle into a million-dollar telemarketing act. Though it took him years to break through, Boxcar Willie aimed for a music career almost from the beginning. Encouraged by a fiddle-playing father, he was singing on local Texas radio by age ten and had performed in honky-tonks by thirteen. At sixteen he had played a stint at the *BIG D JAMBOREE*. After two tours of duty and a decade as an air force C-5 pilot, he spent two years in Lincoln, Nebraska, performing on a local live TV show. Beginning in 1960, as Marty Martin, he worked as a DJ at KGEM–Boise, Idaho, for almost ten years. In 1970 he moved back to Texas, where he worked on and off as a pilot, mechanic, and DJ. In the fall of 1975, while living in Fort Worth, he began performing in hobo costume as Boxcar Willie and appeared on the local *Grapevine Opry*. In 1978 Scottish promoter Drew Taylor engaged him as the opening act for a star in a series of shows in the United Kingdom. When the name artist bowed out, Taylor gambled on Boxcar Willie as the headliner. The Texan's booming vocal style and hobo persona caught on with British audiences. In April 1979, without benefit of a major label or a hit single, Boxcar Willie appeared at England's Wembley International Country Music Festival and was named Most Promising International Artist, though still largely unknown in the States.

Shortly afterward Boxcar Willie had four albums top the English country charts and won both the British CMA International Entertainer of the Year and Best Song (for *Daddy Was a Railroad Man*) awards. He continued this run of success in the United States in 1980 with his *King of the Road* album for Main Street Records, eventually selling some 3 million copies worldwide, almost exclusively via television marketing. As a result, readers of *Music City News* voted Boxcar Willie Most Promising Male Artist of 1981. He debuted at the GRAND OLE OPRY on June 19, 1980, and joined the Opry cast on February 21, 1981.

Of the ten singles Boxcar Willie placed in the *Billboard* charts between 1980 and 1984, his best was "Bad News" (#36, 1982). In 1986 he became one of the first artists to open a theater in BRANSON, Missouri, where he long performed regularly in addition to visits to the Grand Ole Opry. —*Walt Trott*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

King of the Road (Main Street, 1980); *Boxcar Willie* (Column One, 1981)

Boy Howdy

Jeffrey Steele b. Burbank, California, August 27, 1961
Cary Park b. Stockton, California, June 3, 1959
Larry Park b. Stockton, California, March 14, 1956
Hugh Wright b. Keokuk, Iowa, November 18, 1951

Boy Howdy was a Southern California–based band consisting of bassist/lead vocalist Jeffrey Levasseur Steele, guitar-playing brothers Larry and Cary Park, and drummer Hugh Wright. They met at a Los Angeles club and formed in 1990. After playing the California club circuit for nearly two years, the band was signed to CURB RECORDS in 1992 and soon thereafter released their debut album, *Welcome to Howdywood.*

The members of Boy Howdy brought different backgrounds to the group setting. The Park brothers' father, Ray Park, played bluegrass in the 1960s duo of Vern & Ray and had taught his sons a variety of musical styles, including jazz and country. Wright was a professionally trained jazz/blues musician who earned a degree from the Iowa State University School of Music. Steele, who wrote or co-wrote most of the original material, took his influences from sixties rock bands such as the Kinks, along with California bands such as the EAGLES. He was essentially the group's focal point, a charismatic figure both onstage and in the band's videos.

The band first debuted over a radio station in Southern California, KZLA-Burbank, and released a single in 1991, "When Johnny Comes Marchin' Home Again." This song gained them a contract with CURB RECORDS. The album *Welcome to Howdywood* generated the band's first hit single, "A Cowboy's Born with a Broken Heart," which received mild airplay. What most impressed reviewers was the group's expert musicianship, both individually and collectively.

Boy Howdy received a nomination from the ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC in 1993, for Best New Vocal Group. In 1994 Boy Howdy released the single "She'd Give Anything," which was the title cut off their second album. The song, co-written by Steele, went to the #4 spot on *Billboard* country charts. They were not able to match this level of success, however, with their 1995 follow-up album, *Bigger Fish to Fry;* it failed to produce a major chart single. Boy Howdy eventually disbanded in 1996, with Steele pursuing a solo career. —*Bob Paxman*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDING

She'd Give Anything (Curb, 1994)

BR5-49: (from left) Don Herron, Chuck Mead, "Smilin'" Jay McDowell, "Hawk" Shaw Wilson, and Gary Bennett

Bill & Jim Boyd

Bill Boyd b. Fannin County, Texas, September 29, 1910; d. December 7, 1977
Jim Boyd b. Fannin County, Texas, September 28, 1914; d. March 11, 1993

Bill Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers are usually considered one of the four major western swing bands of the prewar era, along with BOB WILLS & His Texas Playboys, MILTON BROWN & His Musical Brownies, and the LIGHT CRUST DOUGHBOYS. William Lemuel Boyd was known as the King of the Instrumentals for cutting classics such as "Under the Double Eagle" (1935), "New Spanish Two-Step" (1938), and "Lone Star Rag" (1949) during a prolific association with RCA VICTOR. Brother Jim Boyd—who had a longer career than Bill—served as his right-hand man for most of the Cowboy Ramblers' existence, which spanned two decades, from the early thirties through the mid-fifties.

Bill Boyd was essentially a country singer-guitarist whose first incarnation of the Cowboy Ramblers, formed at Dallas's WRR in about 1932, was oriented toward cowboy songs and old-time tunes. Under the influence of Fort Worth's Musical Brownies, Boyd gravitated steadily toward western swing, sharing personnel such as fiddler Art Davis and banjoist Walker Kirkes, with ROY NEWMAN's jazzy WRR stringband. Boyd's recording bands were rarely like his daily radio and road bands. For his BLUEBIRD (and later RCA Victor) recordings he borrowed jazz-minded men such as Knocky Parker and Marvin Montgomery from the Light Crust Doughboys and other bands, recording a far different repertoire and style than his live performances featured. In the early forties Boyd's repertoire became more weighted toward originals or songs that Boyd owned a piece of; if these compositions did not always measure up to the material Boyd had played previously, they were nevertheless always performed expertly.

Partly owing to his sister, Janie Hamilton, who deftly handled his publicity, Bill Boyd remained a viable major label act far longer than many of his contemporaries. In the early forties he even appeared in a series of western films. "Lone Star Rag" was his last hit in 1949, and after leaving RCA in 1951 he recorded for TNT and for STARDAY before fading from the scene.

Arguably a far better singer and musician than his brother, Jim Boyd played extensively with Roy Newman's band, worked the first of many stints with the Light Crust Doughboys in 1938–39, and led his own Men of the West, recording for RCA, 1949–51. Jim remained musically active until shortly before his death. —*Kevin Coffey*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Bill Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers (Bluebird, 1976); *Bill Boyd & His Cowboy Ramblers, 1934–1947* (Texas Rose, 1982)

BR5-49

Gary Bennett b. Las Vegas, Nevada, October 9, 1964
Donald John Herron Jr. b. Steubenville, Ohio, September 23, 1962
Jay Michael McDowell b. Bedford, Indiana, June 11, 1969
Charles Lynn Mead b. Nevada, Missouri, December 22, 1960
Randall Edward Shaw Wilson b. Topeka, Kansas, July 10, 1960

From 1994 to 1996, BR5-49 stepped up from playing for tips in downtown Nashville to become one of the most talked-about acts in country music. The neo-hillbilly boogie quintet, with a deep affection for all genres of American roots music, and the group's long run at Robert's Western World at 416 Broadway touched off a street-level industry buzz that landed them on the cover of the trade magazine *Billboard* before they had a record deal.

Originally, BR5-49 had coalesced around the talents of front men Gary Bennett and Chuck Mead, a pair of singer-songwriter-guitarists who began working together at Robert's in early 1994. The group takes its name from Junior Samples's used-car salesman routine on *Hee Haw*. BR5-49 went through various personnel changes before the current lineup, which includes drummer "Hawk" Shaw Wilson, bassist "Smilin' " Jay McDowell, and multi-instrumentalist Don Herron, solidified in the spring of 1995. By then, their four-hour sets at Robert's, a combination bar

and western wear store, had become standing-room-only affairs. Their high-energy mixture of classic country covers (WEBB PIERCE, FARON YOUNG, JOHNNY HORTON, etc.) and original tunes spearheaded a downtown Nashville music revival that made national news. Journalists and music industry insiders flocked to Robert's, and on October 13, 1995, after much hype and speculation, the band was signed to ARISTA-Nashville. A *Live from Robert's* minialbum was released in April 1996, followed in September by an eponymous full-length album. The debut single off the latter album, a cover of the MOON MULLICAN hit "Cherokee Boogie," was nominated for a Grammy. The album crested just inside the Top Forty, leaving the question open at the close of 1996 as to how much a history-conscious band that played for tips in a Nashville boot store might or might not affect the course of country music. *—Daniel Cooper*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

BR5-49 Live from Robert's (Arista, 1996); *BR5-49* (Arista, 1996)

Bobby Braddock

b. Auburndale, Florida, August 5, 1940

One of Nashville's most admired songwriters, Robert Valentine Braddock moved to Nashville in September 1964; he took a job as MARTY ROBBINS's piano player in January 1965. Later that same year, Braddock landed his first cut when Robbins recorded "While You're Dancing." Braddock signed his first publishing contract with TREE INTERNATIONAL in 1966.

In the late 1960s Braddock parlayed a relationship with producer BILLY SHERRILL into hits by TAMMY WYNETTE, GEORGE JONES, and many other Sherrill-produced artists. Classic songs of Braddock's include "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" (Wynette, 1968), "Golden Ring" (Jones & Wynette, 1976), "He Stopped Loving Her Today" (Jones, 1980), and "Time Marches On" (Tracy Lawrence, 1996). Other artists who charted with Braddock tunes include JOHN ANDERSON, TANYA TUCKER, TRACY LAWRENCE, LACY J. DALTON, MARK CHESNUTT, JOHNNY DUNCAN, and JOHNNY PAYCHECK.

In addition to songwriting, Braddock has recorded for MGM, COLUMBIA, MERCURY, ELEKTRA, and RCA with minor chart impact. His offbeat, slightly askew sense of humor was perhaps best portrayed on the RCA album *Hardpore Cornography.* *—Kent Henderson*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Love Bomb (Elektra, 1980, out of print); *Hardpore Cornography* (RCA, 1983, out of print)

Connie Bradley

b. Fayetteville, Tennessee, October 1, 1945

Connie Bradley is southern executive director for the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), a position she has held since 1980. Her Nashville branch of the performing rights agency is responsible for signing songwriters and publishers in a twenty-state area.

Born Connie Darnell, Bradley grew up in Shelbyville, Tennessee, and worked for Nashville's WLAC-TV, Famous Music/DOT RECORDS, the Bill Hudson & Associates public relations firm, and RCA RECORDS before she joined ASCAP in 1976. She has served on the boards of numerous music and community organizations; she served as the CMA's chairman of the board in 1989.

Bradley has won numerous awards, including Lady Executive of the Year (1985) from the National Women Executives and the Community Salesperson of the Year (1992) honor from the Tennessee Association of Sales Professionals. Bradley is the wife of JERRY BRADLEY and the daughter-in-law of the late country music pioneer OWEN BRADLEY. *—Don Cusic*

Harold Bradley

b. Nashville, Tennessee, January 2, 1926

Harold Ray Bradley, considered the "Dean of Nashville Session Guitarists," grew up in Nashville, and his first instrument was the tenor banjo. Older brother OWEN BRADLEY suggested that his younger brother learn guitar, though. Harold was playing amplified jazz guitar by 1943, and Owen got him a summer job playing lead guitar with ERNEST TUBB's Texas Troubadours. After his service in the U.S. Navy from 1944 to 1946, Harold returned to Nashville to study music and play in Owen's dance band. His first country recording session came in 1946, when he recorded with PEE WEE KING's Golden West Cowboys in Chicago. As recording activities increased in Nashville, Harold's studio workload grew. His acoustic rhythm guitar opened RED FOLEY's 1950 hit "Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy."

Though he is a capable lead guitarist, Harold's studio specialty was rhythm work. On many sessions, he was part of a studio guitar triumvirate with lead specialists HANK GARLAND and GRADY MARTIN. Garland specialized in jazzy licks, Martin in funkier leads. After Garland's disabling 1961 accident, Harold took Garland's place, and RAY EDENTON played rhythm guitar chores. His rhythm playing wasn't always apparent when listening to recordings, although his parts were essential contributions. Occasionally he did play lead parts that stood out. For example, he played the opening banjo notes (the instrument was tuned like a guitar) on JOHNNY HORTON's 1959 hit "The Battle of New Orleans."

After operating two small recording studios in town in the early 1950s, Harold and Owen opened Bradley Film and Recording on Sixteenth Avenue South, in 1955. After COLUMBIA RECORDS purchased the Bradley studio in 1962,

Harold Bradley

Owen and his son Jerry opened Bradley's Barn east of Nashville in tiny Mount Juliet, Tennessee.

In addition to his studio achievements, Harold was the first president of Nashville's chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. In the 1980s he toured with FLOYD CRAMER and served as bandleader for SLIM WHITMAN. He also produced Irish country singer Sandy Kelly and EDDY ARNOLD's later RCA albums. As president of Nashville's chapter of the American Federation of Musicians since 1991, Bradley has helped establish a union presence in Branson, Missouri. —*Rich Kienzle*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Bossa Nova Goes to Nashville (Columbia, 1963); *Misty Guitar* (Columbia, 1963)

Jerry Bradley

b. Nashville, Tennessee, January 30, 1940

As the son of famed Nashville recording pioneer OWEN BRADLEY, Jerry Bradley was groomed to succeed in the music business. After working for a number of years as a publisher with his father's Forest Hills Music, he succeeded CHET ATKINS as head of RCA RECORDS' Nashville office in 1973. At the time, Atkins's influence still loomed large over RCA, and Bradley was eager to make his own mark. He glimpsed his opportunity in the burgeoning OUTLAW movement in country music in the mid-1970s. Bradley put together an album package consisting of cuts by WAYLON JENNINGS, some by Jennings's wife, JESSI COLTER, and others by WILLIE NELSON and TOMPALL GLASER, and released it in 1976 as *Wanted: The Outlaws.* It shortly became country music's first album to be certified platinum for sales of 1 million copies. Nashville executives had traditionally viewed their business as having a low sales ceiling, but the success of the platinum-selling *Wanted: The Outlaws* changed all that.

Bradley was eventually succeeded as RCA Nashville chief by JOE GALANTE. Bradley went on to head the OPRYLAND MUSIC GROUP, which grew out of GAYLORD ENTERTAINMENT's acquisition of the ACUFF-ROSE publishing catalogues. —*Chet Flippo*

Owen Bradley

b. Westmoreland, Tennessee, October 21, 1915; d. January 7, 1998

William Owen Bradley produced the hits of a half dozen Country Music Hall of Famers. He built the first music business on Music Row and is the only country producer who has been nominated for an Academy Award. In addition, Bradley was an architect of the NASHVILLE SOUND.

The Bradley family moved to Nashville when Owen was a boy. He was fascinated with music and learned harmonica, steel guitar, trombone, piano, vibraphone, and organ. He was working professionally as a musician by age fifteen.

By the late 1930s Bradley was leading his own band, which eventually included future pop stars Snooky Lanson and Kitty Kallen as vocalists. He broadcast on WLAC during 1937–40, then became a regular on WSM. DECCA executive PAUL COHEN noted Bradley's studio skills during his recording visits to Nashville, and in 1947 he hired Bradley to lead the label's sessions there.

In addition to those duties and co-writing songs such as ROY ACUFF's 1942 hit "Night Train to Memphis," Bradley found time for his own recording career. "Zeb's Mountain Boogie," issued as by "Brad Brady and His Tennesseans," launched BULLET RECORDS in 1946. Bradley's group had additional hits on Coral in 1949 ("Blues Stay Away from Me") and in 1950 ("The Third Man Theme").

Owen Bradley

One of Bradley's first big production successes was RED FOLEY's 1950 million seller "Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy." In that same year BILL MONROE rejoined Decca, and Bradley soon began producing a string of bluegrass classics. He started working with honky-tonk masters ERNEST TUBB and WEBB PIERCE in 1947 and 1952, respectively. He also led the session that revolutionized female country music, KITTY WELLS's 1952 blockbuster "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-Tonk Angels."

Owen and his brother HAROLD BRADLEY were among the first to build independent recording studios in Nashville. Paul Cohen was contemplating relocating Decca's country headquarters to Dallas, but in 1955, Bradley promised him a Nashville recording center in an old house at 804 Sixteenth Avenue South; the Bradleys later added an army Quonset hut film and recording studio behind it.

Ironically, the earliest hits from Bradley Studios weren't all Decca recordings. Rented to other labels, the studio became the birthplace of SONNY JAMES's "Young Love" and Gene Vincent's "Be-Bop-a-Lula" (both CAPITOL, 1956), MARTY ROBBINS's "Singing the Blues" (COLUMBIA, 1956), CONWAY TWITTY's "It's Only Make Believe" (MGM, 1958), Mark Dinning's "Teen Angel" (MGM, 1959), and JOHNNY HORTON's "The Battle of New Orleans" (Columbia, 1959), to name but a few.

Owen Bradley was named head of Decca's Nashville division in 1958, from which position he helped shape the evolution of the Nashville Sound. In addition to turning out hits by Decca's country acts, Bradley also produced a Grammy-winning record for folk star BURL IVES (1962) and attracted Dixieland clarinetist Pete Fountain and pop organist Lenny Dee to Nashville. Bradley himself scored pop hits for Decca in 1957 ("White Silver Sands") and 1958 ("Big Guitar").

Bradley's finest productions for Decca were with female vocalists. He produced numerous Top Ten hits with Kitty Wells, and his collaborations with PATSY CLINE remain the standard against which female country records are measured to this day. BRENDA LEE had twelve Top Ten pop hits produced by Bradley in the early 1960s, and he also produced the fifty-plus hits that made LORETTA LYNN a country legend.

By the early 1960s Bradley's studio was hosting 700 sessions annually and had been joined by similar businesses in a district that would come to be known as Music Row. COLUMBIA RECORDS bought the studio from Bradley in 1962 and built the label's Nashville headquarters around it. Columbia continued to use that studio for recording until 1982.

In 1965 Bradley converted a Mount Juliet, Tennessee, barn into another studio. "Bradley's Barn," as it was called, was used by Gordon Lightfoot, Joan Baez, the Beau Brummels, and other pop acts. Meanwhile, Bradley continued to sign important artists to Decca, most notably Conway Twitty.

Bradley was inducted into the COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME in 1974. He stepped down as a label head in 1976 (by which time Decca had been completely absorbed into MCA) to become an independent producer and work with his publishing firm, Forest Hills Music. He built yet another studio (on the same site) after Bradley's Barn was destroyed by fire in 1980.

Actress Sissy Spacek portrayed Loretta Lynn in the 1980 movie *Coal Miner's Daughter;* the soundtrack, produced by Bradley, received an Academy Award nomination. In 1985 Jessica Lange portrayed Patsy Cline in the film *Sweet Dreams;* again, Bradley produced the soundtrack. Canadian K. D. LANG came to Nashville in 1987 to record *Shadowland: The Owen Bradley Sessions.* The album sold 1 million copies.

In the 1990s Bradley produced records for Marsha Thornton, Brenda Lee, and Pete Fountain, and went into semiretirement. The Recording Academy gave him its Governors Award at a 1995 gala, and the reactivated Decca label saluted him with a 1996 compilation called *The Nashville Sound.*

Bradley fathered a musical dynasty. Son Jerry led RCA's Nashville operations for a time, then took the reins of the OPRYLAND MUSIC GROUP, where grandson Clay also works. Daughter Patsy is at BMI; Nephew Bobby is a studio engineer. Daughter-in-law Connie is the head of Nashville's ASCAP office. Younger brother Harold became the most recorded session guitarist in history, and the president of the Nashville musicians' union.

When Owen Bradley died in 1998 his funeral service was held at the RYMAN AUDITORIUM. —*Robert K. Oermann*

Paul Brandt

b. Calgary, Alberta, Canada, July 21, 1972

Paul Brandt burst onto the country music scene in 1996 with his three-octave baritone and self-penned ballads. His debut single, "My Heart Has a History," reached the Top Five in July 1996, followed by "I Do" (#2) in October 1996.

Brandt grew up singing in church and began playing guitar in ninth grade. He began writing songs and entering talent contests in high school while listening to CLINT BLACK, GEORGE STRAIT, and DWIGHT YOAKAM. Although he won the $1,000 prize at the 1992 Calgary Stampede and found success in other U.S. and Canadian talent competitions, he simultaneously pursued another career, in nursing. His father is a paramedic, so when Paul's mother returned to school to become a registered nurse, Paul soon followed.

Brandt spent two years at Alberta's Children's Hospital, often working with terminally ill children, but his medical career was cut short after he won Best Original Canadian Country Song for "Calm Before the Storm" in a nationwide contest sponsored by the Society of Composers, Authors, and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN), a performance rights society. Among the music executives in attendance was Warner Music Canada's Kim Cooke, who contacted Brandt. Brandt sent a tape to WARNER BROS.' Nashville office and soon got a message from Warner vice president Paige Levy, who had signed Dwight Yoakam to Warner/Reprise. Warner Bros. eventually signed Brandt, and the label released his debut album, *Calm Before the Storm,* in August 1996. Produced by Josh Leo, the album contains six songs either written or co-written by Brandt.

—*Beverly Keel*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Calm Before the Storm (Warner Bros., 1996); *Outside the Frame* (Warner Bros., 1997)

Branson, Missouri

The Ozark Mountains community of Branson, in southwestern Missouri, is one of America's most popular and distinctive resort and entertainment areas, attracting more than 5.8 million visitors in 1994. Since the 1960s, the town has grown into a major live performance center for the music industry, where stars of country, pop, and big band music perform to enthusiastic audiences from April through October. As of 1995, entertainers including GLEN CAMPBELL, MEL TILLIS, JIM STAFFORD, MICKEY GILLEY, CHARLEY PRIDE, Tony Orlando, BOXCAR WILLIE, and Bobby Vinton were headlining at their own theaters there, while VINCE GILL, BARBARA MANDRELL, KENNY ROGERS, and LORRIE MORGAN, to name a few, performed at a 4,000-seat, state-of-the-art facility called the Grand Palace.

Branson was a tourism center before the live music boom. Tours of Marvel Cave (now part of the area's largest employer, the theme park Silver Dollar City) have brought visitors to Branson for more than one hundred years. The region has flourished as a fishing and camping haven since the 1920s, and water sports are popular in the three lakes that surround Branson.

The first live performance attraction in Branson started more than thirty years ago with a hillbilly jamboree called Baldknobbers (named for a turn-of-the-century Ozarks vigilante gang). Built in 1967, Presley's Jubilee was the first theater on 76 Country Boulevard, known locally as "The Strip." Branson has since grown to accommodate more than thirty local venues with a combined total of more than 50,000 indoor theater seats and 21,500 amphitheater seats.

In the early 1990s the town's booming popularity as a country music tourism destination caught the attention of the national media, which portrayed Branson as threatening Nashville's dominant position as a country music mecca. Though the threat later appeared exaggerated, Branson has continued to hold a preeminent position among national tourism destinations. Among other hon-

ors, Branson was listed as one of the Top Ten U.S. "hot spots" for 1995 by the American Society of Travel Agents.

—Janet E. Williams

Rod Brasfield

b. Smithville, Mississippi, August 22, 1910; d. September 12, 1958

From 1947 to 1958, Rodney Leon Brasfield was the premier comedian at the GRAND OLE OPRY and very likely in country music. He began his career as straight man for his brother Lawrence (known as "Boob") during several years with Bisbee's Dramatic Shows, one of many such troupes that traversed the South during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Brasfield served one year in the army air corps during World War II, but returned to Bisbee's because of a nagging childhood back injury. Boob eventually wound up playing "Uncle Cyp" on Springfield, Missouri's, *OZARK JUBILEE* television program (1955–60).

While working the road in the Southeast, Brasfield was recruited by GEORGE D. HAY for the Grand Ole Opry in 1944. By this time Brasfield was playing both comic and straight parts and became an immediate hit with the show's stage and radio audiences, especially with Opry TENT SHOWS. With his trademark baggy suit, button shoes, beat-up hat, rubbery face, and clacking false teeth, he could have the audience laughing before he spoke a word. Playing the drawling bumpkin to the hilt, he had a finely honed sense of timing and worked easily with host RED FOLEY on the Opry's NBC network segment beginning in 1947, when Brasfield replaced the DUKE OF PADUCAH in this regard. Much of their comedy contrasted the tall, broad-shouldered Foley with the diminutive Brasfield, who skillfully milked running gags by deferentially addressing the singer as "Mr. Foley" and complaining good-naturedly about the sweltering summer heat in the RYMAN AUDITORIUM.

Rod Brasfield

Audiences instinctively sympathized with Brasfield's hapless character, a good ole country boy who was constantly unlucky. Like MINNIE PEARL, with whom he frequently teamed from 1948 until his death, he often poked fun at country life—always with good humor. Reinforcing his small-town identity, he took his moniker, the Hohenwald Flash, from the name of a Tennessee town southwest of Nashville. Brasfield and Pearl's comic exchanges (in which they alternated in delivering punch lines—that is, neither was the straight man) were not only broadcast on the Opry radio show but also televised on a series of ABC network shows made by Opry acts in 1955 and 1956. In addition, Brasfield did comedy routines with singer-comedienne June Carter. Brasfield's role as Andy Griffith's sidekick in the 1957 film *A Face in the Crowd* hinted at a film career that might have been. A victim of heart failure and a widely known problem with alcohol, Brasfield was elected to the COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME in 1987.

—John Rumble

Thom Bresh

b. Hollywood, California, February 23, 1948

Versatility has distinguished the career of Thomas Charles Bresh, who has been a singer, songwriter, and impressionist, and who at age three was billed as "Hollywood's Youngest Stunt Man." But Bresh's command of fingerstyle guitar is perhaps his most natural talent, since Bresh is the son of MERLE TRAVIS.

This was an open secret for years, only publicized since the deaths of Travis and Hollywood photographer Bud Bresh. Bresh grew up knowing Travis as a family friend from whom he never took lessons. However, Bresh says, "I could play everything he did when I was about thirteen years old. . . . I inherited a heavy thumb from Merle." When he was sixteen, Bresh replaced ROY CLARK in HANK PENNY's band and made an unsuccessful bid for pop success with his 1963 recording debut, "Pink Dominoes." Working with Penny in Vegas, Bresh played guitar, banjo, and trumpet, and did impressions. A stint running a Seattle recording studio yielded Bresh's 1972 novelty "D. B. Cooper, Where Are You?" His biggest chart success came four years later, with the JIMMY BOWEN–produced "Homemade Love" on the short-lived Los Angeles–based Farr label. It is Bresh's only entry into the country Top Ten.

Subsequent recordings in the 1970s and 1980s for ABC/DOT and LIBERTY brought Bresh little commercial success. He hosted a Canadian television series, *Nashville Swing,* for a time before moving to Music City in 1983. Bresh has in recent years highlighted his relation to Travis and displays his inherent guitar skills in recordings for Scotty Moore's Belle Meade label. *—Mark Humphrey*

REPRESENTATIVE RECORDINGS

Son of a Guitar Pickin' Man (Belle Meade, 1993); *Next Generation* (Belle Meade, 1994)

David Briggs

b. Florence, Alabama, March 16, 1943

When David Paul Briggs moved to Nashville in 1964, at twenty-one, he had established a significant career as a ses-