International Country Music Journal 2017

Don Cusic, Editor

International Country Music Journal
Don Cusic, Editor

ISBN 978-0-9990537-0-6

Brackish Publishing
P.O. Box 120751
Nashville, TN 37212

Production Coordinator
Jim Sharp
Sharp Management

Cover and Interior Layout Design
www.PricelessDigitalMedia.com

Acknowledgments

The *International Country Music Journal* is an outgrowth of the International Country Music Conference, an academic conference held annually at Belmont University in Nashville in May. The Conference is hosted by James Akenson and Don Cusic. In addition to presentations, the Conference also presents the annual Belmont Book Award for the Best Book on Country Music publishing during the previous calendar year. We are indebted to Mike Curb and the Mike Curb Family Foundation for the funding of the Belmont Book Award and the *International Country Music Journal*.

Table of Contents

Country's Kitchen: Country Singers and their Cookbooks

Sarah Blomeley
Belmont University

Hey, good lookin', whatcha got cookin'?
How's about cookin' something up with me?
Hey, sweet baby, don't you think maybe
We could find us a brand new recipe?
(Hank Williams, "Hey Good Lookin'")

In 1951, Nashville's WSM aired a 15 minute morning program hosted by Hank Williams at the peak of his career. Featuring a mix of country and gospel songs, the show was sponsored by Mother's Best Flour. Near the middle of each show Hank would sing a short jingle: "I love to have that gal around / her biscuits are so nice and brown / her pies and cakes beat all the best / cause she bakes 'em all with Mother's Best." When Time Life released the complete recordings of the Mother's Best Flour Show in 2010, country music historians such as Chet Flippo lauded the boxed set as "a genuine time machine" that introduces a lesser-known side of the tragic—and iconic—Hank Williams; the set of recordings "humanizes him as nothing else could have done. These shows truly add another dimension to Hank Williams" (Flippo). But besides revealing "the fun Hank, the Hank who wrote 'Hey Good Lookin',' the morning Hank" (Ochs), these recordings do something else: they point to the longstanding symbiotic relationship between country music and Southern foodways.

The most famous early example of this symbiosis is Martha White Flour's sponsorship of Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs. In 1948, Martha White became a sponsor of the Grand Ole Opry, and in 1953 they hired the then-unknown Flatt and Scruggs to tour the south in a bus dubbed "The Martha White Express," playing their bluegrass music and promoting the company's products. As Flatt and Scruggs shot to fame, so too did the mill see a "rise in prosperity" (Malone 321). Known as The World's Greatest Flour Peddlers, Flatt and Scruggs soon incorporated "The Martha White Theme Song" into their repertoire and—like Hank Williams a few years before—began recording radio segments promoting flour and cornmeal. Ad copy mixed with bluegrass music and stage banter, and listeners were treated to recipe ideas and encouraged to send in for recipe leaflets. And though the radio show eventually faded into obscurity, says Kay West, the Martha White company continued its relationship with country music, sponsoring Tennessee Ernie Ford in the 1970s, Alison Krauss in the 1990s, and Rhonda Vincent in the early 2000s (52-53). So important has Martha White been to country music's history that the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum now displays the original Martha White Opry backdrop (West 51).

Along with its role in the commerce of country music, Southern cooking has long been a favorite theme in country songs themselves (flour jingles notwithstanding). Hank Williams offers a tribute to Cajun cuisine in "Jambalaya," while Loretta Lynn praises the country ham of her Appalachian home in "You're Lookin at Country." Alabama celebrates sweet potato pie in "Song of the South," and Tim McGraw kicks off the chorus of "Something Like That" with the image of a barbeque stained t-shirt. But the Southern dish that seemingly gets the most play in country music is fried chicken—whether served with corn bread

in Alan Jackson's "Where I Come From," cold beer (and sweet tea and pecan pie and peaches) in Zac Brown Band's "Chicken Fried," or the titular potatoes in Little Jimmie Dickens's "Take an Old Cold Tater (and Wait)"—a dish so iconic that it is identified by its "Sunday smell" alone in "Sunday Morning Coming Down." All these home cooked memories make sense given country's well documented propensity for nostalgia. Indeed, the frequency with which country songwriters allude to Southern food could be attributed to the larger themes of home, hearth, and family that characterize the genre—and perhaps the fact that country singers are often so far from home.

In *Country Music's Greatest Eats*, a recipe collection published by Southern Living and CMT, the editor notes in the Introduction: "One line plumbs the entire book. It's the love of the road, the frenzied fame and all it affords juxtaposed with the longing for home and the respite and equananimity home provides…Over and over again, artists spoke about how making a meal was deeply grounding, and how cooking is an entry point for returning to normalcy, to home base" (Latham 11). Kay West echoes this sentiment in *Around the Opry Table*, a collection of foodtales from the Grand Ole Opry from its beginnings to modern day: "Off the stage, cast members and staff come together for meals, whether at a restaurant to grab a bite to eat between shows, at formal dinners, or at casual potlucks. Spending so much time on the road, time around the table with their *own* families enjoying the foods that say "welcome home" becomes especially precious" (xvii). Food, then, is not just sustenance—it is tradition, comfort, communion. It is home. But it is also a contrivance. In their Introduction to *Writing in the Kitchen: Essays on Southern Literature and Foodways*, Davis and Powell articulate what they call the "fried chicken paradox"

in Southern cuisine and culture—the "self-conscious act of preparing or eating traditional southern food [as] a deliberate act of performing southern identity" (7).

The fact that Southern food appears so often in country music is no accident. It marks the genre as distinctly "Southern" (irrespective of actual audience demographics). To be sure, these food-themed country songs, especially when taken together, construct an idealized "home" in the rural South, where the table is always set with fried chicken, country ham, soup beans, sweet tea, cornbread, and biscuits (to say nothing of Jack Daniel's, Jim Bean, and Southern Comfort).

Nowhere is this long and complicated relationship between country music and Southern foodways more evident than in the robust archive of what I am calling *country celebrity cookbooks* housed in the Country Music Hall of Fame Research Library. The earliest text in the collection dates back to 1964: the *Kitty Wells Country Kitchen Cookbook*, a trove of recipes from Wells's own kitchen and collected on the road. Since then, dozens of country cookbooks have followed, from *The Tammy Wynette Southern Cookbook* to *The Official Oak Ridge Boys International Fan Club Cookbook* to *Mother Maybelle's Cookbook*.

Early on the books varied in quality; some, like Tammy Wynette's feature professional photos and layouts; others, like Kitty Wells's are cruder, more akin to self-published church or community cookbooks. For the past several years, however, cooking country stars have been big business; Tricia Yearwood hosts a cooking show called *Tricia's Southern Kitchen* on the Food Network, Zac Brown organizes a Southern Ground Music and Food Festival each summer, and *Southern Living* has put out multiple country-themed recipe collections, books and periodicals alike. And, of course, country stars continue to churn

out cookbooks, each one glossier than the last. Tricia Yearwood's *Georgia Cooking in an Oklahoma Kitchen*, published in 2008, includes a foreword from

Yearwood's husband and country superstar Garth Brooks: "Watching Miss Yearwood (as I often call my wife) in the kitchen, it is easy to see how much she loves to cook."

Sheryl Crow's *If It Makes You Healthy*, published in 2011, mixes beautiful, Instagram-worthy photos of food with photos of Crow and her personal chef (and co-author) on the farm, by the table, and with her children. Martina McBride's *Around the Table*, published in 2014, features menus and recipes for, according to the book's subtitle, "gatherings throughout the year" alongside full-page photos of McBride holding party platters while wearing a sequined dress.

Despite their wide variety, country celebrity cookbooks typically fall into three distinct types: Tributes, Compilations, and Auxiliaries. Tributes are those cookbooks that spotlight a specific artist or group but are written by someone else; Compilations are those books that collect recipes from various artists; and Auxiliaries are texts written by country stars themselves (though some are co- or ghost-written).

The country celebrity cookbook is a recognizable genre that has persisted for fifty years and warrants critical attention. As we will see, these books do heavy ideological lifting in the discourse community of country music, reinforcing some of the most conservative ideas that have marked the genre throughout its history.

Cookbooks: A Brief Overview

"Cookery texts" have existed for thousands of years; Abigail Dennis points to clay tablets discovered in ancient Egypt as the earliest known example (2). Because the cookbook genre

(including its prototypes) is so old, the massive body of texts is marked by great flexibility of form. Dennis posits that at its most "fundamental," a cookbook is "a collection of recipes purposely gathered to form a body of work" (1), and such a broad definition allows for a variety of approaches. Dennis explains that, Egyptian tablets and medieval manuscripts aside, the advent of the printing press in the 17th century allowed for robust growth of the genre; in fact, she points out, cookbooks and Bibles were the two earliest mass-produced books (2).

Cookbooks take so many forms, in fact, that there are multiple ways to categorize them. They might be sorted by audience—are they meant for professionals, for example, or home cooks? Adults, teens, or children? Proficient amateurs or total novices? Or they might be organized by author. Is this book written by a restauranteur, a chef, a home cook, or a collection of community members?

They might be grouped by purpose—is this text meant to offer a sampling of local cooks? Showcase the artistry of the author? Raise money for a worthy cause? Or they might be catalogued by content. Is this a collection of everyday recipes? Special occasion dishes? Full menus? Drinks, appetizers, desserts, or some other specific type of dish? Regional or ethnic cuisine? Tone can vary—from didactic to confessional to conspiratorial—as can textual components. Some cookbooks offer recipes only; others offer pictures, anecdotes, historical information, and instructional material such as substitution guides and shopping lists. The flexibility of the cookbook genre is one of its strengths, and a reason it has stuck around so long, but it makes any organizing endeavor challenging.

Recipes, too—the chief component of the cookbook—have proven historically fluid.

Noted food writer M.F.K. Fisher parsed the "anatomy" of modern recipes into three parts: the name, the ingredients, and the method—though even a form this rudimentary has been a relatively recent development (23). Fisher takes up examples from the 17th and 18th centuries to demonstrate the imprecision of historical "receipts," drolly pointing out a flaw in a 1694 recipe for Brandy Cake: "In mixing the cake, the mace and nutmegs which have been prescribed are not mentioned again. Any idiot knows that they could be sifted along with the flour, and that of course they could be grated or powdered…but as a spoiled idiot-child of the twentieth century I want to be *told*" (17). A recipe, she declares, "is supposed to be a formula, a means prescribed for producing a desired result, whether than be an atomic weapon, a well-trained Pekingese, or an omelet" (20). But it was not until the very end of the 19th century, with the publication of Fannie Farmer's *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, that American recipes and cookbooks begin to adhere to universal measurements and standards (Fisher 19). Since that time, however, the recipe form has stuck, though—again—variations abound within the basic formula. Linguistic analysis has shown, for example, that recipes from commercial cookbooks are much more prescriptive, detailed, and explicit than those from community cookbooks (Cotter).

As the cookbook has developed generically, one feature that scholars have noticed is its function as an aspirational text. People turn to cookbooks because they want to know how to cook something new or exotic—or perhaps because they want to cook a familiar dish better or more easily. The recipes (and, more recently, photos) in cookbooks represent a culinary ideal, a goal to be achieved. Beyond individual recipes, Abigail Dennis notes that by the 19th century, cookbooks had become symbols of middle class "fantasy," signaling a particular style and taste (7).

Josee Johnston, Alexandra Rodney, and Phillipa Chong bring the "fantasy" up to date in light of the current celebrity chef cookbook trend, where the celebrity is famous for being a chef, in the manner of Julia Child, Emeril, Lagasse, or Bobby Flay: "today's food celebrities have a prominent role teaching cooking skills, but also showcasing enviable lifestyles" (5). This aspirational tone certainly appears in the cookbooks of country stars. In the *Kitty Wells Country Kitchen Cook Book* the recipes are said to have been "personally collected by Kitty in her vast travels" (n.p.). In *Helen Naismith's Recipes of the Stars*, the Introduction balances the hardscrabble roots of many country stars and the glamorous lifestyles they now lead: "Many of the foods in this collection, like the stars themselves, were born of hard times, reflecting their roots in American soil. Others are exotic and fancied up a bit, revealing an appreciation of the cuisines they sample and enjoy during their travels throughout the world" (1). These country stars have presumably done more, seen more, and tasted more than the average home cook, and a cookbook provides an outlet for sharing their experience.

It is out of this tradition that celebrity country cookbooks have sprung. As noted above, some of these texts are commercial in nature, glossy and beautiful and distributed by big name publishing houses or bearing the imprint of media giants like CMT or *Southern Living*; some are more in line with the community cookbook tradition, put out by small presses or even self-published. In either case, though, the country celebrity cookbooks serve as not only aspirational texts, but promotional tools as well. Some country cookbooks are promotional in the literal fundraising sense; both volumes of *How's About Cookin' Something Up With Me?*, for example, raised money

for the Hank Williams Memorial. But most are promotional in a more theoretical sense, in that they are enhance the "brand" of the country star(s) featured in the text. Johnston, Rodney, and Chong call these "persona-based brands" generally and "culinary personas" specifically (2).

Celebrities and celebrity chefs, they explain, "are media creations and commodities that assume value through their persona, much like a brand" (Johnston, Rodney, and Chong 4). In some instances of the country celebrity cookbook, the branding is overt. *Cooking With Kenny Rogers*, for example, was published by the Dole Food Company in 1987 because Rogers had signed a $17 million contract as a spokesperson for Dole the year before (Gorman); every recipe in the book features pineapple. But typically the branding is subtler and confined to the personas themselves—no contractually required ingredients, at least. Puns abound in these country celebrity cooking texts; a brief glance at book titles such Alan Jackson's *Who Says You Can't Cook it All?*, Hank Williams' *How's About Cookin' Something Up With Me?*, Loretta Lynn's *You're Cookin' It Country*, Elvis's *Are You Hungry Tonight?* is enough to demonstrate the ease with which these country stars (or, more likely, their editors) shoehorned a cooking term into one of their hit song titles.

We see the same thing in the one-off recipes featured in the Compilation texts, where a recipe name is an awkward mashup of the artists' most famous song title with a favorite recipe: Billy Ray Cyrus's "Achy Breaky Cake," Willie Nelson's "Always On My Mind Biscuits and Chocolate Gravy," Crystal Gayle's "Pumpkin Tea Bread to Make Your Brown Eyes Blue" (Hand and Killen). These recipe names, obviously, are not culled from a family cookbook, but are instead meant to reinforce the image of the starts with whom they are associated.

The Tribute Cookbook as Backstage Pass

Of the country celebrity cookbooks housed in the Country Music Hall of Fame archives, the smallest category of the three outlined above—Tributes, Compilations, and Auxiliaries—is that of the Tribute texts. This category features texts cookbooks—but not authored—by a single artist or group. Examples include *How's About Cookin' Somethin' Up With Me*, volumes 1 and 2 (1977 and 1984), inspired by Hank Williams; *The Official Oak Ridge Boys International Fan Club Cookbook* (1983); *Recipes and Memories from Mama Cash's Kitchen* (1989) and *Cooking in the House of Cash: Johnny and June's Favorite Foods, Recipes, and Photos* (2004), both of which are inspired by Johnny and June Carter Cash; and *Fit for a King: The Elvis Presley Cookbook* (1992), *Are You Hungry Tonight?: Elvis's Favorite Recipes* (1992), *The Life and Cuisine of Elvis Presley* (1993), inspired by sometimes-country artist Elvis Presley.

As with all cookbooks, the quality of these texts varies. Some, like the Elvis texts, are commercial and glossy; others, like the Oak Ridge Boys book, are hardly more than typewritten and mimeographed pages fastened with spiral binding. In any case, these texts are meant to give behind-the-scenes look at country stars and their eating habits, in the manner of an authorized biography. They allow for a measure of amicable voyeurism for a select group—a sense that, as the most devoted fans, these cookbook readers are getting a peek at the off-stage lives of their favorite country personas.

Indeed, this rhetoric of exclusivity appears quite literally on the title page of the Oak Ridge Boys cookbook: "NOT FOR SALE. This book comes as a part of your 1983/1984 ORBIFC membership kit only." Superfans, it appears, receive special access.

Sometimes the Tribute texts play on well-worn stereotypes of the artists they are honoring. For example, even casual fans know that Elvis loved rich, fattening dishes such as fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches (or, as it is called in one cookbook, "*the* sandwich" [Butler 20]). So it is no surprise that an Elvis-themed cookbook would feature recipes for doughnuts, cheeseburgers, barbecue spareribs, frosted brownies, or banana coconut pie—or that it would jokingly subtitle the Vegetables section, "Yes, the King Ate Vegetables" (Butler).

These allusions serve as inside jokes, rewarding the reader-fan for already knowing something about the cookbook's subject. Elsewhere, though, the Tribute texts offer completely new information— a different sort of reward for the reader. In *Recipes and Memories from Mama Cash's Kitchen*, Johnny Cash's mother Carrie shares her son's prized chili recipe. A headnote from the editor reveals, "This recipe has never been given to anyone. Many people have asked for it, but he has never given them the true ingredients. (He has been known to substitute things like snake meat for the steak.) When his mother asked him for the recipe for her book, he finally consented, and he guarantees that this is the recipe he uses" (6). This anecdote does double duty, bestowing on the lucky reader the gift of a top-secret recipe *and* reinforcing Cash's image as a rustic outdoorsman who would never shy away from a little snake meat.

Some scholars have criticized country music for the "indulgent musical hero worship" that runs throughout its lyrics and, to some extent, its scholarship (Sanjek 41)—and a bit of that phenomenon seems to be at work here in the Tribute texts. That is, these cookbooks about-but-not-by country superstars are cashing in on the allure of their names and the reader's presumed desire to get as much scoop as possible on them, even if that "scoop"

uncovers only that the Oak Ridge Boys bass player's mother uses lard instead of butter in her biscuits and instant vanilla pudding mix in her whiskey cake. Ultimately these texts are limited in what they can teach us about Johnny Cash or Hank Williams or Elvis Presley or anyone else. They are written by friends, family members, sometimes personal chefs—essentially biographers who are filtering their glimpse of a country star through the lens of food. But for an intensely devoted fan, the glimpse may be worth it.

The Compilation Cookbook as Community Builder

Compilation cookbooks, as I am defining them, are those which house recipes from multiple country personalities and are collected around a common theme—such as a particular type of food (chili), season (Christmas), or location (Branson or Nashville). Among the compilation cookbooks in the Country Music Hall of Fame Archive are the following:

Helen Naismith's Recipes of the Stars (1977);

Cooking With Country: Favorite Recipes from 32 Top Country Music Artists (1978);

Cooking With Country Music Stars (1986); *Music City Celebrity Chili Cookbook* (1989);

Branson's Country Music Cookbook: From Branson's Best…Well Most Famous Cooks! (1992);

Cooking Up Country: A Collection of Recipes Prepared for Country Music's Top Stars on the Road (1997);

A Country Music Christmas: Christmas Songs, Memories, Family Photographs and Recipes From America's Favorite Country and Gospel Stars (2006); and *Country Music's Greatest Eats: Recipes and Riffs from Country Music's Greatest Stars* (2014).

Generically, the Compilation books are closest akin to traditional "community" cookbooks—those collaborative texts

produced by churches, synagogues, charities, and civic groups, and comprised of recipes collected from a defined (usually small and local) population.

Margaret Cook's *America's Charitable Cookbooks* catalogues thousands of these texts, tracing them to the American Civil War, when aid societies used recipe collection books to raise money for medical supplies to send to the front. As such they invited readers and contributors to feel part of the larger war effort. Eventually, aid societies gave way to other civic and religious groups, and the popularity of community cookbooks exploded. These texts create a community not only among contributors, but also with the reader. By reading these texts, a home cook/reader becomes "a member of a larger community of cooks, with whom she shared implicit alliances and knowledge" (Cotter 53).

Many of these Compilations, like the Tributes, work to establish a sense of community— but whereas the Tribute texts created a sub-community of country fans and cooks centered around a particular artist or group, the Compilation texts construct a narrative of country stars as a whole *as* a community, in much the same way as a church or civic club cookbook would, attributing single recipes to the star who "submitted" it. Folklorist Janet Theophano suggests that cookbooks often serve as microcosms of the communities out of which they grow, that the community "commemorated" in a cookbook is "predicated on shared understandings about what its members did and what mattered in their lives" (24).

Linguist Colleen Cotter argues that a recipe—and thus a cookbook—"can be viewed as a story, a cultural narrative that can be shared and has been constructed by members of a community" (52-53). Certainly cookbooks presuppose a sense of shared values and purpose. But whereas a typical church cookbook might

have recipes for the organists's apple dumplings or the deacon's grandma's meatloaf, these compilation cookbooks collect recipes from country music's most recognizable names, from Brenda Lee's Southern Spoon Bread (73) and Bobby Bare's Fruit Salad in *Cooking With Country Music Stars*, to Craig Campbell's Red-Wine Braised Beef Short Ribs (44) and Wynonna Judd's Broccoli-Rice Casserole (164) in *Country Music's Greatest Eats*.

Whether the recipes are genuine—that is, whether Brenda Lee ever made spoon bread or Wynonna Judd actually remembers that "casseroles were a staple growing up in Ashland, Kentucky, because her family was poor, and those dishes went a long way" (165)—is irrelevant. After all, as Richard Peterson points out in *Creating Country Music*, manufactured "authenticity" is a paradoxical hallmark of the genre, and the goal is to be "*believable* relative to a more or less explicit model" (220). The point is that readers *see* country singers as a community of like-minded people, not that they actually *are* a community of like-minded people.

The community extends to the reader as well. The introductions of many of these cookbooks often explicitly cast the country personas as regular folks, not unlike the fans and home cooks perusing the texts. In this regard the Introduction of *Helen Naismith's Recipes of the Stars* is worth quoting at length:

"Who are [country stars], where do they come from, how do they live and what do they like to serve for Tuesday night supper? The answers are simple: they are Americans, with backgrounds as varied as this great country of ours, and although fame and fortune permit them to travel "in style" and live in luxurious homes in the grand manner, their culinary tastes remain true to their early beginnings. Most come from rural homes and farms—from large, boisterous families where an over-abundance of love made up for modest circumstances and frugal cupboards" (Introduction).

These paragraphs read like a "Stars: They're Just Like Us" gossip magazine spread, featuring photos of makeup-free actresses in line at Starbucks or shopping at Walgreens. They are meant to demystify celebrity, to bring stars down to earth. A home cook and country music fan in the 1970s might be starstruck to meet Bobby Bare in person, but reading his recipe for fruit salad—"If colored miniature marshmallows are not available, substitute small white ones" (37)—might make him a little less intimidating and a little more human.

The Auxiliary Cookbook as Gendered Text

The final category of country cookbook is the Auxiliary, a text authored (though sometimes co- or ghost-written) by a recognizable country personality who invites readers into her (and sometimes his) kitchen. A Tribute cookbook provides a backstage-pass look into the life of a country star, but it ultimately keeps the subject at arm's length as it is written by a biographer of sorts. And a Compilation cookbook might offer a brief glimpse into the life (and kitchen) of country personality, sometimes even including an anecdote in the star's own voice, but the glimpse is necessarily fleeting—the point, after all, of the Compilation cookbook is to show country stars in community with each other. But the Auxiliary constructs a sustained narrative of a particular country persona, a metaphorical portrait painted by the stories they tell, the pictures they include, and, of course, the recipes they offer. Examples of Auxiliary cookbooks include the following:

Kitty Wells, *Kitty's Country Kitchen Cook Book* (1964) & *Kitty's Country Cookbook: A Collection of Down-Home Recipes* (n.d.);

Minnie Pearl, *Minnie Pearl's Music City Cookbook* (1970);

Kenny Rogers, *Cooking With Kenny Rogers* (1987);

June Carter Cash, *Mother Maybelle's Cookbook* (1989);

Tammy Wynette, *The Tammy Wynette Southern Cookbook* (1990);

Hank Williams, Jr., *Hey Good Cookin'* (1991);

Alan Jackson, *Who Says You Can't Cook it All?* (1994, 2009);

Naomi Judd, *Naomi's Home Companion* (1997);

Loretta Lynn, *You're Cookin' It Country* (2004);

Dolly Parton, *Dolly's Dixie Fixin's* (2006);

Trisha Yearwood, *Georgia Cooking in an Oklahoma Kitchen* (2008),

Home Cooking with Trisha Yearwood (2010),

Trisha's Table (2015);

Sheryl Crow, *If It Makes You Healthy* (2011);

Martina McBride, *Around the Table* (2014);

Kimberly Schlapman, *Oh Gussie!* (2015); and

Kix Brooks, *Cookin' It With Kix* (2016).

I am calling these texts "Auxiliaries" insofar as they are hobbyhorses—inessential to the authors' day jobs but pet projects nonetheless. I could just as easily have called them, in musicians' parlance, "side gigs." Several of the singer/authors describe cooking as a passion second only to singing and performing. On the flyleaf for her cookbook *Oh Gussie!*, Little Big Town singer Kimberly Schlapman declares, "I love cooking for folks about as much as I love to sing." Trisha Yearwood offers a similar confession in her first cookbook, *Georgia Cooking in an Oklahoma Kitchen*: "Other than for the 'singing thing' I do, I'm best known among my friends for my cooking" (11). Further in the past we see authors make similar claims, as Tammy Wynette draws this parallel in the introduction to her cooking manual: "just as music has always been a part of my life and an expression of my love for life, so has food" (7). And though she is often lauded as the mother of country music, Kitty Wells says plainly in her *Country Kitchen Cook Book*, "I'm happiest when I can be in my kitchen" (n.p.).

Such musings on vocation and career are not out of place in cookery texts. As Janet Theophano argues throughout *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote*, rare is the cookbook that consists simply of a collection of recipes; cookbooks can and should also be read as diaries, autobiographies, conduct manuals, even reveries on life and death . As "expressive," rather than merely "utilitarian or aesthetic" texts (Theophano 5), cookbooks reveal something about their authors—what they value, what they think of their audience, and what they think of the task at hand. Further, as cultural artifacts, cookbooks pull back the curtain on the prevailing social values of the cultures that produced them. And what the country Auxiliary cookbooks reveal about the country music culture that produced—and continues to produce—them is persistent anxiety over gender.

Gender trouble has long plagued country music, often seen as a bastion of conservatism, "aligned in the popular imagination with patriotism and religious fundamentalism" (Bufwack and Oermann 281). This is the genre, after all, that that puts Mama on a pedestal but demonizes the temptresses and vixens who seem to prowl honky-tonks nationwide. This is the genre that relegated female artists to the "girl singer" role on package tours in the 1950s and 60s but soon saw artists like Patsy and Dolly shoot to single-name status long before women in other fields had the opportunity to do so.

This is the genre that still treasures old murder ballads where men kill women out of "love" (Goddu)—but it is also the genre that nurtured the Dixie Chicks, Martina McBride, and Miranda Lambert, who sing of justifiable homicide in the face of abuse. Country music seemingly celebrates, even demands, the angel in the house and the brawler in the barroom with equal enthusiasm. Thus, female country singers must tread a fine line, tinging spunk

with reserve, modernity with tradition. This tightrope walk plays out variously for individual artists; Loretta Lynn is a classic example. On the one hand, she vocally renounces "women's liberation" in her songs, television appearances, and memoirs; on the other, she writes and sings unapologetic encomia to reproductive freedom—including, in *Coal Miner's Daughter*, abortion. More recently, Carrie Underwood has released earnest songs of faith, such as "Jesus Take the Wheel," on the same album that includes songs of unrepentant revenge, such as "Before He Cheats."

Even the "Queen of Country Music," Kitty Wells, embodies the "true woman" vs. "new woman" challenge faced by female country stars. Wells was the first woman to top the country charts, with "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-Tonk Angels," an answer song to Hank Thompson's "The Wild Side of Life" (CITE). Wells's hit called out the double-standard in Thompson's song, which chided women for infidelity, by suggesting that "honky tonk angels" cheat only because they find willing partners. But as historians Mary Bufwack and Robert Oermann maintain, Wells's stance was only an act. "Publicly," they say, "she sang of guilt and remorse, or illicit romance and sin, of betrayal and broken dreams. Privately, she was the polite mother of three and a shy, soft-spoken, dutiful housewife" (150).

Such discord is a familiar predicament for female country stars, who have to be glamorous but relatable, impressive but ordinary, forward-thinking but ultimately conservative. If Tammy Wynette was uneasy singing about D-I-V-O-R-C-E, or if Loretta Lynn caught grief for singing about "The Pill," they could easily mitigate such "unladylike" discourse by sharing recipes and discussing their love of hearth and home. Is it any wonder, then, Kitty Wells, country's first chart-topping queen, would also be the first country start to write her own cookbook? After all,

cookbooks have historically been coded as gendered texts; they "vividly demonstrate the way that food preparation and gender seem hopelessly intertwined" (Neuhaus 2).

As many scholars have demonstrated, modern cookbooks have been primarily written, compiled, edited, and used by women (Fleitz; Bower; Mitchell; Johnston et al; Engelhardt; Neuhaus, Theophano). As a domestic activity, cooking has fallen acceptably into the "private" sphere—outmoded as that term may be—so although "women have never had full access to the modes of communication," the cookbook "is one area where women are allowed full reign to compose and produce, without the previous limitations imposed on them by men and patriarchal forces" (Fleitz 3). Whereas women's literate practices have been circumscribed throughout history, cookbook authorship—and readership—has been considered "acceptable" for women because it underscores a woman's role in the private sphere: "as long as the woman fulfills her gender role, little attention is paid to the increasing amount of public power she gains in both the private and public spheres" (Fleitz 4).

A cookery text is a perfect way to perform femininity as a public woman—especially a woman in a conservative field. Perhaps, then, female country singers have used cookbook authorship to mitigate any lingering tension over transgressing into dangerous (read: public, male) territory.

Insofar as they are "expressive" texts, in Theophano's words, these cookbooks are comparable to memoirs and autobiographies such as *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Stand By Your Man*, a genre Pamela Fox deftly analyzes in *Natural Acts: Gender, Race, and Rusticity in Country Music*. Fox says such personal writing evinces a "noble tension" between "the 'common' voice of the Southern girl who still remembers picking cotton and the worldly

perspective of the glamorous woman whose very name has become a material end unto itself" (118).

More to the point, these memoirs work to assure readers that the glamour, fame, and public adoration garnered by their subjects pale in comparison to the delights of home; as Fox discovers, texts such as *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Stand By Your Man* "demonstrate that *off*stage, [artists like Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette] still coded as traditional domestic women (preferably mothers), rather than modern honky-tonk denizens" (122).

And indeed, the cookbooks do similar, often explicit, discursive work. Here's Kitty Wells, implying that no job—not even that of a famous country singer—could compare to her calling in the kitchen: "To me, the most fun in the world is to work for my family. I love to experiment with new and old recipes and sometimes I am never satisfied. However, nothing delights me anymore than for my family to enjoy my cooking!" (n.p.). Here's Tammy Wynette, reflecting on her duties as a hostess entertaining "hundreds" of guests in her Nashville home: "I wouldn't dream of sending out for pizza or popping something pre-cooked in the microwave. I cook for them and then we sit down to enjoy it. That's the way it was in Itawamba County way back when; that's the way it is today. I wouldn't have it any other way" (9).

Here is June Carter Cash in *Mother Maybelle's Kitchen*—a combination Tribute-Auxiliary cookbook in that it is written by one country star in honor of another, who happens to be her mother and "the best cook I ever knew": "I've told you a little about Momma in the hopes that you'd realize that she was a famous person not only for singing and performing…but also because she had so much more to offer. I hope this book will give

you an insight into the way she kept her family close, by way of her altar table" (13).

Here is Loretta Lynn in *You're Cookin' It Country*: "It's important that you pay attention to what your mother's teaching you as you grow up. Mothers have the good recipes, and folks don't make things like they used to, you know." And here is Martina McBride: "I find comfort in knowing that even when my girls are away from home, they will long for my pot roast (a recipe handed down from my mom). And one day I know the phone will ring and it will be one of them asking me how to make it for their family" (ix).

Reading these cookbooks together, we see a clear pattern emerging. In these texts, the authors are not country legends; they are wives, mothers, daughters, and hostesses. They are no different than their readers, who may be looking for a good pot roast recipe themselves. Over and over these texts seem to answer Merle Haggard's retrograde lament for old-fashioned homemakers in the second verse of "Are the Good Times Really Over?". In country music, these cookbooks suggest, a "girl" can still cook—and still will.

It would be an oversimplification, though, to suggest that these Auxiliary cookbooks are only about "women's work." Of course plenty of male country stars have capitalized on the cookbook trend—but these, too, can be read through the lens of gender. Examples of male authored Auxiliaries include Alan Jackson's *Who Says You Can't Cook it All?*; Hank Williams, Jr.'s *Hey Good Cookin'*; Kenny Rogers's *Cooking With Kenny Rogers*; and Kix Brooks's *Cookin' It With Kix*. But the women's texts far outnumber the men's, especially when we consider the multiple books put out by artists such as Kitty Wells and Tricia Yearwood. And if we read these texts with an eye toward gender, asking if

anything differentiates them from texts authored by women, we see two differences: references to hunting and recipes for grilling, both of which are stereotypically "masculine" activities.

Most of the cookbooks authored by women— like most contemporary commercial cookbooks in general—assume that ingredients will come from a market of some sort. Such is not the case in the cookbooks authored by male country starts. In his Introduction, Kix Brooks muses, "Where I grew up, hunting and fishing and even taking a drive to find something fresh, whether it was fresh oysters or shrimp in South Louisiana or fresh summertime peaches in North Louisiana, were all part of the process" (ix). Similarly, the male-authored cookbooks often refer to preparing game; Hank Williams, Jr. offers recipes for venison, possum, and rabbit, and Kix Brooks likewise assures readers that he knows "how to deal with venison and all the other game and fish we hunted and caught. Wild game is a world unto itself, and I'll share some tips from some great outdoor cooks along with recipes and tricks from friends and family" (x). And though June Carter Cash includes a "Poultry and Game" section in *Mother Maybelle's Cookbook*, recounting stories of hunting as a young girl, she also says that her friendship with Paul and Linda McCartney led her to "*almost* [become] a vegetarian" (65).

In any case, references to hunting, fishing, and preparing wild game are much more common in Auxiliary texts authored by men. Grilling, too, takes center stage in these books. The cover of *Cooking With Kenny Rogers* shows an aproned Kenny at a backyard grill, smiling as he transfers kebobs and pineapple chicken onto a platter. In between sections on Entrees and Side Dishes, Alan Jackson devotes an entire chapter of *Who Says You Can't Cook It All?* to Marinades, i.e. the step that comes before putting meat on the grill. So although Hank, Kenny, Alan, and Kix

enter "feminine" discursive territory by authoring cookery texts, they also mark themselves as "masculine" in their focus on hunting and grilling. In their study of celebrity cookbooks, Johnston, Rodney, and Chong found that "existing social hierarchies"—including gender hierarchies—"are reproduced through culinary personas" (20), and that certainly seems to be the case in country cookbooks as well.

So what is the role of the country celebrity cookbook? Is it simply a product of a culture steeped in soup beans and sweet tea? Is it an attempt to unify the country community under the banner of Southern food? Or is it a calculated attempt at image control? The answer, of course, is all of the above. Ideologically speaking, a cookbook is a triple threat: it perpetuates the conservative ideology shot through country music; it underscores the mythos of country music as a family; and it reinforces the image of the idealized rural south as a deep-fried wonderland. We may open a country cookbook looking for a "brand new recipe" for pasta salad or short ribs or peach cobbler, but we would be wise to consider the ideology that comes served on the side.

Works Cited

Adler, David. *The Life and Cuisine of Elvis Presley*. Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1993.

Bower, Anne L. "Our Sisters' Recipes: Exploring the 'Community' in a Community Cookbook.

Journal of Popular Culture, vol. 31, no. 3, Winter 1997, pp. 137-151.

Branson's Country Music Cookbook: From Branson's Best…Well Most Famous Cooks!.

Anderson Publishing, 1992.

Brooks, Kix. *Cookin' It With Kix: The Art of Celebrating and the Fun of Outdoor Cooking*.

Thomas Nelson, 2016.

Bufwack, Mary and Robert Oermann. *Finding Her Voice*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2003.

Burgess, Claudia, editor. *Cooking With Country: Favorite Recipes from 32 Top Country Music Artists*. Atheneum, 1978.

Butler, Brenda Arlene. *Are You Hungry Tonight?: Elvis's Favorite Recipes*. Gramercy Books, 1992.

Cash, June Carter. *Mother Maybelle's Cookbook: A Kitchen Visit with America's First Family of Country Song*. Wynwood, 1989.

Cash, Mrs. Ray. *Recipes and Memories from Mama Cash's Kitchen*. Edited by Terry and Sherri

Calogne, Southern Post Card Co., 1989.

Cook, Margaret. *America's Charitable Cookbooks: A Bibliography of Fund-Raising Cook Books*

Published in the United States (1865-1915). Kent State University, 1971.

Cooking With Country Music Stars. Marmac Publishing, 1986.

Cotter, Colleen. "Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the Language of Recipes Defines

Community." *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, edited by Anne Bower, University of Massachusetts Press, 1997, pp. 51-75.

Crow, Sheryl and Chuck White. *If It Makes You Healthy: More Than 100 Delicious Recipes*

Inspired by the Seasons. St. Martins, 2011.

Davis, David A. and Tara Powell, editors. *Writing in the Kitchen: Essays on Southern Literature and Foodways*. University Press of Mississippi, 2014.

Dennis, Abigail. "From Apicius to Gastroporn: Form, Function, and Ideology in the History of Cookery Books." *Studies in Popular Culture*, vol. 31, no. 1, Fall 2008, pp. 1-17.

Engelhardt, Elizabeth D.S. *A Mess of Greens: Southern Gender and Southern Food*. University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Fisher, M.F.K. *With Bold Fork and Knife*. Paragon, 1983.

Fleitz, Elizabeth. "Cooking Codes: Cookbook Discourses as Women's Rhetorical Practices." *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1-8.

Flippo, Chet. "Hank Williams' Historic Mother's Best Boxed Set." CMT, 23 September 2010, www.cmt.com/news/1648593/nashville-skyline-hank-williams-historic-mothers-bestboxed-set/

Fox, Pamela. *Natural Acts: Gender, Race, and Rusticity in Country Music*. University of Michigan Press, 2012.

Goddu, Teresa. "Bloody Daggers and Lonesome Graveyards: The Gothic and Country Music."

South Atlantic Quarterly, vol. 94, Winter 1995, pp. 57-80.

Gorman, John. "Dole Takes Gamble on Kenny Rogers' Pitch." *Chicago Tribune*, 9 December, 1986, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-12-09/business/8604020190_1_losangeles-based-castle-dole-products-david-murdock

Hand, Edie and Buddy Killen. *A Country Music Christmas: Christmas Songs, Memories, Family Photographs and Recipes From America's Favorite Country and Gospel Stars*. New Broadway Books, 2006.

Helen Naismith's Recipes of the Stars. The Porch Swing Press, 1977.

Jackson, Alan. *Who Says You Can't Cook it All*. 2nd ed., CBOCS, 2009

Johnston, Josée, Alexandra Rodney, and Phillipa Chong. "Making Change in the Kitchen?: A Study of Celebrity Cookbooks, Culinary Personas, and Inequality." *Poetics*, vol. 47, 2014, pp. 1-22.

Judd, Naomi. *Naomi's Home Companion*. GT Corp, 1997.

Knight, Peggy. *Cooking in the House of Cash: Johnny and June's Favorite Foods, Recipes, and Photos*. Premium House America, 2004.

Latham, Tanner, editor. *Country Music's Greatest Eats: Showstopping Recipes and Riffs From Country Music's Biggest Stars*. Oxmoor House, 2014.

Lynn, Loretta. *You're Cookin' It Country: My Favorite Recipes and Memories*. Thomas Nelson, 2004.

Malone, Bill C. *Don't Get Above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class*.

University of Illinois Press, 2006.

McBride, Martina. *Around the Table: Recipes and Inspirations for Gatherings Throughout the Year*. HarperCollins, 2014.

McClintock, Kathy, editor. *The Official Oak Ridge Boys International Fan Club Cookbook, Volume* 1, 1983.

McKeon, Elizabeth, Ralph Gevirtz, and Julie Bandy. *Fit for a King: The Elvis Presley Cookbook*. Rutledge Hill Press, 1992.

Mitchell, Christine M. "The Rhetoric of Celebrity Cookbooks." *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2010, pp. 524-539.

Music City Celebrity Chili Cookbook. Ambrose Printing Co, 1989.

Neuhaus, Jessamyn. *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in*

Modern America. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

Ochs, Meredith. "Hank Williams' Radio Magic on 'Mother's Best." NPR. 11 November, 2010, www.npr.org/ 2010/11/11/131245167/hank-williams-radio-magic-on-mother-s-bestrecordings

Parton, Dolly. *Dolly's Dixie Fixin's: Love, Laughter, and Lots of Good Food*. Viking, 2006.

Pearl, Minnie. *Minnie Pearl's Music City Cook Book*. Aurora, 1970.

Peterson, Richard A. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Rogers, Kenny. *Cooking With Kenny Rogers*. Dole Food Company, 1987.

Sanjek, David. "Blue Moon Rising Over the Mystery Train: The Complex Construction of Country Music." *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars, and Honky-Tonk Bars*, edited by Cecelia Tichi, Duke University Press, 1998, pp. 22-44.

Schlapman, Kimberly and Martha Foose. *Oh Gussie!: Cooking and Visiting in Kimberly's Southern Kitchen*. William Morrow, 2015.

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Turner, William L. *Cooking Up Country: A Collection of Recipes Prepared for Country Music's Top Stars on the Road*. Branson Publishing Company, 1997.

Wells, Kitty. *Kitty Wells Country Kitchen Cookbook.* Kitty's Cook Book Co, 1964.

---. *Kitty's Country Cookbook: A Collection of Down-Home Recipes from the 'Queen of Country Music'—Kitty Wells*. Wright's Enterprises.

West, Kay. *Around the Opry Table: A Feast of Recipes and Stories from the Grand Ole Opry*. Center Street, 2007.

Williams, Hank, Jr. *Hey Good Cookin'*. Bocephus Music, 1991.

Wynette, Tammy. *The Tammy Wynette Southern Cookbook*. Pelican Publishing, 1990.

Yearwood, Trisha. *Georgia Cooking in an Oklahoma Kitchen*. Clarkson Potter, 2008.

---. *Home Cooking with Trisha Yearwood: Stories and Recipes to Share With Family and Friends*. Clarkson Potter, 2010.

---. *Trisha's Table*. Clarkson Potter, 2015.

Performing Southernness in Country Music across Five Generations

Catherine Evans Davies
Department of English, the University of Alabama

Introduction

This study tracks the performance of Southernness through dialect from the origins of country music across five generations and suggests that certain features and representations have become iconic and enregistered (i.e., a use of language linked with the country music genre), creating a situation in which non-Southern speakers must sing with these features or risk being judged as "inauthentic" in a genre that prioritizes authenticity.

The study takes as a starting point work on pronunciation in popular music, beginning with Trudgill (1983) who used LePage and Tabouret-Keller's "acts of identity" model (1978, as elaborated 1985) to explain the patterns of imitation of American pronunciation features when British groups performed rock and roll songs. In particular, he identified ungliding of [ai] and rhoticity as significant, noting that the genre arose out of American Southern culture. Gibson (2011) used Baumann's notion of "staged performance" (1977) to theorize the process of enregisterment in popular music, in particular the phonetics of stylization in parody (although country music is not among the genres considered). Simpson (1999) took up Trudgill's thread for rock and pop and expanded from the phonetic to include discourse analysis and considerations of register in analysis of singing styles. Expanding still further, Coupland (2011) explored broader semiotic dimensions

within popular music genres, with one exemplar of "folk/country" a James Taylor song with some country-like elements. Although it seems to be common knowledge that the genre of country music requires a performer to sing in some approximation of a Southern accent, there is little research specifically on aspects of the contemporary accent and dialect in country music. Linguistic analysis at the level of lexicon and syntax is offered in Fox (2004) in an ethnographic study of the genre in Texas. Treatments of accent and dialect can be found in Wilmuth (1997) on Hank Williams's "Luke the Drifter" recordings, Davies (2003, 2005) on the group *Alabama*, Lide (2007) on accent and accommodation by non-native Southern speakers, and Davies (2014) that builds on Rogers & Williams (2000) and uses a discourse analytic approach to illustrate deployment of the resources of classic country music form and style.

Given space constraints and the broad frame of the study, this research is intended to be suggestive. It uses a qualitative methodology and invites future researchers to follow up with a mixed-methods approach that would add appropriate quantitative techniques.

The Construction of Country Music as Southern

Whereas today we automatically associate country music with the South, a recent special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* in 2014 reminds us that vernacular music was performed in rural contexts through the United States. Murphy (2014), entitled *Yankee Twang: Country and Western Music in New England*, documents this history in the Northeast. One of the most famous artists in this part of the country, who was frequently depicted wearing a cowboy hat, was Dick Curless, born in 1932 just a decade after Hank Williams. A pioneer of the trucker music genre, he was distinctive in that he wore a black eyepatch. His

most famous song, from 1965, was about a very dangerous road in Maine near the Canadian border, "A Tombstone Every Mile". In the following representation of an excerpt from this song, I have shown via phonetic transcription that he is not singing with a southern accent, in terms particularly of monophthongization or ungliding for [ai], but that he does use vernacular grammar here, extending object pronoun *them* to demonstrative in "in them woods." Recordings of Curless in interviews reveal that even though he lived in Maine and Massachusetts (where an "r-less" pronunciation is common), he had a rhotic pronunciation.

(1) Dick Curless from "A Tombstone Every Mile"
there's a stretch of road up north in Maine
that's never ever ever seen a sm[ai]le
if they buried all the truckers lost in them woods
there'd be a tombstone every m[ai]le

In a complicated confluence of recording practices, commodification and the rise of Nashville as center, and the scholarship of people like Bill Malone with publications like "Don't get above your raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class," "country music" has been constructed over the past century as a Southern white working-class art form (Malone 2002, Cohen 2014), for which the notion of authenticity has been both central and yet redefined with each generation (Peterson 1997, Jensen 1998).

The Importance of "Authenticity"

Peterson points out the particular importance of "authenticity" to the genre because of its white rural working class origins, yet details how that authenticity has been "constructed" from the beginnings. The singers need to credibly project the "voice" of

lived experience in the world of country music lyrics (Malone 1988, 2002; Fox 2004), even as they become successful and wealthy. They also need to honor what Rogers (1989) calls the "sincerity contract" with the audience. This can include what Brackett (2000: 82) describes as being "true to one's emotions," and "singing from the heart," no matter how many times a song is performed.

Peterson's work (1997) explains the importance of the notion of authenticity to the genre, yet details how that authenticity has been "constructed" from the beginning. Peterson analyzes what he calls the "fabrication of authenticity" in the case of the two men generally acknowledged to be the "founders" of Country Music, Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams, and indicates that cultural constructions were present at the origins. In the case of Rodgers, who was born in 1897 near Meridian, Mississippi, and died in 1933, the stage persona was the "singing brakeman." The classic photo of him shows him wearing the denim cap and jacket of his railroad brakeman uniform (with an anomalous bow tie) and a locomotive in the background. This persona had some reality in that his father and he were involved with trains. The cultural orientation of the brakeman, however, was to a romantic working class male image of the time that was associated both with the relatively new technology of railroads and also with the implied freedom of movement and lack of traditional responsibility. Hank Williams, who was born in 1923 in Butler County, Alabama, and died in 1953, adopted the "cowboy" image, including not only ten-gallon hats and appropriate types of boots but also the classic Western-style Nudie suits. Even though there were no cowboys in Alabama, Williams's group was called "The Drifting Cowboys," drawing on another romantic male image of the period but with the attributive adjective in their name also emphasizing the supposed freedom and mobility of the cowboy lifestyle.

Southern Dialect in Country Music

In contrast with the personal inauthenticity of their stage personas, it appears, from a comparison of limited recordings of speech available, that the dialects that were part of the performance of the music of both Rodgers and Williams were consistent with the way that the two men actually spoke. Whereas Peterson in his work on authenticity, beyond a general remark about a "soft Southern accent," does not comment on the dialects of the singers, Wilmuth (1997) examined characteristics of Williams's dialect across various levels in his analysis of the "Luke the Drifter" recordings in which the lyrics combine speaking and singing. Davies (2011) built on this work on Williams and also compared the few recordings of Rodgers's speech with his singing, with particular attention to rhoticity and monophthongization of [ai], finding that Rodgers was variable in both rhoticity and [ai]-ungliding, whereas Williams had consistent strong rhoticity and monopthongization of [ai]. These claims appear to be consistent with data from the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States from the Piney Woods areas, comparing the closest available speakers in relation to these two generations. Rodgers also had strong influence during his childhood from his Aunt Dora Bozeman, an educated woman who had "finished" at a private academy for women in Mississippi, with a certificate to teach English (Porterfield 2007:14). He lived with her for five years, from ages 9 to 14, during which time he not only attended school but lived with his teacher who was a boarder with his Aunt Dora. If these civilizing influences extended to any linguistic features it might have included r-vocalization and variable monophthongization of [ai]. In the early lives of both of these men it is probable that they had few non-local dialect models. It is also known that both men were influenced by African-American musicians with whom they

had contact, such as Rufus Payne ("Tee-Tot") in the early life of Hank Williams (Escott 2004:10). Both Rodgers and Williams also wrote many of their own songs, adding more levels of dialect to the performance of Southernness.

Five Generations

The qualitative study presented here examines the performance of Country Music across five generations of successful singers in the genre. The following chart provides an overview of the generations and the singers considered in this study. Because the two generally acknowledged founders of country music were male, I have selected male pairs of native and non-native Southerners (with one exception to show a vocal characteristic of the music genre) choosing popular singers born at about 20-year intervals. I selected in each case (drawing on online sources such as *Billboard*) some of their best-selling songs as evidence of success within the genre. Starting from the premise that the founders wrote and sang in their authentic accents, and that the notion of "authenticity" will inevitably be both enregistered as part of the genre and also constantly redefined and re-enregistered, this study will consider examples from all levels of dialect across the generations, along with themes and some genre-specific characteristics. Transcriptions of selected clips will be included to show the relevant phonetic features; because of space limitations some discussions will be more extensive than others. After discussion of the five generations, the data will be theorized in terms of the notion of enregisterment, drawing on (Agha 2003, Silverstein (2003), and Johnstone, Andrus, and Danielson (2006).

Generation 1: b. 1897 Mississippi: Jimmie Rodgers
Generation 1.5: b. 1914 Canada: Hank Snow
Generation 2: b. 1923 Alabama: Hank Williams

Generation 3:
Southerner: b. 1949 Alabama: Randy Owen of "Alabama"
Non-Southerners: b. 1941 Minnesota: Bob Dylan
(Nashville Skyline)
Generation 4:
Southerners: b. 1962 Texas: Clint Black
Non-Southerners: b. 1967 Australia: Keith Urban
Generation 5:
Southerners: b. 1987, Georgia: Tyler Hubbard of "Florida Georgia Line", LeAnn Rimes b. 1982 Mississippi to Texas at 6
Non-Southerners: b. 1990 in Liverpool, England, with northern Irish parents: Nathan Carter (#1 country star in Ireland)

The Founders' Generations (1 and 2):

A common theme in Country Music is the difficulty of working-class life. This is often expressed in terms of ambivalence: appreciation of family and rootedness in a region, and yet at the same time the urge to be free and mobile as on a train, as a cowboy on a horse out on the range, or as a long-haul trucker. Aspects of these themes can be seen in excerpt 1 above, and in excerpts 2 and 3 immediately below.

In terms of accent, it appears that both Rodgers, born 1897, and Williams, born 1923, were variable in their velar fronting for [ɪŋ], pronouncing it as *-in'*. On the other hand, there was a shift from Rodgers to Williams in terms of rhoticity and ungliding of [ai]. Rhoticity refers to the pronunciation of [r] in a word following a vowel as a consonant or as a vowel. Both men produce [r] as a consonant at the beginning of words (as in "right" and "train"). "Ungliding" or monophthongization of [ai] refers to the pronunciation of this two-vowel combination as if it were simply a long a [a:] "ah" without the front of the tongue gliding up toward the front of the mouth to produce the second vowel [i]

"ee." Whereas the spoken and sung recordings of Rodgers show variability, Williams is very consistent with a monophthongized or reduced glide on [ai] before voiced and voiceless consonants, as also noted by Wilmuth (1997: 251), and a strong retroflex [r].

(2) Jimmie Rodgers: from "Waiting for a Train"
Spoken: All r[aɪ]ght. What do you want to hea[r]? That old song, "Wait[ɪŋ] for a train? All r[a:]t.
Sung: All around the wate[r] tanks
Wait[ɪŋ] fo[r] a train
A thousand miles away from home
Sleep[ɪŋ] in the rain
….
He put me off in Texas A state [a:] dear[slightly vocalized r] ly love The w[a:]de open spaces all around me The moon and the star[slightly vocalized r]s up above

(3) Hank Williams: from "Pictures from Life's Other Side"
Spoken: the pictu[r]es from l[a:]f's othe[r] s[a:]d
Sung: a l[a:]fe has gone out with the t[a:]de
that m[a:]ght have been happy some day
there's a poo[r] old mothe[r] at home
she's watch[ɪŋ] and wait[ɪŋ] alone
just long[ɪn] to hea[r] from a loved one so dea[r]...

In terms of morphosyntax, in a sampling of 5 of their most famous songs, we find:

one instance of personal dative for each ("I'm gonna buy me a pistol/shotgun"; "I had me a woman"), one instance of completive done for each ("The judge done said that he refused the fine;" "She's done left and gone"), one double negative in Williams ("Cause

nothing's ever gonna be alright nohow"), one vernacular past tense in Williams ("My woman run away with another man"), and two instances of *ain't* for each ("to try it just ain't smart;" "if you ain't got a damper..."). Here we have stigmatized grammatical features that are both specifically Southern in the case of completive done and the personal dative, and also general vernacular in the case of the past participles, *ain't* and double negative.

Turning now to lexicon and discourse, Rodgers is specific in naming Southern locations (Texas, Tennessee, Dixieland), and also in making both positive and negative judgments about places in the South. Whereas Williams doesn't have a lot of self-conscious "Southern" material in his songs (apart from the song "Jambalaya" about Cajun culture), at the end of his radio shows he would say that he would be back next time "If the good Lord's willin' and the creeks don't rise." This formulaic expression, which came to be associated with his spoken discourse, combines aspects of Southern culture with linguistic features: an acknowledgement of a religious orientation to life, velar fronting, and an invocation of a rural setting in which rising creeks would mean problems with travel without bridges. The term "creek" (that he pronounced [krik]) is not specifically Southern in that is it used throughout the US, but it was one of a range of Southern options with his pronunciation according to Dictionary of Regional English.

Two genre-specific features for Country Music are the yodel and a particular kind of wordplay. The vocal effect of the yodel (which was very popular in vernacular entertainment in the 19th century) can be heard in both Rodgers and Williams. In Rodgers's "Blue Yodel #1" (T for Texas) it is represented in the lyrics as: [Yodel]: O-de-lay-ee-oo--a-lay-ee-o-ly-ee, and is a falsetto style that involves jumps of a fifth on the musical scale. Whereas other music genres may include wordplay in

the lyrics, a particular style of wordplay has been identified with Country Music. Rogers and Williams (2000:50) call this style a "hinge construction," i.e., "hinging a phrase to allow the second half to negate the first." These constructions can also be seen as a form of "garden path sentences" (Fodor and Ferriera 1998) that channel interpretation in a certain way and then suddenly violate expectations. One of Williams's most popular songs was entitled: "I'll never get out of this world alive." In this case we expect "I'll never get out of this…." to be followed by a nominal that expresses a problematic situation, such as "predicament" or "nightmare," but we are given "world" instead. Because we have been set up in this way, "world" is cast in a negative light. This is of course consistent with a stereotypical country music worldview of trouble and difficulties associated with a low position in the economic hierarchy, and matches the hard luck lyrics of the song. After surprising us with the unexpected direct object, the construction then violates expectations further with "alive." Playing on life and death here, death is the only escape; this song was intended to be humorous, with the sardonic title, but it was particularly impactful because it was the last song released before Williams died at age 29.

Generation 3:

Generation 3 is represented by native Southerner Randy Owen, born in 1949 in Fort Payne, Alabama, who sings with his native North Alabama accent as lead in the group named *Alabama*. An English major at Jacksonville State University, Owen wrote many of the songs for the group which is composed mostly of kin. The non-Southerner in this generation is Bob Dylan, born in 1941 in Hibbing, Minnesota, in the northern iron range. Although typically considered a "folk" artist, Dylan was selected because

he came out with a "country" album in 1969 entitled "Nashville Skyline." "Country Pie" is one of the two songs written especially for the album.

Whereas Dylan's "Country Pie" is a general celebration of Southern culture, touching on music, food, and sociability, *Alabama*'s "Roll On Eighteen Wheeler" carries forward a thematic tradition from the founders. In its earliest form it was the mobility of the cowboy and the railroad brakeman, but then with Dick Curless that theme was extended to the long-haul trucker. *Alabama'*s song combines the mobility of the truck with the connectedness to family and home.

In terms of phonology, from Randy Owen in "Roll On Eighteen-Wheeler," we hear, for example, strong rhoticity in "wheele[r]," monophthongization of [ai] in "highway" and "night," and velar fronting in "morning" and "kissing." Judging from recordings of interviews with Bob Dylan from the 1960s and more recently, his speaking style is rhotic with full glides on [ai]. In 1983 Trudgill noticed that Dylan's "singing style incorporates frequent use of [a:] and r-loss," a finding of variability confirmed impressionistically from a sampling of his songs. In "Country Pie," he achieves the best monophthongization in the refrain, "Oh me oh m[a:], love that country p[a:]." There is more gliding in other iterations of "pie" and "lie." The retroflex [r] is strong in "fiddler play" but vocalized a bit in "dinner honey." There is velar fronting in "playing."

The lyrics in *Alabama*'s most popular songs include both Southern vernacular features (e.g., "completive 'done'" in "Me and my woman's done made our plans" ("Tennessee River")) and general vernacular features (e.g., *them* as a demonstrative pronoun modifying a noun as direct object: "on them good ol' Gospel songs" ("My Home's in Alabama"). In "Country Pie"

Dylan includes a personal dative ("saddle me up my big white goose"), representing a stereotypically Southern feature, and two instances of general vernacular *ain't*.

Rodgers started the trend of referring to specific Southern places, and that trend is continued in the third generation. The group *Alabama* takes their name from their home state and most of their songs include references to Southern places and Southern culture. Wordplay in a form of the "hinge construction" can be seen in a best-selling *Alabama* song, "When it all goes South." The current expression, indicating a negative, downward trend on a chart, plays on the spatial metaphor taken from a map. In the Northern Hemisphere, of course down is South. The *Alabama* song plays with that idea, reversing it with a positive depiction of the South as a refuge to which northerners will retreat when their own Wall-Street-based worlds fall apart. In the case of Dylan's "Country Pie," it could be argued that we find a different kind of wordplay in the form of sexual double entendre, a style more closely associated with another Southern musical genre, the blues.

Generation 4:

Generation 4:
Southerner: b. 1962 Texas: Clint Black
Non-Southerner: b. 1967 Australia: Keith Urban

Generation 4 is represented by Clint Black (as a native Southern speaker), and Keith Urban (as a non-Southern speaker). Clint Black wears both a cowboy hat and cowboy boots when he sings. In the lyrics to his song, "Killin' Time," about his reaction to a failed love as an aspect of life's difficulties, we see velar fronting, [ai] ungliding in all contexts, and strong rhoticity:

(4) Clint Black: from "Killin' Time"
This kill[ɪn] t[a:]me is kill[ɪn] me Drink[ɪn] m[a:]self bl[a:]nd think[ɪn] [a:] won't see That if [a:] cross that l[a:]ne and they bu[r]y me Well, [a:] just m[a:]ght f[a:]nd [a:]'ll be kill[ɪn] t[a:]me fo[r] ete[r]nity

In this excerpt we also see wordplay in the country music tradition. In the initial line it occurs in the repetition of "killing," first in a metaphorical expression of wasting time or trying to make it pass without awareness, and then in a literal meaning of drinking himself to death as a potential consequence of his method of "killing time." In the second line we find another metaphorical expression "drinking myself blind" paired with a negation of the verb "to see," which is also used in a metaphorical way to express realization or understanding of his situation. And then in the final line after he has imagined his own death as a result of his excesses, we find a nice juxtaposition of the notion of "killing time" in the context of an eternity of death.

In the case of the native Australian, Keith Urban, the most striking thing is his accommodation to an American Southern accent as represented by certain pronunciation features. Lide (2007) demonstrated that Keith Urban imitates certain key Southern phonological features, including unglided [ai]. As a native speaker of a non-rhotic accent, he also had to add rhoticity to his singing repertoire. Lide found that Urban actually overproduced the unglided [ai] compared with native Southern artists. This makes sense if he was somehow made aware of certain key features and learned or was taught how to do them as a key element of his performance. This accommodation suggests iconization of unglided [ai] and rhoticity for the genre.

Generation 5:

Southerners: b. 1987, Georgia: Tyler Hubbard of *Florida Georgia Line*, LeAnn Rimes b. 1982 Mississippi to Texas at 6

Non-Southerner: b. 1990 in Liverpool, England, with northern Irish parents: Nathan Carter (#1 country star in Ireland)

Generation 5 is represented by a male Southerner named Tyler Hubbard who is currently very popular as part of the group *Florida Georgia Line*. The non-Southerner is Nathan Carter, who has hits in two genres in Ireland: Irish music, and Country Music. Carter is currently the number one country star in Ireland.

In terms of themes, we still find the difficulties of working-class life (in particular in a song by *Florida Georgia Line* entitled "Dirt"), but positive aspects in home and family and rootedness in a region. Whereas in the earlier generations we had trains and long-haul trucks, in the *Florida Georgia Line* bro-country songs we have young men with their girlfriends in trucks on Southern country backroads. With Nathan Carter we actually have a long-haul trucker in an eighteen-wheeler, but as with *Alabama*'s "Roll On Eighteen-Wheeler" in the third generation there is a connection to his wife and home, but with a twist: in this case he is an older man about to retire. But then he and his wife will take to the road in an RV to discover America together.

In "I fall for you," Tyler Hubbard displays rhoticity and strong ungliding on [ai] in all contexts:

(5) Tyler Hubbard: from "I fall for you"
[a:]'m the k[a:]nd of g[a:]
who would neve[r] make the t[a:]me
for anything that m[a:]ght t[a:] me down

In "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses," Nathan Carter displays velar fronting and rhoticity (which are of course both

natural to his Irish accent), but he also produces a strong imitation of ungliding on [ai] which is not part of his Irish accent: l[a:]fe, w[a:]fe, ton[a:]ght, m[a:]les.

In Tyler Hubbard's lyrics we see no stereotypically Southern morpho-syntactic features (i.e., no completive done, no dative of interest), and there is an absence of double negatives and *ain't*. On the other hand, we find lots of examples of general vernacular forms (e.g., in "Cruise"): object pronoun to demonstrative: "she had them long tanned legs"; verb forms: "I should have took the time to tell you"; preposition placement: "you can find us where the party's at"; and zero copula: "Baby, you a song." In "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses," we find no Southern grammatical features at all and only one instance of a general vernacular levelled form: "[It] Don't seem like a whole lot."

As with Jimmie Rodgers's invocation of names of places in the South, carried forward in the third generation in the songs of the group named *Alabama*, in the fifth generation we have another group that takes its name from Southern states, *Florida Georgia Line*, and there is an amplification of the use both of Southern place names and of cultural items to evoke the idea of the South. Whereas Hank Williams had "if the good Lord's willin' and the creeks don't rise," in the fifth generation we find Tyler Hubbard's "oh, good Lord, she had them long tanned legs," although to be fair he does use a religious metaphor in the next lines: "in these times I need a saving grace, but time is running out and I'm starting to lose my faith."

Genre-specific features in this generation include both the typical style of wordplay and also a variation on a vocal effect from the founders' generations. Whereas in the first and second generations the 19th-century yodel was an important part of some songs, by the fifth generation we find what Wise (2007) calls "third species yodel") performed by LeAnn Rimes in "Blue."

The third species is a yodeled grace note….a long-held natural tone is followed by (or occasionally preceded by) a very brief yodeled tag. Known as 'feathering' in rockabilly parlance, this is an important vocal device as well as a style indicator for country music.

In Hubbard's "I fall for you," there are two instances of forms of hinge constructions. In the first example, "The best of you is gettin' the best of me," the word "best" is repeated, first in a relatively literal sense, i.e., the woman's most attractive qualities, and then as part of an idiom meaning to overcome or defeat, in this case the singer. He doesn't want to be tied down but he is losing the struggle against his own attraction to the woman. The second hinge construction, "I'm afraid I won't get up if I fall for you," continues the theme of the man's fear of becoming emotionally involved. In this case if he "falls for" her, i.e., falls in love with her, he is worried that he will not be able to disentangle himself and regain his freedom. The two metaphorical uses of verbs create a visual image, interestingly reversed, perhaps to emphasize his fear; he doesn't say "if I fall for you I'm afraid that I won't get up." In Carter's "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses" wordplay occurs in a less sophisticated form through the extensive use of numbers in the title and in the lyrics, which adds "thirty years on the job," and "ten more miles on his four-day run."

Enregisterment

Following Agha (2003), Silverstein (2003), and Johnstone, Andrus, and Danielson (2006), it seems that the sung dialects of Rodgers and Williams could be conceptualized as a first-order indexical for region and class and gender. In contrast with their constructed stage personas, it would appear that their sung dialect represented their speech. Given the classic musical characteristics of the genre (Rogers and Williams 2000, Davies

2014), as country music became increasingly commodified and constructed as "Southern," it is proposed that the dialect found in the lyrics and performance took on second-order indexicality as part of the country music style and that accordingly singers who were not native Southern speakers began to imitate it as part of their performance. Whereas Agha (2003) used written sources such as handbooks to illustrate the effect of different discourses in his analysis of enregisterment of Received Pronunciation as the prestige dialect in Britain, the genre of country music has a unique resource in the form of oral histories in the archives of the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tennessee. The archive contains an interview with Hank Snow (born in Nova Scotia in 1914) recorded later in his life after a very successful career in what I have called Generation 1.5. In the oral history he said that starting out in Nova Scotia he "tried to sound exactly like Jimmie Rodgers." I suggest that this could be considered early evidence of enregisterment within the community of aspiring performers. In the third generation we first see enregisterment through metacommentary as part of the lyrics. In *Alabama*'s song, "My Home's in Alabama," the singer describes "speaking my Southern English just as natural as I please." A forthcoming album by *Alabama* is entitled "Southern Drawl." Another kind of enregisterment has taken place through scholarship, and this is perhaps the closest to Agha's evidence concerning RP in terms of providing an authoritative judgment on the genre. This occurred in particular in Bill Malone's editions of "Country Music, USA," which first appeared in 1968, a second edition in 1985, with a third edition in 2010 done with Jocelyn Neal, which had a significant enregisterment effect within the community, defining Country Music as Southern. As I noted earlier, this thesis has been challenged only within the last year or so, but of course the enregisterment has had a profound effect. Enregisterment

appears in the fourth generation in the accommodation of non-Southern speakers to a Southern accent, and this is dramatic in the rise of a native Australian singer, Keith Urban, who has become very successful in American Country Music. In the constant redefinition within country music of "authenticity" in relation to the Southern white working class, we no longer find any Rodgers-type railroad man personas (although the cowboy hat has been maintained as essential). Instead a representation of Southern dialect in the performance of country music appears to have moved to third-order indexicality with increasing commentary on the phenomenon. This is yet another form of enregisterment.

(6) Online commentary on Straight Dope Message Board: in response to question about a "country music accent":

I think I know what you mean; country singers do tend to sound like they all have the same (or very similar) accent, at least while they are singing. I do think that some of it is "put on" or at least exaggerated in some country singing simply because sometimes you can hear the same artists singing a country song with the heavy twang then singing a pop song without it.

Conclusion

Starting from the paradoxical idea that country music has to sound "authentic," this study has tried to track the performance of Southernness and its enregisterment across five generations, from the original Southern singers of what was to become country music. After establishing that the "founders" did sing with their authentic accents, it has compared native Southern performers with successful performers who were native speakers of other dialects of English and who accommodated in various ways. It has considered all levels of dialect as well as themes, vocal effects,

and the wordplay that is characteristic of the genre, in an attempt to discover iconization of "Southernness" within the country music genre. This snapshot of Country Music across five generations suggests that phonological features that were consistent for the singing of Hank Williams--in particular strong rhoticity and ungliding of [ai] in all contexts--have been carried forward such that non-Southerners who hope to succeed in Country Music have to accommodate. The *Atlas of North American English* (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006) defines the outer boundary of "the South" by "glide deletion of /ay/" before voiced consonants and word-finally, and the "Upper South"--which includes Nashville--by glide deletion also before voiceless consonants. Themes, vocal effects, and a particular style of wordplay have also been carried forward into the present. Distinctively Southern vernacular grammatical constructions are the only element of the early genre that seem to have receded rather than become iconic, replaced by general vernacular constructions. While noting the combination of recording practices, commodification and the rise of Nashville as center as significant, the study has highlighted the role of scholarship in defining country music as Southern and reinforcing the idea that performing country music was performing Southernness. As part of the enregisterment process, the study has identified informal processes of imitation, self-reflexive commentary in the lyrics, and now the reinforcement of social media, all in the continuing cycle of redefining the notion of authenticity.

References

Agha, Asif. (2003). The social life of cultural value. *Language and Communication* 23: 231–273.

Billboard: http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/the-615/5869583/hot-country-songs-chart-70th-anniversary-top-number-one-songs-by-decade-artists-more?page=0%2C1

Bauman, Richard. (1977). *Verbal Art as Performance*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press.

Brackett, David. 2000. *Interpreting Popular Music*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Cohen, Ronald D. (2014). Bill Malone, Alan Lomax, and the Origins of Country Music, *Journal of American Folklore127* (Spring 2014): 126-139.

Coupland, Nikolas. (2011). Voice, place and genre in popular song performance. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15/5, 2011: 573–602

Davies, Catherine Evans. (2003). "The Representation of the South in *Alabama*'s Lyrics," paper presented at the 20th Annual International Country Music Conference, Belmont University, Nashville, TN

-----. (2005). "Dialect and the Spread of Country Music: The Case of *Alabama*," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Dialect Society, Oakland, CA

-----. (2011). "The Founders' Accents in Country Music: Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams." paper presented at Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL), Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, GA

-----. (2014). "Reaching across the partisan divide: The linguistic construction of an oppositional country music voice". *The International Country Music Journal*, 2: 115-146.

Dictionary of American Regional English: http://www.daredictionary.com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/view/question/C1?rskey=iydLHi&result=1

Escott, Colin (2004). *Hank Williams: The Biography*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Fodor, J. D. and Ferreira, F. (eds.) (1998). *Reanalysis in Sentence Processing*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Fox, Aaron A. 2004. Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Gibson, Andy. (2011) Flight of the Conchords: Recontextualizing the voices of popular culture. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15/5, 2011: 603–626

Jensen, Joli. (1998). *The Nashville Sound: Authenticity, Commercialization, and Country Music.* Nashville: The Country Music Foundation Press and Vanderbilt University Press.

Johnstone, Barbara, Andrus, Jennifer and Andrew E. Danielson. (2006). Mobility, Indexicality, and the Enregisterment of ''Pittsburghese'' *Journal of English Linguistics* 34: 77-104.

Journal of American Folklore special issue 2014

Labov, William, Ash, Sharon, and Charles Boberg (2006). Atlas of North American English http://www.atlas.mouton-content.com/secure/generalmodules/anae/unit0031/genunstart.html

Lide, Sara. (2007). Accent Accommodation and Identity Projection: An Analysis of the Use of the "Southern Accent" by Country Singers. M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina.

Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States: http://www.lap.uga.edu/Site/LAGS.html

Malone, Bill C. 1968. *Country Music, U.S.A.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Malone, Bill C. (2002). *Don't Get above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Murphy, Clifford R. (2014). *Yankee Twang: Country and Western Music in New England*. Urbana/Chicago/Springfield: University of Illinois Press.

Peterson, Richard A. (1997). *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Porterfield, Nolan. (2007). *Jimmie Rodgers: The Life and Times of America's Blue Yodeler* (second edition). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Rogers, Jimmie N. (1998). The Country Music Message: *Revisited*. Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press.

Rogers, Jimmie N., and Miller Williams. (2000). "Figure It Out: The Linguistic Turn in Country Music." *Country Music Annual 2000*, 46-56. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.

Silverstein, Michael. (2003). Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life *Language & Communication* 23 (2003)193–229

Simpson, Paul. (1999). Language, Culture and Identity: with (another) Look at Accents in Pop and Rock Singing. *Multilingua*. 18(4), p. 343-367

Snow, Hank. Oral History Collection at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. http://countrymusichalloffame.org/OralHistoryCollection/OralHistoryDetail/hank-snow

Straight Dope Message Board (archived): http://boards.straightdope.com/sdmb/archive/index.php/t-548407.html

Trudgill, Peter. (1983). "Acts of Conflicting Identity: The sociolinguistics of British popsong pronunciation." In Trudgill, P. (ed.) *On Dialect*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 141-160.

Wilmuth, Thomas A. (1997). "'Pictures from Life's Other Side': Southern Regionalisms in Hank Williams's Luke the Drifter Recordings. In *Language Variety in the South Revisited*, 255-255, (ed. Cynthia Bernstein, Thomas Nunnally, and Robin Sabino). Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.

Wise, Timothy. (2007). Yodel Species: A Typology of Falsetto Effects in Popular Music Vocal Styles. *Radical Musicology* (Vol 2): ISSN 1751-7788

Framing Cagun Music Representing Cajun Culture in Documentary Film

Ryan André Brasseaux
Yale University

In 1965, folk music icon Pete Seeger launched the *Rainbow Quest* television series to showcase America's vernacular musical traditions. But lingering questions about Seeger's alleged communist sympathies immediately subverted the program's chance of reaching a national audience via a major network. Only UHF Spanish-language channel WNJU in New York City and metro New Jersey agreed to carry the program. Those few viewers who dialed their black-and-white televisions to *Rainbow Quest* would catch the first televised glimpses of Cajun music on small screens outside Louisiana.

Strains of "La Talle d'erronce" reached viewers ears before the screen faded from black. The sharp jangle of a wrought-iron triangle cut through the television set. Meanwhile, an accordion hammered out the two step's syncopated melody in lock step with his fiddle accompaniment. A tightly-framed montage of fingers dancing over accordion buttons and a fiddle bow sawing across strings eventually gave way to a wide shot finally revealing accordionist Cyprien Landreneau, fiddler Adam Landreneau, and triangle player Revon Reed. Cyprien wailed in French, much to the delight of Pete Seeger, who, banjo in hand, orchestrated the musical interlude from a rocking chair. "Hey! As you can see the party is already underway," applauded Seeger as the song concluded. "I'd better introduce you to our friends because maybe you didn't recognize the language he was singing in. It's the

Acadian French language of Louisiana… And they've all come up to visit us. They're from the town of Mamou, Louisiana."

The low-budget television studio in Newark, New Jersey was sparsely decorated. Cinderblocks supported a wooden plank serving as a makeshift coffee table. A suspended, glassless window frame and wooden armoire in the background conjured home. Folksy decor, even the bulky and casual wool sweater Seeger wore (contrasted by the band's dark suits and string ties), meant to evoke the proverbial hearth—the wellspring from which vernacular music presumably flowed. The props fit with the banjo player's assertion that folk music was not show business, but rather a powerful form of communal exchange far more enriching than television's "magic screen." Hence Seeger's goal of faithfully representing and celebrating America's musical traditions on camera required viewers to undertake a significant a leap of faith.

"You know, I'm like a blind man looking out through this little magic screen," he expressed in the first episode of *Rainbow Quest.* "And I—I don't know if you see me. I know I can't see you. But all the same, tonight and in the weeks to come, I'd like to invite you to come with me on a rainbow quest to try to seek out all of the colors and kinds of human beings we have in our land. Of course, that's an awful lot of kinds of people." Seeger regarded *Rainbow Quest* as a discursive egalitarian space and "a chance to swap songs" with performers representing the many variants of traditional American music. It was within this collaborative cultural sphere that Cajun music first appeared on film.

"I hope you don't mind me playing along. I'm not a Cajun," Pete Seeger said politely, as the Mamou Cajun Band surveyed their repertoire across seven songs. "We'll make you one," Revon Reed assured his host. Seeger relied heavily on Reed—who held a Master's degree in Education from Boston University—to act

as the band's interpreter between songs. Reed translated French song lyrics into English and explicated cultural life in Cajun Louisiana, while repeatedly addressing the Acadian deportation. "As I understand it," Seeger relayed to Revon Reed, "the English deported a couple thousand French people from Nova Scotia, from Acadia, and they made them leave their homes, made them leave everything, and some of them went down to Louisiana." Reed elaborated. "They settled in different places, Pete. But, they managed to find their way, most of them, to the bayous of south Louisiana. That's where they found a haven."

Seeger first heard Cajun music in 1955 while visiting St. Martinville, Louisiana during a public commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the Acadian deportation. Two years later, he met bandleader Cyprien Landreneau at a folk festival in Oklahoma City. Seeger's travels and engagement with various forms of folk music around the country stoked the banjo player's "curiosity about different kinds of people and their music, either old or new." These experiences collectively became the impetus for curating and representing various musical traditions on *Rainbow Quest*. The power of moving images, he realized, afforded him the opportunity to educate the masses about the contexts giving form and meaning to American folk music. The television show also allowed Seeger to reconnect with the Mamou Cajun Band, who, by the 1960s, had become one of a handful of traditional ensembles circulating beyond the confines of south Louisiana on the folk circuit. Revon Reed, on the other hand, was not a regular performer with the ensemble. "[T]his is my hobby," he told Seeger. Instead, this Cajun cultural nationalist understood his time on *Rainbow Quest* afforded an invaluable opportunity to reframe Cajun music in particular, and Cajun culture in general, in the face of social marginalization and the pervasive denigration of francophone culture within his home state.

Seeger proved a willing ally. "Well," Seeger told his guests, "I hope this Acadian music and language too doesn't ever die out because it's too beautiful. People think that just because America is mainly English speaking that everything should be English speaking. But I think that we lose something if we lost this." Validating Cajun culture as a legitimate constituent in the American national project was part-and-parcel of the rebranding campaign to which Revon Reed subscribed. "We think that we are as American as the next fellow," he said. "But we're still keeping our culture. And I think that it's a wonderful thing, after 200 years, having done it. And the movement is starting now, a sort of renaissance [is] going on now…" That message would echo across America as *Rainbow Quest* went into syndication on public television in at least seven major U.S. cities in the years after its initial debut on WNJU-TV.

Both Seeger and Reed both recognized the power of the "magic screen." Moving images could both define and (re)contextualize music, culture, even performers. Non-fiction depictions of musical performance could also be revelatory and educational as in the case of *Rainbow Quest*. That is not to say, however, without framing. Editorial decisions, camera angles, set design (or local settings, in the case of ethnographic documentary), and on-camera dialogue in effect made claims about Louisiana French music's place within—and at times outside of—the American national project. These framing devices transformed photographic depictions captured in raw footage into deliberate constructions that, as cultural historian Alan Trachtenberg suggests, are "inseparable from the history they enact." This essay explores those non-fiction film projects produced by American documentarian Les Blank and French Canadian filmmakers André Gladu and Michel Brault, all of whom curated moving images like those featured in *Rainbow Quest*, to explore Cajun music.

Like the father of documentary film Robert Flaherty, Les Blank has come to signify "one of the great discoverers of Cajun culture, of Cajun people." Blank created the most important catalogue of Cajun music on film. First turning his camera to French Louisiana in the early 1970s, the documentarian issued a series of critically acclaimed films focusing on Cajun and Zydeco in the first half of the decade: *Spend It All* (1971), *Dry Wood* (1972) and *Hot Pepper* (1972). Blank's singular goal of documenting pleasure frames his intimate, almost voyeuristic portrayals of expressive culture. Shunning virtually all historicism, he zooms in on those parts of Louisiana's francophone traditions that, to his eye, seem unfamiliar, exotic, eccentric, countercultural, and, at times, outright bizarre. Otherness thus always lies beneath the veneer of his Louisiana *oeuvre*. Les Blank would eventually produce the most substantial documentary on Cajun music to date: his 1989 collaboration with Chris Strachwitz—*J'ai Été Au Bal* (I Went To The Dance). I examine Blank's cinematic aesthetic as a mode of Cajun music's representation beyond both the recording industry and the confines of Louisiana. My interests lie in how he frames Cajun music and the ways in which his cinematic lexicon helped shape national discourses around Cajunness.

In sharp contrast, contemporary films made in the 1970s by French Canadian documentarians Michel Brault and André Gladu frame Cajun music and society not as exotic, but rather as familiar expressions of French North American culture. Brault and Gladu use mapping and history, all filtered through the memory of New France, to reframe Cajun music from a panoramic, continental perspective. I consider this alternative view of French Louisiana through Brault and Gladu's *Le Son des Cajuns* series released in 1976. The documentarians produced four separate shorts on Cajun music for syndication on Radio-Canada, the country's national French-language television network. Using the *cinéma direct*

approach that Michel Brault helped pioneer, these documentarians used their cameras for both observation and intervention in their quest to explore forms of everyday resistance. The films depict French Louisiana not only as a vestige of New France quietly resisting assimilation, but a point of entry into America through which French-speaking peoples and ideas could circulate. I focus on the fourth and final segment, a documentary titled *Réveille*—a film cataloguing the musical ramifications of the so-called Cajun Renaissance that Revon Reed helped generate. I investigate the ideological, socio-cultural, performative, and aesthetic impulses driving this film. Their visual depictions suggest that French Louisiana had staved off cultural assimilation and linguistic erosion, at least for the time being, on the edge of Anglophone North American.

CAJUN MUSIC'S DOCUMENTARY AUTEUR: LES BLANK

Critics have alternatively described documentary filmmaker Les Blank as a "renegade independent film maker"—a "white middle-class peeping tom behind a camera" who is "part poet, part ethnographer, part curious child…an artist rather than archivist, an interpreter rather than a collector." As an artist and interpreter, Blank's films explore cultural frontiers on the margins of American society. His constant pursuit of sensual experiences steered him towards the pleasures of foodways and vernacular music through an aesthetic informed by ethnography, thick description, cinema vérité, and cinematic impressionism.

As his frequent collaborator, Arhoolie records founder Chris Strachwitz maintains: "His aesthetic was to just sit calmly back and watch people do what they do." Preferring to push into the field with portable cameras, Blank lived in the communities he filmed, quietly observing and participating in the cultural phenomena that ended up on screen. "I'm mainly interested in primitive peoples who haven't gotten bogged down with sophistication and neuroses

and cheap or shoddy value systems," Blank explained. And yet his view finder focused on everything from the dangers of cigarettes, cooking, the blues, Cajun and Zydeco, and gap-teethed women, to the joys of garlic. Maureen Gosling, the editor for many of Blank's projects, described his films as "celebrations – looking at the way people survive in their lives above and beyond the struggles. [Many] of his films are about people that are poor, marginal or struggling, but there's something else going on there … the other human qualities that make life worth living, the music and the food that help these groups and cultures survive."

Like Pete Seeger, Blank embarked on his own rainbow quest in search of the authors of authentic American music. In 1970, after completing a documentary on bluesman Lightning Hopkins in nearby Houston, Les Blank discovered another marginal world when he met Cajun accordionist Marc Savoy and the nationally-acclaimed Balfa Brothers band. Their French music captivated the filmmaker, who traveled to southwestern Louisiana, portable camera in hand, to immerse himself in a world of sound and spice. Part ethnography, part Geertzian thick description, Blank relentlessly used his lens to investigate how locals were embedded in the natural and cultural landscapes of south Louisiana. Marc Savoy recalled that the documentarian "just came in and joined the party and didn't say anything, you know. He was drinking beer with us. He was scraping the hog. He was catching the fish." Savoy's wife, Ann, maintained that the filmmaker's participatory, but unobtrusive methodology allowed him to probe more deeply into the local culture that ended up on film. She elaborated, "Part of his artistry is just that. The silence, you know, blending in. You forget he's there…A lot of those older Cajuns would have been *very* intimidated if somebody acting like big shots would have come in there." Blank's growing intrigue with French Louisiana would manifest as the documentary *Spend It All*, released in 1971.

Spend It All is Les Blank's impressionist vision of Cajun Louisiana. Without linear chronology nor omniscient narration, Blank crafts an intimate portrait of regional culture and music through thoughtful editing designed so his audience could viscerally and vicariously experience Cajun life. Images of horse racing, foodways, labor, and people moving through various Louisiana landscapes suggest constant movement within the social confines of the Cajun community. Meanwhile, a soundtrack driven by nearly non-stop Cajun music propels the film forward. When played off screen, the tempo of songs like the Balfa Brothers' interpretations of "Eunice Two Step" and "Quand j'etait pauvre" provide the editorial pacing for montages. Blank masterfully twines music and montage in ways that suggest the connection between emotion, artistry, culture and place. Moreover, by highlighting a genre that is comprised primarily of dance music, the soundtrack evokes a celebratory mood that uplifts the footage. Even the saddest lyrics conjure the deep feeling that Blank constantly seeks out. "A Cajun, when he's playing, either when he's real sad or when he's real happy, he'll yell. And yell his heart out." Dewey Balfa explains in the film. "Now, it's kind of hard to say whether he's happy or unhappy when he yells, but that's the way of putting your feeling in song." When musical performance is presented on screen, Blank shores up the relationship between Cajun music, community, and *joie de vivre*.

Spend It All begins in earnest following an introductory sequence featuring title screens interpreting the Acadian deportation. Blank then introduces Adam Landreneau of the Mamou Cajun Band. In sharp contrast to the framing conventions used on *Rainbow Quest*, Landreneau speaks for himself without an interpreter while fishing for his lunch on the banks of the Bayou Nezpiqué. "[Cajuns] are all happy all the

time," he said in a heavily French-inflected English. "He likes to play music. When he's happy, he takes his fiddle or accordion or any kind of music, and he play and he tries to learn his kids to do that." Blank then presents Landreneau, the musician, mid-performance. Dressed in a cowboy hat and collared work shirt, the fiddler fills the frame singing in waltz time at the top of his vocal register. The camera then zooms in on the ever expanding-and-contracting bellows of Cyprien Landreneau's black accordion. Blank completes the scene by revealing details to the audience about the environs in which the Landreneau performance is taking place—Fred's Lounge during Revon Reed's weekly live radio broadcast. Bartenders, dancers, local town patrons—the immediate audience for whom the Mamou Cajun Band is playing—contextualize the music. Revon Reed, meanwhile, does not act as the talking head interpreting music or culture. Instead, he is relegated as an extra. He calls out song titles into a microphone while seated behind a table cluttered with electronics, the daily newspaper, and a half-empty bottle of whiskey. "Let's listen to a very popular dance number," Reed explains while dedicating "La Talle d'erronce" to a listener. Blank echoes the celebratory ethos of *Rainbow Quest,* but through editorial conventions that yield very different results.

Blank likened his editorial signature to "a kind of poetry," placing images, like words, into a sequence that might provoke a visceral, emotional response. "Even transitions," Blank elaborates, "are based on your senses rather than on your thoughts." Cajun music's improvisational nature and emotive character suited Blank's editorial style. "There's no two fiddlers that plays the same melody the same way," maintained the disembodied voice of Dewey Balfa during a *Spend It All* montage. "But I would think that it's due to the fact that we only play by ear. And, we

definitely play by—by the feeling of your heart. To me, that 's the beauty of playing Cajun music." Editing by ear lay at the heart of Blank's impressionism. Twining sound and photography allowed Blank to evoke those webs of significance giving Cajun music form and meaning. From German filmmaker Werner Herzog's perspective, "Nothing is explained. *Spend It All* is exactly one of those films. Nothing needs to be explained. No person needs to be introduced. No political event needs to be invading the film. It's the pure joy of life." For some viewers, the contextual images framing musical performances revealed customs and behavioral codes structuring the cultural world sustaining Cajun music. They also offered a visual translation of Cajun music and Francophone life for Anglophone audiences. It is this affect that the *New York Times* regarded as the "poetic juxtaposition of imagery and sound."

Film critics applauded Blank's lyricism. Fellow filmmakers like Herzog admired the portraits of American life Blank painted on screen. But, Blank shied away from the spotlight. He remained far more concerned with how locals received *Spend It All*. "Marc Savoy was delighted with the film," he recalled. "In his music store, the day after it was broadcast on local TV, all the young Cajun boys were coming in and speaking Cajun French, and it was the first time he'd ever seen them speaking it, and buying Cajun instruments and Cajun records, and starting up Cajun bands. By seeing their culture on TV, it made them feel like it must be okay to be a Cajun." *Spend It All* not only captured a moment in time in French Louisiana, the film also stimulated change within the Cajun community itself. Locals used the film to reframe their own views of Cajun ethnicity. *Spend It All* became part of a broader moment of cultural recalibration affecting communities across French-speaking North America.

THE FRENCH GAZE: CAJUN MUSIC AND FRENCH CANADIAN NATIONALISM

During the 1960s and 1970s, the province of Québec experienced radical and violent change. Francophones rejected the conservative demagoguery customary in French Canadian politics. Rapidly growing urban populations in Montréal and Québec City, meanwhile, began to question the province's cultural and political relationship to the rest of Canada. The radical *Front de libération du Québec* embarked on a domestic terrorism campaign to incite secession. Bombs, kidnappings, and deaths exponentially raised the emotional and political temperature within the province and in Canada more broadly. Moreover, the precipitous rise and political success of the more conventional separatist party, *Parti Québecois*, make the threat of separatism a pressing concern both domestically and abroad during the mid-1970s. These contexts colored a growing number of documentaries produced by French Canadian filmmakers, who, despite these seismic shifts in their home province increasingly zoomed out from the local to adopt a continental perspective. Michel Brault and André Gladu, in particular, created a body of work examining the broader French North American experience beyond the borders of Québec during the 1970s.

Looking past Québec was, in effect, a strategic maneuver designed both to buttress and extend the reach of Québécois nationalism. As Michel Brault explained, when Québécois see that "some [francophone] people are doomed to disappear, that will reinforce their desire to survive. It will stimulate them." Indeed, nationalism compelled Québec's most accomplished filmmakers, including Brault, to probe the contours of francophone life in North America. Before Brault traveled to Louisiana, he had already amassed a reputation as the architect of *cinéma direct*, a

style of ethnographic and observational cinema born within the so-called *l'équipe française* of Canada's National Film Board. Brault's aesthetic intervention came in the form of portable hand-held cameras which allowed him to maneuver in close proximity to his subjects. Ideologically, the cinematographer regarded his camera as a means of capturing an authentic social and cultural reality that was neither staged nor mediated. He tried to counter his own mediation with his subjects by avoiding voiceovers in the hope that audiences to find their own interpretations of the images projected onto the screen. Topically, many of Brault's films were deeply concerned with documenting the francophone struggle in Acadian cultural zones including the Canadian Maritimes and French Louisiana. One of his most influential films, *L'Acadie, l'Acadie?!?* released in 1971, documented a group of Acadian student activists agitating for equal funding and resources (as compared to Anglophone schools) at the newly founded *Université de Moncton*. *L'Acadie, l'Acadie?!?* not only brought cinematic realism to bear on the Acadian struggle for equal rights in neighboring New Brunswick, but in 1972 the film became first French-language documentary ever broadcast nationally (with subtitles) on the Canadian Broadcast Corporation, the country's national English-language television network.

That same year French Canadian director André Gladu, like Brault, cast his gaze beyond the provincial confines of his native Québec and released a National Film Board documentary titled *Le Reel du pendu* (Hangman's Reel). The exploratory film was part of Gladu's growing fascination with francophone music across the North America. It was also a chance to cultivate a panoramic vision of *l'Amérique française* as he probed the remote corners of Québec, New Brunswick, and Louisiana looking for vernacular musicians. "Through a series of coincidences," the

filmmaker explained, "I discovered Creole and Cajun music on record…*Blues du Bayou* from Bois Sec Ardoin…I knew about Louisiana like anybody…about French colonists and about the Acadian *déportation* and all that stuff. But music like that, it hit me. It was a shock for me. Never have we learned this [in books] or at school or even in our own families. That's what got me in Louisiana." Using an immersive style similar to Les Blank's aesthetic, Gladu contextualizes musical performances with depictions of life surrounding song. Musical performances on screen are accompanied by contextual images evoking the broader contexts in which these sounds emerged: crowds filling into the Montréal metro, working-class laborers picking blueberries, the deck of a fishing boat, even Bois Sec Ardoin wielding a shoveling in a Louisiana rice paddy. *Le Reel du pendu* projected Gladu's vision of a unified, transnational, and pan-francophone world straddling Canada and the United States. "Taken together," explains anthropologist and film reviewer Gerald Gold, "the film communicates the image of one *Amérique française*, so interwoven that the uninitiated viewer loses track of which regional culture he is observing." Cajun music thus became part of the cultural matrix through which Gladu realized his conceptualized of a unified francophone North America.

Following the success of their respective films, Gladu and Brault embarked on a collaborative project titled *Le Son des Cajuns* (the Cajun Sound) to, in Gladu's words, "understand what's behind the music." They conceptualized *Le Son des Cajuns* as but one component of a broader fourteen-part television series for Radio-Canada exploring "the traditional music of French North America." The filmmakers divided the documentary into four acts, each approximately 30 minutes long: *Fred's Lounge, Ma Chère Terre, Les Créoles,* and *Réveille.*

As a whole, the four segments juxtapose the vibrancy and fragility of francophone culture in North America. *Fred's Lounge* introduces viewers to a series of live Cajun musical performances by the Deshotels brothers and accordionist Nathan Abshire broadcast remotely for Revon Reed's radio emission. A map of *l'Amérique française* (with Mamou appearing twice the size of New Orleans) coupled with narration describing the Acadian deportation interrupt the music on screen to remind viewers of Cajun culture's place within French North America. The scene mirrors images of the tavern depicted in *Spend It All*, however, *Fred's Lounge* reintroduces Revon Reed as Cajun music's interpreter and the established voice of Cajun nationalism. He addresses Americanization and the decline of French as the quotidian language in Louisiana, signaling a cultural shift in the decade since his appearance on *Rainbow Quest*. *Ma Chère Terre* (My Beloved Land) examines working-class Cajun culture with an emphasis on land tenure and labor through an in depth interview with fiddler and vocalist Edius Naquin. The third segment, *Les Créoles*, features performances by Afro-Creole musicians Calvin Carriere, Dalton Broussard, and Inez Catalon. *Le Son des Cajuns*' final chapter, *Réveille* (or The Awakening), is the most politicized component of the series. The short film draws a parallel between Revon Reed's interpretation of Cajun culture and the nascent nationalism espoused by a handful of young up-and-coming musicians. If *Fred's Lounge* presents "a condemned people who refuse to die," then *Réveille* considers French Louisiana's "chances for survival in the modern world."

Réveille combines the intimate and probing camera work emblematic of Michel Brault's aesthetic with Gladu's continental perspective which places Cajun country within the framework of *l'Amérique française*. The film's opening sequence transports

viewers to the porch of a historic Acadian-styled home with the psychedelic sounds of the progressive Cajun-rock band Coteau—the precursor to the Grammy Award-winning Cajun band Beaulsoleil. Michael Doucet's modal fiddle runs swirl around the driving clave rhythm of his amplified, long-haired rhythm section. Even though Doucet sings the familiar French lyrics of the traditional Mardi Gras song, Brault and Gladu make it clear to viewers that these musicians are not the traditionalists of the ilk featured at Fred's Lounge. The filmmakers quickly cut to an animated map of North America designed to reorient the viewer's attention from Louisiana to French Canada and back. Brault and Gladu then introduce the film's protagonist, singer/songwriter and Cajun cultural nationalist Zachary Richard.

Richard grew up in a French-speaking home on the outskirts of Lafayette, Louisiana. In 1973, after earning a degree in history at Tulane University, Richard briefly relocated to New York City during an ill-fated stint as an artist for Elektra Records. He used the advance from the deal to purchase an accordion then began intently studying traditional Cajun music back home in Louisiana. "I learned to play the accordion by listening to Aldus Roger and the Lafayette Playboys on records," recalled Richard. "For two hours every day, I put Aldus Roger on the record player and I played along with the band." Zachary also sought out and apprenticed under local accordion master Felix Richard as he dug deeper into local musical traditions. In 1975, the budding accordionist partnered with his cousin, fiddler Michael Doucet, to form the Bayou Drifter Band. With little money to be made working the dancehall circuit at home, the group traveled to French Canada at the behest of Québec's provincial government which operated a delegation office in Lafayette, Louisiana. The experience radically altered the trajectory of Richard's musical career. He found an

audience in Francophone Canada. “After hanging around Quebec for about six months, we went ot New Brunswick,” he explained, “then returned to Montreal to play at the Veillée des Veillées at the end of November 1975. That was a real break for us in Quebec.”

Richard forged a connection with André Gladu at *Veillée des veillées,* an evening of musical performances that Gladu curated, staged, and hosted in Montreal. The concert featured French-speaking artists from across North America, including Marc Savoy, D.L. Menard, and Zachary Richard representing Cajun Louisiana. The event not only highlighted Richard’s formidable musical abilities, but Gladu realized that the Cajun songwriter possessed a commanding and critical voice that could speak directly to issues facing Louisiana music. “There is nothing in Louisiana that hits—that hits the heart like music. There is nothing that makes Acadians feel more Acadian than music,” the songwriter revealed. “In Louisiana, [music] is really the only cultural manifestation that belongs to us [the Cajun community]. Because we don’t have literature. We don’t have theater or anything of the sort except for music. To sing music, to play music, it’s really the only thing, the only big thing, we have at the cultural level.” Not only were music and cultural identity inseparably fused in Richard’s estimation, but music encoded the collective wisdom, joy, and pain of an entire culture. “For the Acadians of Louisiana, it is absolutely necessary to make music…If we don’t sing, if we don’t play music, the culture will be completely dead,” Richard elaborated. His exposure to French Canadian militancy fueled the urgency with which Richard framed his anxieties around cultural erosion. Indeed, intense political and social upheaval framed the musician’s initial visit to Québec. The Canadian sojourn effectively radicalized the songwriter, who returned to his native Louisiana on a mission to halt cultural assimilation and linguistic erosion in the Cajun community.

When Gladu traveled south to film *Le Son des Cajuns*, Zachary Richard was the natural choice to represent youth culture in Louisiana. Both the filmmaker and songwriter shared the experience of crossing borders and the continental perspective it engendered. Both were conversant in a common nationalist vocabulary. And, Gladu and Richard had a preexisting working relationship dating back to *Veillée des veillées*. Moreover, Richard was fluent in French. He was a rising star in French Canada who also happened to have the acumen to historicize the Cajun experience.

"It's really a romantic story. It's a beautiful story: a people that were crushed; a people who refused English tyranny and were then scattered around the world," Richard explained with cameras rolling. He evoked the memory of the Acadian deportation while the filmmakers framed Richard's remarks in front of a potent symbol of contemporary Cajun nationalism: a homemade flag featuring a live oak tree and the words, "Solidarité" (Solidarity) and "Fierté" (Pride). "Not too long after they established themselves in Louisiana, it was like the same story all over again. It was crushing again. But, it wasn't with as much violence. It wasn't expropriation. But, in another way it was crushing from a cultural point of view." "Do you mean by the Americans?" Gladu asks off camera. "Yes," Richard answered.

Sitting at his sun-soaked kitchen table, with Brault tightly zoomed in on Richard's face, the musician soberly articulated the historical pressures that have worked to erase francophone culture in the state. "My father's generation was forcibly discouraged, punished, beaten for speaking French at public school," he explained. Progressive Era legislation enacted English-only education in the state of Louisiana. Local educators literally took matters into their own hands, corporeally punishing students

for speaking their native tongue on the school grounds. "So, francophone Cajuns became ashamed…They were considered unintelligent if they did not speak English." That long and traumatic past—from the Acadian deportation to humiliation Cajun children experienced at public school—became encoded in musical traditions. Richard expounded:

I suppose that there is a sense of tragedy in Cajun music, even two-steps, which are meant to be joyous. But if you listen, it's a genuinely sad music…There is a sense of tragedy, even if musicians and others are not aware of history, aren't aware of what happened at Grand Pré [Canada] two hundred years ago. The conquest is their heritage. It marked their culture, especially their music.

Brault and Gladu present several sides of Zachary Richard's musicality, all of which tie into the narrative that the songwriter relays on camera. Historical ballads related to violence and personal loss, which factor prominently in Richard's repertoire, are foregrounded in *Réveille*. With his eyes closes and head tilted back, he begins his first performance in the film: an unaccompanied ballad, "La Maudite Guerre" (The Cursed War). The ballad's minor key, Richard's emotive performance, even his use of vibrato (a stylistic device not found in traditional Cajun music) lend poignancy to the song's lyrics about *la grande misère* (great misery) suffered during the American Civil War. His suggestion that tragedy is ever present in Cajun music colors a light-soaked sequence in which the young musician sits at the knee of his white-haired mentor Felix Richard. The strains of the Cajun standard "La Valse de Bayou Teche" sound heavy and pained as the duo play twin accordions in unison.

As day turned to night, Brault and Gladu filmed Richard performing in his living room with two journeyman musicians,

mandolinist Kenneth Richard and accordionist Steve Guidry. The cinematographer evoked Cajun music's melancholy with dramatic effect. Lighting his shots with little more than a kerosene lamp, Brault captured shadows dancing on the walls of Richard's home as the youthful musicians sway to the pulse of their music. Richard saws away on a fiddle while the mandolin picker and accordionist hammer out the melody to the "La Valse de Bayou Teche." The filmmakers use the scene to evoke the looming question about French Louisiana's future currency within Anglophone America.

"[I]t's a question that will be answered by the following generation," Richard proposed. Brault and Gladu frame the singer's comments with another a cappella performance of a song penned by Richard himself, *Réveille* (Awaken), the song for which the film is titled. The composition recounts of the moment of cultural trauma for peoples of Acadian descent. It is also an anthem, a call to arms for Francophones "pour sauver le village"—to save the community from the onslaught of assimilation. Brault tightly framed Richard's face as he sang forcefully. "The blood of my family/has drenched Acadie/and the damned British are here/ Hunting us like animals/destroying our families/throwing us to the wind…" As Richard reaches the songs chorus, Brault zooms out to reveal Kenneth Richard who sings in harmony signifying a unified front among young nationalists, "Awaken, awaken/Men of Acadie/To save the village."

Cajun music on film, Gladu realized, was the key to unlocking the mysteries of cultural nationalism. "More than any other community—even Québec and Acadie—the drama of the French in America has never been so well demonstrated as in Cajun music." The filmmakers wanted to project their images of Louisiana back to Canada to reveal the "wisdom of a traditional culture" to their fellow cultural nationalists. Brault and Gladu

hoped *Le Son des Cajuns* would incite what film historian Scott Mackenzie calls "shock of recognition," in which an audience realizes it has a "shared cultural past that it never knew it had, yet one that distantly resonates with their own cultural experiences." Recognition was a first step towards creating creating pan-Franophone solidarity in the fight for *survivance*.

Brault and Gladu also stimulated a shock of recognition in Louisiana when locals saw their own musical traditions projected back to them. Cajun cultural nationalists enthusiastically endorsed Brault and Gladu's film shorts. "*Le Son des Cajuns* has succeeded where other films have failed in portraying Cajun culture faithfully and respectfully. The difference is one of approach," hailed folklorist Barry Ancelet who twined nationalism and academics even in his role as film reviewer. "Past documentaries on the Cajuns have been done by young Americans who seemed to be seeking a sort of 'paradise lost' and thought to have found it in French-Louisiana." When the series premiered in Lafayette, Louisiana, the filmmakers invited all of the participants that appeared in the project. The screening came on the heels of an American made-for-television documentary *The Good Times Are Killing Me* (1976), a film focusing on the influential accordionist Nathan Abshire who appeared in *Fred's Lounge, Spend It All* and later *J'ai Été au Bal*. Local cultural nationalists discredited the film as nothing more than a "cinematic ethnic slur." To be sure, both Les Blank and Brault-Gladu projected sympathetic views of Cajun culture back to Louisianians. But local nationalists felt strongly that *Le Son des Cajuns* more accurately represented and promoted their agenda on screen. "This film will do immeasurable good to the French renaissance movement in Louisiana. It is a source of pride and has great potential as an educational tool," the most prominent cultural nationalist James Domengeaux told André Gladu at the

premiere. Of course that agenda was already colored by French Canadian cultural politics, which had begun to pollinate nationalist expression in Louisiana as reflected in *Réveille*.

Gladu became one of the most visible and influential agents of French Canadian cross-pollination in Louisiana. His films present Cajuns with framing tools to reconsider their positionality within French North America. In 1976, the same year that André Gladu released *Réveille*, the French Canadian elaborated on the importance of local culture in the forward to Revon Reed's French-language, Montréal-published nationalist manifesto, *Lâche pas la patate* (Don't Drop the Potato):

Too many Québécois have inherited this rather alienating attitude from France, which considers those other Francophone groups in America "less than Québécois" with funny accents. However, we have much to learn, and our future is far from secure. For example, one is surprised to notice how Louisiana's Acadian culture rests on the contribution and the vitality of each individual as opposed to that of small regional elites like it is the case in Quebec. Everybody in Louisiana knows the songs, the tunes; everybody knows how to dance, and there is not one family that doesn't know how to cook. There are no stars, no myths, just the simple cult of daily life. That is the strength of the culture. This sense of the collective should inspire us all.

Zachary Richard, meanwhile, remained an anomaly in Cajun music following the release of *Le Son des Cajuns*. His compositions, and perhaps more specifically his pop-tinged arrangements, garnered significant attention in Francophone Canada. But back home, Richard was largely unsuccessful as an artist. Rather, it was Richard's cousin Michael Doucet and

Beausoleil who enjoyed commercial success even national recognition riding the crest of the so-called Cajun craze that spread across the United States during the 1980s. Doucet became the face of Cajun music beyond Louisiana as a recording artist for Chris Strachwitz's Arhoolie records. Their Arhoolie debut, *Parlez-Nous A Boire* (1984), played a significant role in promoting the genre to a national audience. But, Beausoleil's collaboration with Arhoolie was just one manifestation of Strachwitz's deep interest in Louisiana French culture. When Strachwitz decided to explore the long history of Cajun music on film, he contacted the director who helped shape the way American regarded the genre—Les Blank.

J'AI ETE AU BAL—CAJUN MUSIC'S MAGNUM OPUS

Spend It All became a springboard for Blank's budding career. "I wanted to do the black musicians on that trip," he explained, "but I ran out of money." He received a grant through the National Endowment for the Arts, thanks in part to the lobby headed by Robert Flaherty's former cinematographer Rickie Leacock who admired Blank's films. He used the money to produce two documentaries focusing on zydeco in 1973, *Dry Wood* and *Hot Pepper*. Blank also expanded deepened his relationship with Chris Strachwitz who served as an advisor on *Spend It All*.

"Shortly after arriving in the USA in 1947, I became enamored, captivated and overwhelmed by the sheer beauty and power of many of the regional and vernacular musics in this country," Arhoolie records founder Chris Strachwitz explained. He later discovered Cajun music in the 1950s through Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*. The enchanting sounds of America compelled Strachwitz to tour the country, including south Louisiana, looking for regional artists to record. It

was in Louisiana that the record man "discovered yet another vital and amazing culture which had evolved in relative isolation from the rest of white-bread America." A deep and shared interest in regional music brought Chris Strachwitz and Les Blank together. In 1976, Blank and Strachwitz collaborated to produce *Chulas Fronteras*—a documentary about *norteño* and Tejano music in south Texas. The two vernacular music aficionados found more reason to collaborate in the wake of Ann Savoy's seminal history, *Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People* (1984). Her book featured dozens of historic photographs and biographical sketches of influential artists that helped contextualize Cajun music for Strachwitz. Using Savoy's *Cajun Music* as a model, Strachwitz became determined to create a documentary that presented the same chronological and historical sweep.

In the late 1980s, Strachwitz persuaded a reluctant Blank to embark on a more academic documentary on Cajun and Zydeco music. "At first Les wasn't really very enthusiastic about doing this historical thing," Strachwitz recalled. "But I think it grew on him." The project that became *J'ai Été au Bal* was indeed a departure from the aesthetics championed by Les Blank, who conceded that his "co-producer was more interested in delivery of content than the inherent expression of a film that can come from its style and form." *J'ai Été au Bal* is substantially longer than his previous Cajun music films, timing out at 84 minutes. It also follows a linear trajectory, featuring dozens of historic images from both Ann Savoy's collection and Depression-era FSA photographs from the Library of Congress. The film also relies heavily on narrators—folklorist Barry Ancelet, fiddler Michael Doucet, and Ann and Marc Savoy—as cultural authorities. English-language captions translating the lyrical content of Cajun songs change the tone of the impressionistic presentation of the genre in Blank's

early work. “It’s a feature-length film and more linear than the others. It proceeds through the history of Cajun music and Creole people from Africa,” Blank explained. “It’s treated as a definitive study of the whole subject without being overly laborious. It’s education that’s entertaining.”

J’ai Été au Bal’s deftly surveys the historical trajectories of the genres in broad strokes. The film’s interventions to the cinematic depiction of Cajun music center on the depth of the genre’s historical contextualization and the presentation of Cajun and Creole musics in tandem. Academics, musicians, and local aficionados do the work of unpacking Cajun music’s cultural DNA through on screen interviews. They discuss the varied influences that have acted on Cajun music through time: Celtic drones, Acadian traditions, Afro-Creole blues, country and western, rock and roll, and various forms of American popular music. Blank and Strachwitz, meanwhile, punctuate these points using both historic sound recordings and on screen musical performances. They further illustrate the interviews presented in the film by creating visual associations between the narratives their culture brokers provide and lithographs, wood cuttings, and historic photographs that may-or-may-not have had any tie to the information presented on screen.

J’ai Été au Bal’s other great intervention rests in the filmmakers insistence on exploring the interconnections between Cajun and Zydeco (rather than siloing them in accordance with racial divisions sometimes used to define the genres). Cajun and Afro-Creole musical expressions are visually and sonically interspersed in ways that suggest synergy between these traditions. The filmmakers reintroduce familiar characters from the Creole community like Bois Sec Ardoin who appeared in both Les Blank’s and André Gladu-Michel Brault’s earlier films. To an uninitiated

ear, Bois Sec Ardoin's on screen performances could sound quite like the Cajun music presented in the vicinity of this segment. But, Blank and Strachwitz move from implication to cross-cultural articulation by interviewing Cajun fiddler Dennis McGee about his interracial collaboration with Amede Ardoin during Jim Crow Louisiana. "I really think that what they play is the base of Cajun music," Michael Doucet exlaborates. "Their influence is still felt today by both the black and white community."

When *J'ai Été au Bal* premiered in Montreal and Telluride in 1989 to critical acclaim, the nation had finally caught up with Les Blank. In the midst of the Cajun craze, Americans voraciously consumed all things Louisiana, including the Blank-Strachowitz collaboration. "I think Jai Été Au Bal may be the best documentary ever made about an American roots music genre," hailed Steve Winick of the music magazine *Dirty Linen*. "It combines serious scholarship with an exuberant love of Cajun and zydeco music, as well as a keen eye for the details of local life in South Louisiana." *J'ai Été au Bal* eventually moved beyond the festival circuit and enjoyed national airplay on PBS' "The American Experience" series. More significantly, the film helped canonize particular artists from Cajun music's past—including Joe Falcon, Dennis McGee, Nathan Abshire, Dewey Balfa, and DL Menard—while lionizing contemporary artists they identified as either significant or innovative including Marc and Ann Savoy, Michael Doucet, and Wayne Toups. Like *Spend It All*, the film validated local traditions. It provided a media outlet for cultural authorities like Barry Ancelet and Michael Doucet, both of whom actively worked to inscribe and control a Cajun-generated narrative for both a local and national audience. Anthropologist C. Ray Brassieur pushes the point further, arguing that *J'ai Été au Bal* even helped "fuel the ongoing Cajun revitalization movement" that Revon Reed helped launch.

Les Blank's films helped create a new vocabulary structuring the national discourse defining Cajun in America both on and off the silver screen. As the *New York Times* suggested, *J'ai Été au Bal* represented "another fine documentary by Les Blank, who is well on his way to becoming an uneasy national treasure." He introduced people, places, even scenarios that would reappear in both documentary and feature films. Werner Herzog explicitly asked Blank if he could steal the *Spend It All* scene of a Cajun man pulling his own teeth with plyers for his 1977 film *Stroszek*. Feature filmmaker Walter Hill modeled the Cajun scenes from his 1981 drama, *Southern Comfort*, on *Spend It All*. Hill's fictional movie featured on-screen performances by two of Les Blank's favorite subjects, Marc Savoy and Dewey Balfa, performing at a local dance. *Southern Comfort* would reframe Cajun culture in accordance with *Deliverance*'s depiction of rural southern cultural deviance. The use of landscape in *J'ai Été au Bal*, meanwhile, left its imprint on the 1989 detective feature *The Big Easy*, which also featured on screen performances and soundtrack appearances by Dewey Balfa and BeauSoleil.

"Where would movies be without music?" Les Blank once posited. Music on film creates a sensory and consumable experience that can be more contextual, revelatory, and educational than sound recordings. Film can also simulate the experience of a live performance, especially when a screening includes a theater audience. And yet, for as revelatory as film can be as a medium, it can also be limiting and restrictive in its ability to frame a subject. The first crucial editorial decision to which a filmmaker must commit is where to turn their lens. For Les Blank, he remained fixated on sounds created on the margins of American society. As his son Harrod Blank recalled, "He is going for what is different. He is going for what he knows is different and he thinks it's special and that's when he turns his camera on." Blank's impressionistic framing

of Louisiana culture in *Spend It All* zooms in on the idiosyncratic. Expressive culture dominates his shots. Events are captured in the moment. Those broader contexts beyond the happening's immediate environs fall out of frame leaving *Spend It All* devoid of historical and academic analysis. Music is thus presented viscerally in the way Les Blank himself might have experienced it.

By contrast, the Brault-Gladu project that became *Le Son des Cajun* suggests that Cajun music has an equal voice in the cacophony of francophone expression in North America. This French Canadian collaboration charted a new geographic imaginary—one that regarded French Louisiana and Québec not as francophone isolates, but rather as interconnected constituencies of the transnational *l'Amérique française*. "For us," Gladu reminisced, "Louisiana is at once a window on this continent, and a window toward the contemporary United States…. Having remained independent in character and very Latin, Cajuns have maintained a side much closer to the French than we have, while at the same time preserving an old Acadian strain of resistance." Louisiana could serve as a model for resisting assimilation for other Francophone groups on the continent.

The cinematic lexicon framing Cajun music's on-screen representation during the 1970s mirrored the dialectic tensions that that Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein earlier identified as thesis and antithesis—dynamic juxtapositions that create contrast and at times discord. *Spend It All*'s exoticized portrayal and *Le Son des Cajuns*' inclusive, Francophone-centric depictions of local culture deploy framing devices that filter how an audience might consume music on film. Even when these films present the same people, songs, and locales, deliberate acts of framing yield different interpretations. *J'ai Été au Bal*'s treatment of Cajun music, on the other hand, signifies what Eisenstein termed synthesis, "arising from the opposition between thesis and

antithesis." Strachwitz's heavy-handed involvement in the film's production disrupted Les Blank's usual aesthetic. The record man insisted upon historicizing Cajun music while contextualizing the genre from a broader, more panoramic view. The film connects Cajun music to North America's colonial past, the Afro-Creole experience, and American popular culture more broadly. This long and vertical view of the genre's development and trajectory synthesized elements from *Spend It All* and *Le Son des Cajuns.* The results are a film with both intimacy and breadth.

These films helped legitimize Cajun music. During the 1970s, French language and music served as class markers in Louisiana. Francophone culture meant working-class, uneducated, backwards, and un-American. To complicate matters further, vilification often came from the local bourgeoisie, not outside forces. Hence, Cajun music projected onto a screen generally reserved for movie stars translated as outside validation for the marginalized ethnic group. Revon Reed, Zachary Richard, and other agents of social uplift embraced their time on screen because they realized that cinema made Cajun music look bigger than life. Nonfiction film reframed local culture and placed it in the center of the magic screen. Indeed, filmmakers helped transform musicians like Marc Savoy, Dewey Balfa, even Revon Reed into stock characters that became part of Cajun music's visual record both locally and (inter)nationally. Film's capacity to seemingly transform the ordinary into the extraordinary gave stature to musicians like Nathan Abshire. *Spend It All*, *Le Son des Cajuns*, and *J'ai Été au Bal* cast Abshire as a folk hero. So, where would Cajun music be without documentary film? Nathan Abshire might have remained a forgotten casualty of the quotidian struggles of everyday Cajun life. His day job at the Basile town dump would instead have framed his identity.

Slim Dusty and the Australian Bush Ballad

Andrew Smith

Slim Dusty–born David Gordon Kirkpatrick in 1927–is forever associated with the Australian "bush ballad", a particularly Antipodean form of country music, so much so that the rules specified by the Australian Bush Balladeers Association state that the most important criterion for the traditional Australian bush ballad is that it must be sung in Slim Dusty style, and lists several recordings by Slim as exemplars of the genre.

Typical of a number of Australian hillbilly recording artists of the 1940s, Dusty was raised in the country, at Kempsey in northern New South Wales (an eastern Australian state). His father, David, had been born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1883; his mother (Mary Partridge) was from Kempsey. David played the fiddle ("laid down his arm in the old time style"), performing Irish tunes and popular songs of the day. He was also drawn to the likes of Henry Lawson and Andrew Barton ("Banjo") Paterson, writers of the late 1800s and early 1900s, who composed prose and poetry about the bush–Paterson generally with more optimism than Lawson.

In 1895, Paterson penned the words to "Waltzing Matilda", Australia's unofficial national anthem, while staying at the Queensland town of Winton, after hearing of a shearer who had committed suicide near a waterhole; but Paterson embellished the story in his lyrics: in Paterson's song, a swaggie (tramp) steals a jumbuck (sheep), only to be accosted by a squatter (wealthy landowner) and troopers (police). The swaggie commits suicide by jumping into a billabong (waterhole). "Waltzing matilda" was slang at the time for drifting around the outback on foot with a

bedroll (matilda) slung over the shoulder. With the collaboration of Christina Macpherson he set the words to the music of a Scottish tune from 1806, "Thou Bonnie Wood o'Craigielea" (or "Craigielee"). In the ensuing years, the song has been recorded by some five hundred artists. Winston Churchill allegedly sang it to a bemused Charles de Gaulle in 1941, remarking it was one of the finest songs in the world.

Paterson's tour de force, however, was "The Man From Snowy River", a lengthy narrative published in 1890 describing a horseman's ride in mountainous terrain to capture a mob of runaway horses. Dusty recorded the nearly eight minute poem in one take, after warning the musicians, "I can't do this over and over again; it's just too long. So concentrate like hell, don't make any blues."[1] The poem was later the basis for an award-winning 1982 feature movie that starred a litigious Kirk Douglas, who was included to enhance international sales. A 1988 sequel was released internationally by Walt Disney Pictures.

Paterson and Lawson were part of a literary movement that eulogised the outback and rural life as ideological markers of Australian identity. Much of their work was published shortly before Australia became a country in its own right (on 1 January, 1901), replacing the self-governing British colonies that had existed beforehand; accordingly, there were strong elements of nationalistic sentiment and fervour in their writings. To an extent, though, there was some justification in celebrating rural life at the turn of the Twentieth Century, since about 49 percent of Australia's population of about four million people at the time lived in very small towns; and about two thirds of the population lived in centres of less than 100 000 people.[2] Accordingly, Paterson celebrated the drover "Clancy of the Overflow" as a free spirited character whose pastoral life contrasted harshly with that of the narrator,

who worked in a "dingy little office" surrounded by townsfolk who "have no time to grow, they have no time to waste".

Lawson's vision was somewhat darker in his poem "The Drover" who "sleeps among the reeds" after unsuccessfully trying to ford a swollen river; and he wrote of the despair of a woman living in the unforgiving outback in "Past Carin'". Dusty later recorded a song about a young woman living in a "shabby tent" in a railway workstation in the song "Clara Waters"; she gives birth to a son who lives for only four days.

As a teenager, Dusty was exposed to recordings by overseas hillbilly artists, including Jimmie Rodgers (for whom he had a special affection–he referred to him as "Old Jimmie"), Wilf Carter, Carson Robison, and Gene Autry (from the movies). He was also inspired by local hillbilly artists Tex Morton and Buddy Williams, who were especially popular in Australia in the early 1940s. He fondly recalled seeing Morton when he appeared at Kempsey with his Wild West Rodeo and Circus, which was taking Australia by storm at the time, combining roughriding, circus acts, and Morton's singing and sharpshooting. In his heyday, Morton's shows regularly drew two to three thousand people a night at a time when Australia's population was only about seven million. In 1943 Slim toured for about two weeks with Morton's show which was much reduced at the time, owing to wartime gasoline rationing.

Dusty learnt to play guitar with a mail-order instrument, an EZ ("easy") tutor, and listening to the records of Buddy Williams, whose playing was especially clear and relatively easy to follow. He also started to write his own songs, the first being "The Way the Cowboy Dies". Later, he called himself "Slim Dusty" and, with his friend Bobby Haberfield ("Shorty Ranger"), made live appearances at local radio stations from about 1941 onwards. In late 1942 or early 1943, his supportive father took him to Sydney

to audition for the Columbia Graphophone Company, hoping to have his son record for the prestigious Regal Zonophone label, but the record sales manager, Arch Kerr, was dismissive and told the aspiring singer to get more exposure through radio and live performances. It was a case of "don't call us, we'll call you".

Undaunted, Dusty made two private (process) recordings at Columbia for a fee of about $50. He took these records to local radio stations where they were played and drew favourable responses from listeners. He made more process records in 1943, 1944 and 1945, and these, too, were especially popular–so much so that radio stations contacted Columbia Graphophone asking where they could obtain records by Slim Dusty. Much to his annoyance, Kerr relented and sent Dusty a recording contract in 1946–after Dusty's father had died. At his initial commercial recording session, he sang "When the Rain Tumbles Down In July", a composition about recent floods around Kempsey. Historian Eric Watson described the song as follows: "This was no hillbilly ditty, no local imitation of an American cowboy song, but a sensitive poet observing and interpreting the life around him. This was of the same stuff as Lawson, Paterson … and though not as mature in some ways, showed an even more intimate and understanding oneness with the Australian earth than the best of them".[3] Dusty himself described it as an "all Australian non-Yank ballad".[4]

By the end of the 1940s, local hillbilly music was making inroads to urban audiences, although it had always had a core of fans there going back to the 1930s. Tim McNamara was performing in live shows in Sydney, often with the McKean Sisters, a yodelling sister duet. Dusty appeared on McNamara's shows and, in 1951, married Joy McKean, who is not only an excellent singer but a first-rate songwriter as well. She was to pen a number of Slim's best known songs, such as "Lights on the Hill", about a truck crash.

Del McCoury recorded it in the United States in 1990 on the album "Don't Stop the Music". Joy's sister, Heather, later married singer Reg Lindsay, who recorded in Nashville in 1968 and made his first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry then, signalling a change in direction towards a more American style that Dusty increasingly resisted.

In Sydney, Slim worked for a while as a plasterer and occasional performer, but about 1954 he and Joy put a show together and toured with it–the start of a career that took them all over Australia, from big cities to small outback communities, and from highways to rough dirt tracks. In 1957 he recorded his own composition, "Saddle Boy", about a young rider who drowned in an overflowing river. The other side of the record was "The Pub With No Beer" a composition by his friend, recording artist Gordon Parsons. Parsons had, in turn, borrowed from a poem that sugar-cane cutter Dan Sheahan had written, "A Pub Without Beer", but Parsons had modified and added to Sheahan's work, basing the melody on "Beautiful Dreamer".

Sheahan had been inspired by rationing during World War II when a local hotel had run out of the amber fluid. Dusty's "The Pub With No Beer" was picked up by radio stations and became a huge hit in Australia and later in England. Following Benny Barnes' example, Tom T Hall essentially copied the song's sentiments and words in his "A Bar With No Beer" in 1985. Hall, incidentally, was a friend of Dusty's. He once wrote: "Slim and I are cosmic brothers. We were both born with a love for the twang of a guitar string and a tale well told. We both cared about the ordinary person in ordinary circumstances which makes for exceptional stories."[5] Hall put Henry Lawson's 1890 poem "The Water Lilly" (about a lonely young wife dreaming of her dead child) to music and recorded it with Ralph Stanley.

During the 1960s, Dusty increasingly recorded bush ballads, a genre in country music that he pioneered, although much of his music owed to previous recordings by Tex Morton and Buddy Williams. His popularity ensured that writers of bush ballads sent him new songs. Chief among these was Stan Coster, whose "By a Fire of Gidgee Coal" described the longing an urbanised exbushman had for simpler times in the country. He recorded John Ashe's "Harry the Breaker", about Harry "Breaker" Morant, an Australian bush poet, horseman and soldier who was executed by the British during the Boer War in controversial circumstances. Mac Cormack provided him with songs like "Camooweal", about lost love in a town in outback Queensland, and Joe Daly (a part-aboriginal) sent him a song of an illiterate Indigenous stockman, "Trumby", who died because he drank from a poisoned waterhole, even though a sign warned of the danger. In later years, the song was criticised for its lyrics, which were then regarded (in more "politically correct" times) as paternalistic and condescending ("his skin was black but his heart was white, and that's what matters most"), but Dusty defended his attitude to Indigenous Australians. In fact, it was said that Daly's song stimulated literacy programs for aboriginal children.

More generally, Dusty was exceptionally popular with aboriginal communities and regularly went out of his way to entertain them. His composition "Plains of Peppimenarti" clearly expressed great respect for Indigenous culture. At Slim's funeral, Mandawuy Yunupingu, a member of Indigenous rock band Yothu Yindi, described him as a pioneer in the reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians; and another speaker at the funeral said that Indigenous people had frequently told him how their families treasured Slim's music, and how he had inspired Indigenous country singers like Troy Cassar-Daley.

Bush ballads in country music are generally fairly simply structured narrative songs, often consisting of several verses without a refrain, usually centred on rural or outback themes. Dusty often devoted a portion of his live shows singing them with just his "pick-and-strum" guitar, but otherwise featured them with full band accompaniment. A contributing factor in the bush-ballad sound was the electric guitar playing that was originally developed by Barry Thornton. Musically, the relatively simple style involved runs that commenced on the bass strings and then ran into the trebles. It was, said Slim, based on the guitar styles of Hank Snow and "an old American guitarist who backed up Ernest Tubb" (presumably Billy Byrd).[6]

Dusty recorded prolifically from 1946 until 2003, the year of his death, and made over 100 albums for EMI (essentially the same company as Columbia Graphophone). This is certainly a record for Australian recording artists and compares more than favorably with long-term country artists in the United States, such as Ernest Tubb and Hank Snow. During those years he increasingly recorded songs by newer songwriters, such as Ernie Constance, Tony Brooks, Kelly Dixon and Tom Oliver, backed by his Travelling Country Band which often featured electric and acoustic guitar, bass guitar, drums, fiddle, steel guitar and, at times, keyboard, banjo and Dobro.

Although Dusty's music was about Australia, many of Slim's band members would most likely have learnt from recordings by American musicians. Ian Simpson, for example, was inspired by Don Reno, Clarence White, Earl Scruggs and J.D. Crowe. In 1971, Dusty was accompanied by the New Zealand Bluegrass group, The Hamilton County Bluegrass Band, featuring fiddler Colleen Bain (Trenwith) and banjo player Paul Trenwith. The band had previously appeared (in the late 1960s) on New Zealand television

in a series called "The Country Touch", hosted by Tex Morton, who brought them to Australia in 1971, two years after they had recorded an album with Bill Clifton (who was visiting Australasia at the time). The band accompanied Slim on his gospel album, "Glory Bound Train", giving a different and refreshing change to his usual backing.

Dusty also recorded truck-driving albums, beer-drinking songs, and the CD "Songs to Remember", described as a "tribute to the classics of the 20s, 30s and 40s", and which featured evergreens like "As Time Goes By", "Ain't Misbehavin'"and "Red Sails in the Sunset". In 1981, astronauts John Young and Bob Crippen played Slim's version of "Waltzing Matilda" from outer space when the space shuttle "Columbia" passed over Australia.[7] Dusty sang the song on numerous public occasions, including the closing ceremony of the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

Dusty recorded two anti-war songs written by Scottish born Eric Bogle, who migrated to Australia in 1969. "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda" tells of a swaggie who joined the Australian Army at the outbreak of World War I and took part in the ill-fated Gallipoli Campaign only to lose both legs. In later years, he is dismissive of nationalistic ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day celebrations ("And the young people ask me, 'What are they marching for?' / And I ask myself the same question").

Bogle wrote the song in response to Australia's participation in the Vietnam War, but based it on Gallipoli because, he said, Gallipoli was closer to the Australian psyche. American Vietnam veteran and amputee, politician Bob Kerrie, reputedly sang the song to his supporters after being elected to the Senate in 1988.

The deeply moving "No Man's Land", sometimes called "The Green Fields of France", has the singer visiting the war

grave of Private William McBride, killed on the Western Front. The singer wonders if the young soldier was given a military burial, and questions if he died in the belief that the war would end all wars–but starkly concludes that "the killing, the dying" and the "suffering, the sorrow" has "all happened again, and again, and again, and again". Dusty's version is especially effective, with military drumming and a fade out of bagpipes playing "The Flowers of the Forest" (referenced in the song).

Dusty's uncle, George, was wounded at Gallipoli and later died a hero on the Western Front. The first son of Slim's parents was named in his honor, but died when he was nine years old, so Slim might have had a personal connection with both these songs.

Another of Bogle's songs about World War I was "As If He Knows", about the Australian Light Horse Brigade who were ordered, against their will, to shoot their horses before returning home, because of quarantine restrictions. Many of the horses had participated in a great cavalry charge, in October 1917, when the 4th Light Horse Brigade stormed the Turkish defences at Beersheba. Dusty, however, didn't record this song.

Although Dusty's songs were popular and sought after by some collectors in the United States, a release of his on Rounder Records, "Australia is His Name", was not successful, even though Ken Irwin (of Rounder) especially liked his music.[8] James Akenson, who lectures in teaching methods at Tennessee Technological University, has innovatively used Slim's music to teach students in the United States about Australian geography and history. In Australia, however, Dusty's reputation was intact, and he was long acknowledged as the "king of Australian country music". His overall sales were in the millions, an impressive accomplishment especially given Australia's relatively small population (about 25 million) and because he received relatively

little airplay in urban areas from about the 1970s.

In later years he was not subjected to the put-downs often directed at country music artists by urban critics and radio announcers; in fact, he was frequently viewed as a national treasure. He was awarded an MBE (Member of the British Empire) and an OA (Officer of the Order of Australia); the Australian mint released a coin celebrating his life and Australia Post issued a stamp of him. Within the country music industry, he won thirty eight Golden Guitar awards and was nominated to the Australasian Country Music Roll of Renown in 1979 (after Tex Morton, Buddy Williams and Smoky Dawson); more generally the Australian popular music industry elected him to the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) Hall of Fame.

In 1984, he was the subject of "The Slim Dusty Movie", directed by Rob Stewart. It featured Slim, his family and the Travelling Country Band on tour in outback Australia. In 1997 he visited the United States and made a guest appearance on the Grand Ole Opry, backed by Keith Urban (who had previously toured with him in Australia) and Lawrie Minson playing a didgeridoo. He sang "A Pub With No Beer", "Ringer [cowboy] From the Top End", and "Lights on the Hill" to, he recalled, an enthusiastic audience. But, unlike several other Australian artists, performing in the United States was not the be-all-and-end-all of his career; Australian songs and audiences mattered far more to him.

From the late 1930s, there has always been tension within Australian country music circles as to whether the music should be perpetually "Australianised"–the bush ballad is one example of music that typifies "Australian" country music–or whether it should be dominated by country music from the United States, from which it originated. One of the foremost proponents of the Australian bush ballad was author and historian Eric Watson, who

even argued that Australian country music preceded American country music, because the origins of the bush ballad can be traced back to the 1800s whereas much early American country can only be dated to the 1920s and later, but Watson's view is certainly not held by the majority of Australian country music historians.

Watson harbored a resentment of a dominating sector of Australian radio that gave far more exposure to American pop-country music than to local bush-ballads. On the other hand, many Australian artists, for example Reg Lindsay, actually championed American-style country music long after they had recorded scores of Australian compositions. Matters came to a head in 2013 when an album of covers of American songs by Australians Troy Cassar-Daly and Adam Harvey ("The Great Country Songbook") was withdrawn from nomination for a Golden Guitar award at the Tamworth Country Music Festival following criticism by another Australian, John Williamson, that it was too American to qualify for an Australian award. More generally, Williamson lambasted the Australian country music industry for being hell-bent on producing more Keith Urbans and the like. He controversially resigned, in protest, as president of the Country Music Association of Australia, a position he had held for a decade.

Some other artists, including Felicity Urquhart and Graeme Connors, supported Williamson's stance. Connors reportedly said, "If you want to write about Texas, go and live there." Arguably, however, most country music audiences are content for the different genres to coexist, although sales of bush ballads may well have declined following Dusty's death in 2003 and the passing of early country recording artists like Buddy Williams and Tex Morton. For his part, Harvey argued that the success of modern Australian country artists such as Keith Urban and Kasey Chambers should be celebrated as well as bush ballads and other localised forms of

country music. “There’s plenty of room for all of us,” he said.

Recently, some academics have tended to dismiss bush ballads as simple, cliché-ridden compositions beloved by conservative, rural folk (arguably based on relatively small, sometimes selective samples of songs). For example, one academic generalised that “Australian country music carries a populist message. This is especially the case with the ‘bush-country’ genre which has been influenced by both American country music and Australian bush ballads. This music idealises the inhabitants of an idealised rural heartland and blends nationalism and agrarian qualities.”[9] Despite a declining rural population, however, the bush ballad has remained relatively popular within the Australian country music industry.

(NOTE: The percentage of rural dwellers in the Australian population declined from 1901 to the present day. In 1933, about 37 percent of Australians lived in rural areas, by 1961 this proportion was halved, and by 1976 only about 14 percent of Australians lived in country areas.)[10]

In part, this enduring popularity might be because, from its earliest days, Australian country music was frequently characterised by rural themes, even after American country music became increasingly urbanised. This was probably the result of marketing the music to country audiences from the 1940s through the 1950s and even beyond. In all probability, the Australian bush ballad will never completely wither, owing to a proportion of active bush ballad singers, the enduring popularity of the genre amongst sectors of the industry, and the continuing efforts of the Australian Bush Balladeers Association.

Slim Dusty died in 2003, and was given a state funeral, attended by the Prime Minister of Australia, his family and friends, senior political figures, industry representatives, country

music artists and fans alike. Huge crowds congregated outside the church. The service was televised nationally.[11] Flags were flown at half mast as Dusty's flag-draped coffin, with his trademark hat on top, was carried from the cathedral to the strains of "Waltzing Matilda".

Slim's daughter, Anne Kirkpatrick, is a recording artist in her own right. Her music has been described as "Australian new country". She lists her influences as her parents, Patsy Cline, Buck Owens, the Carter Family and Hank Williams. She recorded an album with her father in 1990, and another by herself, "Showman's Daughter", which has been described as "an album of raw, authentic performances of insightful and at times deeply personal stories."[12] Recently, the family opened the multipurpose Slim Dusty Centre which includes the Slim Dusty Museum.[13] Nearly all of Dusty's albums are currently available, and despite his passing in 2003 he continues to be acknowledged as an influential figure in the development of a particularly Australian form of country music.

Sources

1. Dusty, S. and Lapsley, J. 1979. Walk A Country Mile. Adelaide: Rigby. 136
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures (for 1906)
3. Watson, E. 1975. *Country Music in Australia Volume 1*. Sydney: Cornstalk Publishing. 95
4. Dusty, S. and Lapsley, J. 1979. Walk A Country Mile. Adelaide: Rigby. 47
5. Liner notes to "Slim Dusty The Man Who is Australia", EMI 7243 5 27649 2 1
6. Dusty and Lapsley, 88
7. Liner notes to "Slim Dusty The Man Who is Australia"
8. Ken Irwin, pers com
9. http://www.uq.edu.au/events/event_view.php?event_id=2321 (accessed February, 2017)
10. ABS statistics.
11. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bLdC4ybn1Y (accessed February, 2017)
12. http://annekirkpatrick.com.au/biography/ (accessed February, 2017)
13. See http://slimdustycentre.com.au/ (accessed February, 2017)

Bill Browning, the Forgotten Man Behind "Dark Hollow"

Edward Morris

I'd rather be in some dark hollow,
where the sun don't never shine,
Than to be at home alone,
just knowin' that she's gone,
That would cause me to lose my mind
(Lyrics from original recording)

Although the song "Dark Hollow" has become a bluegrass and country standard, so little is generally known about Bill Browning—the artist who wrote and first recorded it—that Wikipedia, as of early 2017, accorded him but one sentence: "William 'Bill' Browning is a Bluegrass musician best known for his recording of Dark Hollow which was eventually popularized by the Grateful Dead."

Alas, even this small mention manages to get three things wrong: His first name was Wilmer, not William; he was not bluegrass but rockabilly; and Jimmie Skinner, with his No. 7 country hit on Mercury Records in 1959, popularized the song eleven years before the Grateful Dead began performing it in concerts and fourteen years before the band recorded it on an album.

Browning recorded and released the first version of "Dark Hollow" in 1958 on Island Records, an independent label he and restaurant owner Frank J. Videmsek had established the year before in Cleveland, Ohio.[1] "Dark Hollow" was the B-side to another of Browning's songs, "Borned [that's the original spelling on the label] With the Blues."[2]

A partial list of artists who have since recorded and/or publicly performed "Dark Hollow" includes Bill Monroe, Ralph Stanley, Larry Sparks, James King, Roland and Clarence White, Del McCoury, J. D. Crowe & The New South, Dan Tyminski and Ronnie Bowman, the Seldom Scene, David Bromberg, Tom T. Hall, Mac Wiseman, Aubrey Haynie, David Grisman, Joe Val, Joan Baez, Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen, Lonesome River Band, Tony Rice and Chris Jones & The Night Drivers.[3]

So who was Bill Browning and why should he be remembered?

Wilmer Lewis Browning was born May 16, 1931, the first of eight siblings, in Wayne, West Virginia to coal miner Haskell Browning and his wife, Elsie Napier Browning. Acceding to his son's interest in music, the elder Browning bought him a Gibson guitar when he was still a teenager and subsequently secured a mandolin for his brother, Carlos.[4]

After performing locally, the Browning brothers entered and won a talent contest conducted by "The Old Farm Hour," a live weekly radio program broadcast on WCHS in Charleston, West Virginia. This win apparently garnered the two enough attention to be invited to join a band called Lew West & The Kanawha Valley Ramblers that had its own weekly program on WTIP, a competing Charleston radio station.[5] When he was 16, Browning formed Bill Browning & The Kanawha Valley Boys and had his own show on WTIP from 1947 to 1950.[6]

Like thousands of other young West Virginians had done before him, Browning moved with his wife and baby son to Cleveland, Ohio in 1955 in search of work.[7] He soon found a job driving for White Star Trucking. "After a while Bill's music bug began stirring again," his widow recalls. "The [Browning] boys had never stopped playing around the house, but Bill wanted more than that. The Circle Theater on the east end of Cleveland was where Nashville artists were booked in every Saturday night. Bill

began putting a band together and went over to see Mr. [Emanuel 'Manny'] Stutz, [manager] of the theater, about a spot on one of the shows. He talked Mr. Stutz into letting him be master of ceremonies [of the 'Circle Theater Jamboree'] and use his band to back all the artists who booked in without their own bands."8

When WJW disc jockey Danny Ford, who also worked as an emcee at "Circle Theater Jamboree," was killed in a car accident in July 1956.[9] Browning wrote and recorded a song memorializing him that, according to Mrs. Browning, earned him considerable local attention. Browning had met Frank J. Videmsek while frequenting his restaurant on his truck route. He discussed his musical ambitions and achievements with Videmsek and eventually talked him into setting up Island Record. In addition to owning the label, Videmsek served initially as Browning's personal manager. During this same period, the young West Virginian began writing his own songs.

"After Island Records came into being," says Mrs. Browning, "we also started a publishing company call B&F Publishing and also the Jean Johnson Booking Agency [Doris Jean Johnson was Mrs. Browning's maiden name.] Every record package and address was done across our kitchen table."

Browning named his band the Echo Valley Boys. It was an assemblage of Appalachian emigres that included guitar wizard and native Kentuckian Rudy Thacker, who met Bill through the offices of Tex Clark, then owner of a record store in Cleveland and later a talent hustler in Nashville. Other members of the Echo Valley Boys in its various incarnations were Art Fulks, Merl Hoaf, Jackie Wooten, Roy Barker, Marshall Looney and future "Nashville Cat" Wayne Moss.

Although Browning wrote both songs and sang lead vocals on them, his first two recordings Island released in 1957 were credited democratically to the Echo Valley Boys. The songs were "Wash

Machine Boogie," B-sided by "Ramblin' Man." The former was pure rockabilly, cheeky, pulsating and as blue-collar as punching a time clock. The latter showed Browning's country chops, with a nod in the folk song direction. Browning would release four more sides on Island in 1957, all under the name "Bill Browning and His Echo Valley Boys." They were "Don't Wait Too Late"/"One Day a Month" and "Hula Rock"/"Makes You Feel-a So Good."

Next came "Dark Hollow." *Billboard* reviewed it in its March 17. 1958 issue, saying, "This is a train weeper delivered in traditional style by the artist. Plucked and steel guitars lend effective support on the medium beater. Traditional c&w fans will like this." Of "Born With The Blues," the reviewer opined, "A c&w blues delivered just as appealingly as the flip. This can also do biz."[10]

And do biz the record did. A little more than two months after the review appeared, *Billboard* announced that "Bill Browning and His Echo Valley Boys recently joined the WWVA Jamboree in Wheeling, W. Va.... Browning and band are set for shows in New York, New Jersey and Maine, starting May 27 ...and closing June 2."[11] With the Jamboree gig nailed down, Browning and family moved from Cleveland to St. Albans, W. Va., a suburb of Charleston, the state capital.

Back on his home turf, Browning recruited into the Echo Valley Boys a hot young guitarist named Wayne Moss who had been playing behind local radio and TV star, Sleepy Jeffers. Moss worked both the road and the "Jamboree" with Browning. "He was fun to work with, and he kept us busy playing gigs,"Moss says.[12] "We toured through Canada a lot. Of course, he was able to promote those things from [radio station] WWVA." In this edition, the Echo Valley Boys consisted to Moss, bassist Tiny Smith and comedian Lazy Jim Day. "[Bill] had a Hudson we [toured in] a lot. I remember one day waking up in a snow bank with Lazy

Jim Day on top of me. Tiny Smith lived in Pennsylvania and had a Cadillac. So we'd drive [from West Virginia] to Pennsylvania in Bill's car and get into Tiny's Cadillac and go the rest of the way.... Lazy Jim liked to drink a lot. So we'd be in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan or somewhere, and he'd say, 'Hook a right up at the next corner. I want to get me some sheep dip.' That's what he called his liquor. I quit performing with [Bill] when it was time to move to Tennessee." Moss left Browning for Music City in 1959. There he eventually co-founded the cutting-edge bands Area Code 615 and Barefoot Jerry and earned his "Nashville Cat" honorific by playing on sessions for such luminaries as Bob Dylan, Lefty Frizzell, Waylon Jennings, the Everly Brothers and Linda Ronstadt..

Cash Box praised Browning's "Dark Hollow" follow-up single, "Don't Wait Too Late"/"One Day A Month," in its Sept. 20, 1958 number. In assessing "Don't Wait Too Late," the reviewer said, "Bill Browning, who created quite a stir in platter circles with the chart-riding Island debut, 'Dark Hollow,' bids fair to follow suit via his newest single for the diskery. It's a persuasive, moderate paced item that finds Bill warmly passing along a bit of friendly advice to the lovelorn." The reviewer was equally flattering to the B side.[13]

Another news brief in the same issue noted that "Dark Hollow" was "one of the big items" in jukeboxes around Richmond, Virginia but had been "unavailable" for a time, probably the consequence of a small label suddenly having a sizable hit to manufacture.[14] Jimmie Skinner's version made it's debut in the Jan.19, 1959 issue of *Billboard* and spent a total of 10 weeks on the country charts[15]. Later that year, Browning would depart Island to record the first of an eventual four sides for Starday Records.

While Browning was on tour in Massachusetts, Lazy Jim Day became ill and died in the backseat of Browning's car on Sept. 5,

1959. "I remember Bill saying he almost burned his car up trying to get him to the hospital," Browning's widow says.

Despite such adversities, Browning's stature as a performer continued to grow. The January 11, 1960 issue of *Billboard* reported: "A c&w package featuring Johnny Horton, of 'Louisiana Hayride,' Hawkshaw Hawkins and Jean Shepard of 'Grand Ole Opry,' and Bill Browning and His Echo Valley Boys, of WWVA, Wheeling, W. Va., pulled a full house at the high school auditorium in Greensburg, Pa. New Year's Eve."[16]

It appears, however, that the rigors of the road finally got to Browning. At the end of a weeks-long Spring tour, he returned home and announced to his wife that he was quitting the music business. "He never said why and I didn't ask," his widow recalls. This decision probably occurred in mid 1960, considering the paucity of references to Browning between the period he recorded for Starday (1959-60) and the creation of his own custom labels, Marbone and Alta, in circa 1966.

Sometime during the mid to late 1960s, Browning established Midway Recording Studio in Hurricane, West Virginia, a village midway between the state's largest cities of Huntington and Charleston. During his non-musical interim, Browning had returned to driving trucks for a living.

As a studio owner, Browning catered to country and gospel artists in the tri-state region of *West* Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky. He recorded himself only occasionally. To this day, he is sometimes confused, even by discographers, with Bill "Zekie" Browning, another rockabilly singer who flourished about the same time in the Cincinnati area. Browning's widow remembers that record royalties were sometimes sent to the wrong Browning.

On Memorial Day weekend of 1975, Browning discovered that his ailment that had been diagnosed as acute colitis was cancer

instead.[17] The diseased progressed, and he died Jan. 23, 1977 at the age of 45, leaving as survivors his wife, Doris Jean, and children Billy Chris, Angela Jean, Deanna Lynn and Susanne Rene.

Discography

Searches through various discographies, trade magazine reviews, news stories and sweeps of YouTube reveal that Browning made the following recordings. With only two or three exceptions, he was the sole writer of all the songs cited.

On Island Records:

"Wash Machine Boogie"/"Ramblin' Man" (as the Echo Valley Boys)

"One Day A Month"/"Don't Wait Too Late"

"Makes You Feel-a So Good"/"Hula Rock"

"Breaking Hearts"/"Lay Me Low"

"First Prayer"/"Let The Bible Be Your Guide"

"Borned [original spelling] With The Blues"/"Dark Hollow"

"Gonna Be A Fire" and "Down In The Holler Where Sally Lives" on a 45 EP labeled "*W.W.V.A. Jamboree Special*" that also included two songs each from the Cook Brothers, Buddy Durham and Hardrock Gunter.

"Just Because You Say Your [original spelling] Sorry"/"Sinful Woman"

On Starday Records:

"Don't Push Don't Shove"/"Dark Valley Walls"

"Down In The Hollow"/"Country Strings"

On Salem Records (no history of which with Browning could be found. However, the songs cited are listed in Browning's BMI catalog):

"She's Not Such A Bad Girl"/"Lookout Girl"

On Marbone Records (Browning's label):
"Marbone Swamp"/"It's A Long, Long Way"
"I Heard That Train A-comin'"/"Dear Mom"
"I Was Touched By The Master's Hand"/"Precious Memories" (as Bill Browning and the Hilanders)

On Alta Records (Browning's label):
"He Sent His Only Son"/"People"
Bill Browning and the Hilanders (album)

"Gone Astray," "The Church Is Gone," "How Great Thou Art," "I Believe In Jesus," "I've Been Saved," Today Was Yesterday's Future," "Oh Lord, Do You Remember Me," "Soul Salvation," "There'll Be Singing," "Don't Wait Too Late."

Sources

1. Interview with Browning's widow, Doris Jean Browning.
2. Label photos on YouTube
3. Revealed via YouTube search.
4. Interview with Doris Jean Browning.
5. Ibid.
6. Ivan Tribe, *Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music In West Virginia,* pp. 117-118.
7. There is some dispute about the year in which Browning move to Cleveland. Tribe (op. cit.) says it was 1955; Mrs. Browning estimates it was "around 1954."
8. Interview with Doris Jean Browning.
9. *Cash Box,* July 21, 1956, no page number listed.
10. *Billboard,* March 17, 1958, p. 34.
11. *Billboard,* May 26, 1958, p. 47.
12. Interview with Wayne Moss.
13. *Cash Box,* Sept. 20, 1958.
14. Ibid., p. 59.
15. *Joel Whitburn's Top Country Songs: 1944 to 2005,* p. 347
16. *Billboard,* Jan. 11, 1960, p. 49.
17. Letter from Doris Jean Browning.

"Fist City": Domestic Violence in the Songs of Loretta Lynn

Thomas Alan Holmes
East Tennessee State University

When we associate Loretta Lynn solely with her nostalgic affirmations of traditional values, we miss assertive, confrontative themes that often emerge in her lyrics. One can understand how her contemporaries, having also survived America's Great Depression, share the resilient faith expressed in "Coal Miner's Daughter," with its assurances that love and determination can keep a family together, and the common folks' kinship described in "You're Looking at Country." These values include a willingness to fight, and Lynn's lyrics often describe a woman ready to scrap to keep whatever is hers. What the woman has, however, does not often seem worth fighting for. Commonly, the men in her lyrics "step out," attracted by trashy women happy to snare straying husbands who lack the good sense to know what is best for them. Usually, the loyal women in these songs remain passive in their relationships with these men, sometimes finding themselves abandoned and fallen into the role of "honky-tonk girl," abandoned and tainted by having lost virtue, or abandoned and considered a promiscuous divorcée. The other woman more commonly risks direct confrontation, since the wronged wife would welcome the opportunity to vent the righteous fury that she may not dare unleash on her foolish, vamp-victimized man. As we can see from such songs as "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)," "Don't Come Home a-Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)," "Fist City," and "Your Squaw Is on the Warpath,"

physical threats, trash talk, and curses are just as likely as conventional romance to express love in Loretta Lynn's lyrics.

At times it is difficult to distinguish Loretta Lynn the stage persona from Loretta Lynn, lyricist and singer. Lynn has appeared candid in her scores of interviews, and her first autobiography, *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1976), has an easy, colloquial, self-deprecating tone that may lead the casual reader to dismiss the idea that Lynn *has* a stage persona. She has been a staple of traditional country music for about half a century. We believed she knew what she was talking about when in the 1970s and 1980s she shilled for Crisco shortening. As Bill Malone notes, "Loretta also became a household word in American popular culture, highly visible because of her frequent appearances on television and in the pages of magazines and newspapers, and beloved because of her disarming honesty and simple country charm" (309). Her devotion to her fans is legendary, and her fans' demands on her—stories of their tearing pieces from her clothing and even attempting to cut some of her hair—transcend the expectations one would have of mere admiration for her talent. She has often found herself caught in an ironic trap of stardom founded on her devotion to the values of family and home.

Her selection of songs written by others has been so canny that it is difficult for some to believe she has not written some of those songs herself. As recently as April 2004, for example, *Entertainment Weekly*'s report about *Van Lear Rose*, Lynn's collaboration with producer Jack White, included "The Pill" in a brief list of Lynn's "self-penned" songs (53). Admittedly, facing opposition from conservative radio programmers, it took a lot of courage for Lynn to release the song in 1975 (after recording it in late 1972), and, admittedly, she has confessed, "they didn't have none of them pills when I was younger, or I'd have been swallowing

'em like popcorn" (*CMD* 14), but "The Pill" is a collaboration of Lorene Allen, Don McHan, and T. D. Bayless. Sharon Higgins' "Woman of the World (Leave My World Alone)" and Shel Silverstein's "One's on the Way" just describe predicaments similar to those Lynn has faced. As Lynn writes in *Still Woman Enough*, her recent autobiography, "your stories become you, and you become your stories" (xvii). As a performer and a lyricist, Lynn has developed a public persona from autobiography, collaborative storytelling, and emotional resonance with her core audience. My comments about her self-penned work would often, therefore, apply to songs in her catalog that have been written by others.

Lynn describes an instance of this interaction with her audience in her writing "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)." A distraught fan came backstage, crying and pointing out her unfaithful husband in the audience.

I looked at that other girl and I thought, "My God, don't tell me you're going to let something like that take your husband away from you!" 'Cause, to me, she was twice the woman that other girl was. So I looked back at her and said, "Why she ain't woman enough to take your man!" Just like that, as soon as I said it, I knew I had a hit song. (*CMD* 124-25)

Lynn assures us that the woman took her advice and kept her man. Unintentionally, however, Lynn slips; while she finds it gratifying that she helped to save a marriage, her first impulse was to make use of her fan's plight for a hit. To her credit, Lynn immediately points out that she has written "Fist City" to warn off a Tennessee woman who would flirt with Lynn's husband, Doolittle, while Lynn was on stage. Lynn does not consider these situations exploitative, because real-life experiences inform her lyrics. Lynn even commiserates with her husband a bit while considering how often he has been the subject of her songs:

Poor Doolittle couldn't get away with nothin'. If he did anything, I would write a song about it and the world would know. But Doo never got mad at me, I don't think. I'd play him a song, and I know he knew it was about him. He would just say, "That's a good one, honey." (*HTG*, 35)

At her best as a lyricist, genuine experience informs her songs. When she has a hit, she has assurance that she has effectively reached her audience by retaining her common, familiar touch.

Lynn's success with the autobiographical "Coal Miner's Daughter," for example, demonstrates how strongly her audience cherishes the family values expressed in the song. It is, after all, a love song both to her family and to a way of life hardly contaminated by big-city callousness. We learn a great deal about Lynn's beliefs in what a marriage should entail as she describes her family's experience. This song also provides a means to understand the origins of Lynn's fighting spirit. The lyrics emphasize time and again that survival requires both love and resilience; hard times have challenged Lynn to endure, and she has successfully followed the model set by her parents.

Significantly, Lynn blurs the conventional gender assignments one would expect in traditional country music. The song notes that her father has worked outside of the home as her mother has tended to house and children. Lynn describes her mother's labors as every bit as physically demanding as her father's work: "My daddy worked all night in the Van Leer coalmine, / All day long in the field a-hoin' corn." For Mr. Webb, her father, life seemed a continuing round of labor. Lynn notes that her mother's housework made similar demands. Lynn sings of her mother's spending nights tending babies (as a mother of eight, those duties were considerable) and spending days scrubbing clothes on a washboard until her fingers bled.

Most significantly, however, Lynn assures us of her father's loving devotion to his family through her associating his work with his affection. "We were poor, but we had love," she writes, "That's one thing Daddy made sure of. // He shoveled coal to make a poor man's dollar." Later, Lynn repeats, "Daddy loved and raised eight kids on a miner's pay," and when she notes that her father "always managed to get the money somewhere," we understand the unspoken corollary; that it takes love, duty, and self-sacrifice to suffer the debilitating labor he endured. She also emphasizes that her father has "raised" his children, not in the sense of immediate hands-on rearing, but in his providing for them. Her song mentions the word "love" only in context of the father's influence; as a child at home, young Loretta would have seen numerous daily demonstrations of her mother's affection, but the word "love" would have been necessary to explain why her father felt driven to endure what he did. She learned early that one must work hard to preserve a family, and she never forgot that lesson, as indicated in a verse from "High on a Mountain Top," from 2004's *Van Lear Rose*:

Well my daddy worked down in the dark coal mine
Shovelin' that coal one shovel at a time
Never made a lot of money didn't have much
But we're high on life and rich in love.

In this verse, she shifts from past tense to present, indicating that she has retained her family's treasure of love, her father's legacy.

As a symbol of loving goodness, Lynn's father provides a template against which she measures all other men.

I grew up thinking all men was as kind as Daddy. Daddy never looked at another woman, and everybody in Butcher Holler knew he was a good and faithful husband. . . . and Daddy was

home every night. I never even heard [my parents] say a cross word to each other. (*SWE* 51)

Significantly, her father's good qualities are known throughout the neighborhood; he has earned his reputation as a good man, husband, and father. In contrast, Lynn's talent for fighting comes from contending with boys. "I was often the one who threw the first punch," Lynn writes. "Remember, I was the only girl amongst a bunch of brothers. I was always a scrapper, and I fought with more folks than Doo" (*SWE* 81). This emphasis on "with" matters, not in that it condones the violence in her marriage, but that violence affects types of relationships lacking in maturity. As Lynn notes, "Doo hit me sometimes. And yes, I've been known to knock the fire out of him. I told him, 'You hit me once, I'll hit you back twice.' I broke my share of dishes throwin' at him, too" (*SWE* xiv). One notes the pride she takes in refusing to be passive in these fights, but we nevertheless see how these incidents fall short of the standard of married devotion Lynn has seen between her parents. As a result, Lynn's lyrics tend to describe men who fail to meet the standards of her father's behavior as such boys, mindless, fickle, contentious, cowardly, and weak. A strong, self-respecting woman must help that man grow up.

Lynn's first hit, "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl," does not fit this image. In her first autobiography, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Lynn describes her songwriting as a simple matter:

The way I started writing those songs, I went down to the candy store and bought a copy of *Country Song Roundup*, the magazine with the words to the hit songs. I figured it looked so simple in these books that, since everyone else was writing songs, I might as well, too. There was nothing to it, really. (87)

Drawing inspiration from a young woman that frequented the small bar where Lynn was beginning to sing professionally, Lynn creates an abject, passive victim. "Ever since he left me, I've done

nothing but wrong," she laments in the opening line, as if a man who has treated her so poorly has at the same time served as a moral compass. She lacks the strength to carry on alone, as she confesses in a later stanza:

All he ever gave me was a reason to go bad,
And it's not hard to see just what I am.
I'm ashamed and I'm sorry for everything you see,
But losing him has made a fool of me.

She sounds as if she cannot make decisions on her own, although she must face the consequences for her lack of will. Released in 1960, "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl" elevated Lynn to national attention, but it offers a curious comparison to one of her heroes at the time. Lynn's autobiographies both emphasize how much she thinks of Kitty Wells as a performer; even her official website notes Loretta was greatly influenced by Kitty Wells, the groundbreaking "girl singer" who turned the tables on several decades worth of male double standards with the 1952 classic, "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-Tonk Angels." (http://www.lorettalynn.com/bio/)

Written by J. D. Miller, this "answer" song to Hank Thompson's "The Wild Side of Life" made housewife Kitty Wells a country music legend. Dolly Parton's description of the recording's revolutionary status indicates the creative barriers Lynn faced so early in her career.

The "boys club" couldn't believe that a woman had had the audacity to suggest that philandering men might be responsible for their own actions. Up until that time, it was a lot easier for them to tell themselves that they had been lured into cheating by loose women. (292)

It would be a while before Lynn's songs would take such a provocative, strong stance, given the weakness of husbands in much of her early work.

Even in attacking worthless men, Lynn's characters often remain passive, as demonstrated by her collaboration with her sister, Peggy Sue Wells, "Don't Come Home a Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)." The flabbergasted wife in this song resents her husband's expecting sex as just one more activity after a long night of carousing. The wife wants to have pleasure with her husband, but she resents his failing to consider her a companion. The song begins with the wife's admonishing her husband for coming home late, all liquored up after a night "with all the boys." She later complains, "You never take me anywhere." Instead, her husband comes home drunk and ready for sex. The wife insists, "liquor and love . . . don't mix," and says, "Just stay out there on the town and see what you can find, / 'Cause if you want that kind of love, well, you don't need none of mine." Clearly the wife is not interested in being merely the means of her husband's physical gratification. She also holds herself in higher regard than the women her husband and the "boys" can scrape up "on the town." The wife insists that when her husband matures enough to appreciate a loving relationship, she will be ready for him, happy to welcome him to a true marriage.

The angry wife in "Your Squaw Is on the Warpath," however, seems ready to pick a fight once her husband returns home drunk to the point of helplessness. In this apparent sequel to "Don't Come Home a-Drinkin'," the husband has difficulty even making it into the house when he comes home late and starts kissing on his wife. Noting that he "can barely crawl" shows more than the degree of his drunkenness; it suggests that he has regressed to the state of a small infant. She, having spent a tiring day of housekeeping and caring for six children, will have none of it and begins berating him:

The game you were huntin' for ain't beef.
Get offa my huntin' grounds

And get out my sight.
This war dance I'm doin' means I'm fighting mad.
You don't need no more of what you already had.

She refuses to consider herself merely more game, suggesting that he is poaching on her territory, and she twice asserts her dominance, taking a masculine stance when she interprets her threats as a war dance. She also refuses to be treated like a piece of meat, like the woman her husband has already had, making a pun on "beef," blurring its definition with the term for a fight. She puns again when she warns him, "Now don't hand me that old peace pipe, / There ain't no pipe gonna settle this fight," and we listeners can hardly miss the double entendre. The wife does not want to kiss and make up, and she is hardly likely to interpret his intentions as romantic desire for loving intimacy. Having tended to children all day, she hopes the night would bring her a companion who offers her the consideration she deserves; the last thing she wants is to face the demands of an infantile husband. She rightfully decides that her needs require attention, too.

If Lynn's wronged wives are victims at home, they are ready to avenge themselves in public against the women who lure their men. The other woman in "You Ain't Woman Enough" actually comes to confront the wife, asserting that she should let go a husband who no longer loves her. The wife immediately dismisses the other woman's claim by asserting she is not worthy of the husband's attention. "Women like you are a dime a dozen," she writes, "you can buy 'em anywhere." The wife suggests that the other woman is a cheap whore, and we begin to see just what the wife thinks it takes to be "woman enough." First, a *real* woman can tell the difference between emotional commitment and sexual trifling: "He took a second look at you, / But he's in love with me." His "second look" occurs because, like a child, the husband lacks a real woman's discernment. When the wife states, "Sometimes a

man's caught lookin' / At things that he don't need," she describes her husband as having a childlike desire for things that are not good for him, enticed by new opportunities. No wonder, she concludes, he would be attracted by the other woman. The wife, however, knows that the other woman lacks the substance to take her husband away, and she threatens to fight to the death to prove it. Curiously, in this song, we never learn why the man is worth keeping, since he requires so much supervision; assigning the husband a child's lack of judgment permits the wife to place blame squarely on the other woman, who cannot understand the troublesome man she attempts to steal away.

The retaliatory threats in "Fist City" seem more convincing, however, because the wronged wife sounds as if she would enjoy making a spectacle of the other woman. In "Fist City," the wife confronts the other woman, who has "been makin' . . . brags around town" about her affair. The wife does not dispute the fact of the affair; she concedes, " I'm not a-sayin' my baby's a saint, 'cause he ain't, / 'n' that he won't cat around with a kitty." We notice, however, that familiar rationalization that her husband lacks full mature capacity. He has been "on the prowl" again in his catting around. While one might take her calling him "baby" as an affectionate endearment, her doing so emphasizes his lack of mature judgment. Even when the wife appears to suggest her husband knows better, she actually intends to insult the other woman: "When he picks up trash, / He puts it in a garbage can, / And that's what you look like to me." We get the sense that the wronged wife will enjoy taking out her frustration by beating the other woman. Rather than offering a vague challenge to fight to the death, she makes more specific threats. "Fist City," the title, refers to the beating to come. The wife will make the other woman "eat / A meal that's called fist city" if the woman has the courage to repeat her brags. "I'll grab you by the hair o' the head / And I'll lift

you off 'a the ground," the wife repeats. The put-upon wife wants to do more than preserve her marriage; she intends to demonstrate her ability to damage any beauty who might entice him away. Apparently directing her anger at the other woman rather than her straying husband permits the long-suffering wife to retain her loving loyalty, but we have seen in the other songs what happens when the angry wife and the imposing husband encounter each other in private. This wife offers a public display of her willingness to fight for what is hers.

We may have seen the last of Lynn's long-suffering wives, however. Her album *Van Lear Rose* (2004) features three songs where women's husbands have betrayed them. The wronged wife in "Family Tree" has pretty much resolved to accept having lost her husband. When she goes to find him, the other woman comes to the door. "I didn't come to fight. / If he was a better man I might." She insists, "I wouldn't dirty my hands / On trash like you." She asks the woman to send out the "babies' daddy," presumably because he lacks on his own volition the courage to face his wife. Still, the wife expects her husband to fulfill his responsibilities; she brings the children when she comes to confront him with the bills. She also brings along his dog, in case his children do not provide him enough incentive to do the right thing. She has abandoned any hopes for an emotional tie for herself, but she understands that those remaining in her care might still benefit, if only materially, from seeing her otherwise worthless husband.

In another song, the title character "Mrs. Leroy Brown" decides to draw all the money from her husband's bank account, hire a limo to go to his favorite bar, and grab a temptress blonde by her ponytail to sling her around. This song presents an entirely different image of the wronged woman from the wife in "Family Tree." Some of us cannot help, as long-time music followers, from noting Lynn's choice of the character's name, because we have

the long-standing image of Jim Croce's creation in mind. The title character of his "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown," we are assured, is the "baddest man in the whole damned town," and Croce describes the character in terms of his overpowering physical presence. One remembers, however, that Leroy Brown's comeuppance occurs when he approaches the wife of a nondescript man who leaves Leroy Brown looking "like a jigsaw puzzle / with a couple of pieces gone." In Croce's song, Leroy Brown relies too much on appearances, his own and that of his potential enemies, to remain safe. Lynn takes this idea of Leroy Brown's being victimized by an unexpected source by having him assume that his wife will tolerate his philandering. We see Mrs. Leroy Brown's determination as she searches "every honky-tonk in town" for him, having to turn down repeated propositions from their patrons. We see her righteous fury when she mentions his broken promises:

Well, you told me you'd be happy
Bouncin' babies on your knee
While I sit at home alone
And I've been bouncin' three.
Yeah, and I'm tired of it, too.

Yet, in spite of his neglect, she does not vent her violent anger on her husband. Instead, she determines to knock her rival out, "sling[ing] her around by her ponytail." Having defeated the "big ol' blonde," she taunts her husband with the information that she has just "drawed all your money out of the bank today. / Honey, you ain't got no mo." She proves that the big blonde is not "woman enough," and she symbolically emasculates her philandering husband by taking away his cash, suggesting that she needs and desires nothing else from him and effectively reducing his desirability to other women.

The speaker in "Women's Prison" goes far past symbolic acts. "I caught my darlin' cheatin'," she explains, "That's when I

shot him down. / I caught him in a honky tonk / With a girl I used to know." The rest of the lyrics emphasizes the sounds of large crowds screaming for her death and the sound of her mother's cry. The speaker sees her actions as noble, because "For love I've killed my darlin' / And for love I'll lose my life." It is unclear whether she contemplates the depth of her own feelings or whether she considers herself a martyr to the cause of true love. Even the priest's words, "Dying's a part of livin', you know," offer ambiguity. It appears to be only a lofty platitude, but the "you know" part of his utterance appears more immediate and personal. The speaker echoes this familiarity when she says, "I know I've been forgiven, / But the price of love is high." Her only remorse appears to be her making her mother sad. She has taken a controlling role in her own life, and she accepts the consequences of her actions.

In her fifty-plus years as a recording artist, Loretta Lynn has addressed domestic violence at every stage of her career. Significantly, the women in these relationships resort to physical violence to counter the emotional distance and insensitivity of their husbands. The no-good men in her songs tend to be selfish, childish, and neglectful, but hardly given to physical violence themselves; they are more likely to inflict emotional distress, and the neglected wives are far more likely to avenge themselves on mistresses than on husbands. No longer abandoned honky-tonk girls crying in their glasses, Lynn's women now consider whether their inadequate husbands are worth the trouble they cause. Her women retain an idea of what they deserve, but they more readily acknowledge that they may never get it. As her Grand Ole Opry companion Minnie Pearl said, "[I]t was still a man's world when Miss Kitty [Wells] and Loretta came in. . . . But Loretta battered down all those barriers" (Bufwack 267). As Lynn's songs demonstrate, getting through the barrier is only the first part of the long struggle for the woman who is determined to fight.

Works Cited

"Bio." *Loretta Lynn*. http://www.lorettalynn.com/50/?page_id=2

Bufwack, Mary A., and Robert K. Oermann. *Finding Her Voice: Women in Country Music 1800-2000*. Nashville: The Country Music Foundation Press & Vanderbilt University Press, 2003.

Lynn, Loretta. "Coal Miner's Daughter." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 83-84.

---. "Family Tree." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 125-26.

---. "Fist City." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 47.

---. "High on a Mountain Top." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 127.

---. *Honky Tonk Girl: My Life in Lyrics*. New York: Knopf, 2012.

---. "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 9.

---. "Mrs. Leroy Brown." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 136-37.

---. "Women's Prison." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 142-43.

---. "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 34.

---. "Your Squaw Is on the Warpath." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 62-63.

---, with George Vecsey. *Coal Miner's Daughter*. Chicago: Regnery-Geis, 1976.

---, with Patsi Bale Cox. *Still Woman Enough*. New York: Hyperion, 2002.

---, with Peggy Sue Wells. "Don't Come Home a Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)." *Honky Tonk Girl*, 39.

Malone, Bill C. *Country Music, U. S. A.* Second revised edition. Austin: U of Texas P, 2002.

Parton, Dolly. *Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

Willman, Chris. "Star and Stripe." *Entertainment Weekly* (23 April 2004): 53.

Kris Kristofferson: Soldier of Song

Don Cusic
Belmont University

"Gene Autry was my first hero," said Kris Kristofferson. "And the first independent thought I had came when I was about five when my parents were making fun of Gene Autry's singing and I said, 'I think he sounds real good.'"

Around 1945, when young Kris was about nine, the family moved from Brownsville, Texas--where he had been born on June 22, 1936--to San Mateo, California, just south of San Francisco. Kristofferson's father, Henry Kristofferson, had been in the Army Air Corps at Fort Brown at the time of Kris' birth. When World War II came, Henry Kristofferson was a pilot for Pan American Airlines but was called back into the Army Air Force as a Colonel, where he helped develop a feeder line operation between American and British forces in North Africa, then helped organize flights over "the hump" in China (the India to China route that went over the Himalayas).

At the end of World War II, Henry Kristofferson re-joined Pan American where, as Pacific Operations Manager, he helped expand Pan Am's routes in the Pacific and Orient. In 1950 he was called back into active duty with the Air Force as a Brigadier General in the Military Air Transport Command that conducted the airlift of troops and supplies to Korea for that war.

It was hard to find country music on the radio in California but in 1949 Hank Williams had "Lovesick Blues," which was number one for 16 weeks on the charts and reached number 24 on the pop charts. Hank had broken through in 1947 with "Move It On Over"

and followed that with "Honky Tonkin'" and "I'm a Long Gone Daddy" in 1948. Young Kris Kristofferson loved him; "Lovesick Blues" was the first Hank Williams record he heard and, after that, "I bought every 78 I could find. Gene Autry was my first hero and Hank Williams was my second."

Midway through his junior year in high school, in January, 1953, one of Kristofferson's school buddies called him with the news "your hero just died." Hank Williams, 29 years old, had died in the back seat of a car on its way to Canton, Ohio for a New Year's Day performance.

Like most teenagers, Kris Kristofferson's interests were wide-ranging. He acquired the name "Straight Arrow" because he was a straight "A" student in school and the son of a military man. He loved sports and competition and wanted to be a jock, a champion boxer and a star on the football field. He also loved reading and something inside him burned to be a writer. Musically, Kris came along before rock'n'roll hit, so he wasn't influenced by the rock'n'roll revolution during his high school years. Unlike many in the generation who came after him, he did not have a garage band in high school or play at school dances.

What he did have was an ember that burned deep inside him: to be a writer. But a writer of what? He said that he wrote his first song when he was 11 but songs were not serious writing; that was more for amusement and fun. Besides, those who wrote songs were in Tin Pan Alley in New York and they wrote pop songs. Kris could not read or write music. Poetry was something he loved, but it was pretty much dead as a commercial venture by the 1950s. The real writers wrote novels, and that's what Kris intended to do. The way to write a novel was to first write short stories, then build on that foundation for a longer work.

During his time at Pomona College in Claremont, California, Kris sent four stories into the *Atlantic Monthly* writing contest;

the judges thought they were the best four stories submitted but didn't want all four top prizes to go to the same person so they awarded Kris a first for his story "The Rock," a third for his story ""Gone Are the Days" and two honorable mentions.

In 1956 Elvis burst onto American television, radio and jukeboxes. Kristofferson remembers the first time he heard Elvis on the radio. "I was driving north in California and stopped at a gas station when Elvis came on the radio and I said, 'who's that?' And the girl I was with said, 'why, that's Elvis,' like everybody already knew that!"

He didn't because Kristofferson was more interested in folk music than rock'n'roll. In 1956 Harry Belefonte had two albums in the top ten of the pop charts. Kristofferson stated that he owned several Josh White albums in high school.

Music was important to Kris, but it was one of many things in his life, more an interest than an obsession. His obsessions were school and writing. However, after graduation from Pomona Kristofferson and Tony Lintz, "a guy I played football with and we tried to work in clubs" made a record. "There was a guy in a record store who said he'd put us on a label," remembered Kristofferson. "Back then, it was easy to get a record out and then you'd hope somebody like Dot would pick it up." They recorded, "Blue Melody" b/w "Ramblin' Man" and copies were sent to disc jockeys at some radio stations but not much happened and the record never made it to a store shelf.

Oxford

During his time at Pomona, Dr. Frederick Sontag, a writing instructor at Pomona, encouraged Kris to apply for a Rhodes Scholarship. Kris was awarded this scholarship, which allowed him to study at Oxford University in England for two years. It also allowed him to postpone entry into the Army (although he

was commissioned a second Lieutenant in the Army Reserves because he had enrolled in R.O.T.C. while in college) until after he completed his education at Oxford.

Kris Kristofferson entered Merton College in Oxford in the fall of 1958 and finished in the Spring of 1960. During those two years he studied the romantic poets, particularly William Blake. By this time, Kris' parents were living in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where his father worked for ARAMCO, a global oil company, as Operations Manager.

Although Kristofferson was immersed in his studies at Oxford, "I answered an ad in the newspaper that said 'Just dial F-A-M-E,'" he said. "And it was this guy named Paul Lincoln who ran a club in SoHo where rock'n'roller's used to play. I didn't know anything about the music business or anything. I think because I was a Yank at Oxford he thought I would be commercially possible. They got me a record deal with Top Rank records. That's J. Arthur Rank's company--Rank Movies. Tony Hatch, who later worked with Petula Clark and wrote 'Downtown,' produced the first sessions. We recorded four songs that were never released. An article came out in *Time* magazine talking about this Rhodes scholar singer...I had signed a contract with that guy back in Los Angeles before I went to England. I never thought anything about it because nothin' had ever happened, but the man [in L.A.] read about me and threatened to sue. So Rank never released the record."

While planning to release the record, the music executives decided to change Kristofferson's name to Kris Carson "because they thought a four syllable name was too long. Sinatra only had three syllables."

As for the music, "I don't know what you'd call it," said Kristofferson. "It was more like songs that the Kingston Trio and people like that were doing then. They were not good. I thought

they were at the time, I guess, or I wouldn't have tried to sell 'em. Anyway, the deal fell through and I abandoned musical ambition for a while."

He also worked on a novel but received his first rejection when he sent a draft to a publisher. "They passed on the book," said Kristofferson. "But they said they were definitely interested in anything I'd do after I'd lived a while."

Kris never did finish that novel.

The Army

After he finished at Oxford, Kris came back to California where in two months he married Fran Bier, his high school sweetheart, entered the Army and went to Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia to join the toughest fighting group in the Army outside the Green Berets (the Green Berets are chosen from the most elite Rangers). Kristofferson was part of the Airborne Rangers and learned to parachute and fly a helicopter. At the end of his first tour of duty, Kristofferson re-enlisted and was sent to West Germany. In addition to his duties and training as a Ranger, Kristofferson formed a band comprised of enlisted men and officers; they called themselves "The Losers."

"The Generals didn't like it because enlisted men and officers weren't supposed to mix," said Kristofferson. "But then they loved to hear us. We'd take songs and write new words to 'em--songs about the Army and life in the Army." The songs were often heavily satirical. "It was mostly country tunes but we also played some Beatles songs," said Kristofferson.

Captain Kristofferson's superior officer was Major Don Kelsey, whose mother came to visit him in Germany and saw Kristofferson perform with his band. Mrs. Kelsey was taken by Kris's performance and wrote to her cousin in Nashville, Marijohn Wilkin.

"She was a musician herself," said Marijohn to writer Michael McCall. "And she wrote to me to say that he had such charisma. Lord, I never heard such praise about anybody in my life. She said he was a sex symbol [that] when he walks in the room women just swoon. But she said he had real talent too. She asked if he could contact me and send me some tapes."

Marijohn Wilkins was in a unique position when that letter arrived. She was a renowned songwriter; among her most famous hits were "Waterloo" by Stonewall Jackson, "P.T. 109" by Jimmy Dean, "Long Black Veil" by Lefty Frizzell and "Cut Across Shorty," by Nat Stucky, which later became a hit for Rod Stewart. She eventually wrote over 300 songs.

In 1964 Marijohn Wilkin and Bill Justis formed Buckhorn Music; their first hit was "Little G.T.O." by Ronnie and the Daytonas, a group comprised of Marijohn's son, Bucky Wilkin, and some studio musicians.

The tape Marijohn Wilkin received from Kris Kristofferson contained "the longest song I'd ever heard in my life," said Marijohn. "It was kind of a mix of Shelley and Keats set to the tune of Hank Williams. He wrote and asked if he could come visit me." She wrote back and agreed.

The Viet Nam conflict was escalating in 1965; in 1964 Congress passed the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" which gave President Lyndon Johnson the power to fully engage American troops in Viet Nam and in March a dramatic buildup of combat personnel began. The Army Rangers trained for combat situations so Kristofferson volunteered for Viet Nam but his request was denied. Instead the Army planned to send him to West Point to teach literature. The offer at first appeared to be a good idea to Kristofferson; here was a chance to devote himself to reading and literature and perhaps have time to write a novel. The desire to write continued to burn deep inside him.

Kristofferson was interviewed for the West Point position and was told the position required him to hand in a lesson plan 24 hours before each class and that on the day of the class, the cadets would line up at attention in a semi-rectangle around him and take their seats after he ordered "Seat."

"I decided to talk it over with my wife before I made a decision," said Kristofferson. "And I decided it was too rigid for me, I wouldn't have any freedom." That meant no time to write.

Kristofferson's wife and young daughter were in California so he decided to drive to Nashville to visit Marijohn Wilkin--he had received a letter from her just before he left Europe inviting him to visit--for a couple of days. He arrived in Nashville in full Captain's uniform.

On his first day in Nashville, Captain Kristofferson met Jack Clement, an ex-Marine who was also a legendary songwriter. Clement had written "Ballad of the Teenage Queen" and "Guess Things Happen That Way" for Johnny Cash back in the Sun days (Clement had worked for Sam Phillips at Sun as a studio engineer), then written "Just Someone I Used to Know" for George Jones and "Miller's Cave" for Hank Snow and Bobby Bare. A couple of years later, Clement would produce Charley Pride, country music's first African-American star and write hits for him such as "I Know One" and "The Snakes Crawl at Night."

Wilkin had introduced him to the legendary songwriter in Clement's office at RCA where Clement was an assistant to Chet Atkins.

Kristofferson and Clement stayed up all that night talking and drinking at The Professional Club, an establishment on 16th Avenue where patrons could imbibe because at that time Nashville did not allow liquor by the drink.

On Kristofferson's last Saturday night in Nashville, Marijohn took him to the Grand Ole Opry at the Ryman Auditorium. Dressed in his Captain's uniform, Kris was backstage where he met a number of performers, including an emaciated, drug infected Johnny Cash. When Cash shook hands with him Kris said "it was electric," a moment he would never forget for the rest of his life and the moment his decision was made: he was going to move to Nashville.

Kristofferson was thinking as a writer--not just a songwriter--at this time; he felt that "these people I met in Nashville were so fascinating that if I didn't make it as a writer of songs I could write about them. Backstage at the Orpy, breathing the same air that Hank Williams breathed, it all felt enchanted."

When Marijohn took Kris back to his hotel that night, he told her that "he had to make a choice between West Point and Nashville," said Marijohn. "Well, I just dropped my head on the steering wheel. I knew his mind was made up. I knew how hard it was for him, because I'd made the same decision when I moved here. I had left a job as a schoolteacher in Texas, and my family thought I was crazy or worse--half of them disowned me. So I'd been through the struggle and the pain he was feeling."

Kristofferson went to the Pentagon and managed to resign from the Army, then returned to Germany and finished his Army duty before he moved to Nashville. He was allowed to leave the Army before his re-enlistment commitment was up because he had accumulated several years of service in the Army Reserves while at Oxford.

"I knew there was something missing," said Kris. "I thought I might find it in writing novels and teaching literature, because those were things I loved. But when I visited Nashville, something clicked inside, and everything changed. It was such a magical place to me. So I followed my heart."

Background: 1965

Kris Kristofferson moved to Nashville in September, 1965, during a time the Viet Nam war was escalating and, along with it, criticism about the war. Kristofferson came from an Army background so he was not part of the anti-war movement; this let him fit in comfortably with the country music establishment.

Johnny Wright had a hit on the radio with "Hello, Viet Nam," a patriotic song which carried the message that "America has heard the bugle call" and so young men must become soldiers and serve their country. In the chorus was a plea from the young man to his sweetheart to "write me while I'm gone" before saying "goodbye, my darling, hello Vietnam." The song was written by Tom T. Hall, a young writer who had served in the Army.

In Nashville, the hot topic was Roger Miller, who'd broken wide open the year before with "Dang Me" and "Chug-A-Lug" and in the Spring won an armful of Grammys. In February, Miller's "King of the Road" entered the country charts; it went straight to number one and stayed there for five weeks while it climbed to number four on the pop charts. Miller followed "King of the Road" with "Engine Engine #9."

The most popular artist in country music was Buck Owens, who lived and recorded out on the West Coast in Bakersfield, California. In 1964 he had two number ones, "My Heart Skips a Beat" and "Together Again,"; in 1965 he had "I've Got a Tiger By the Tail" and "Only You (Can Break a Heart)" as well as the instrumental "Buckaroo."

Country music was quite popular during the 1960s, musically a counterculture to the counterculture. There were gimmicky songs like "Girl On the Billboard" by Del Reeves and love songs that captured the essence of the Nashville Sound like "What's He Doing In My World" and "Make the World Go Away" by Eddy Arnold. Those songs had strings, not fiddles, and allowed country

music to reach the middle class who did not care for the whine and twang of an early, honky tonk based country music--or a Buck Owens.

Buckhorn Publishing

Marijohn Wilkin had signed writers Johnny Darrell and Chris Gantry to her new publishing company but had not recruited Kris Kristofferson as a songwriter for her new company; he "volunteered" for that position, although she paid him a small weekly draw. This meant that Kris Kristofferson moved to Nashville with a lot of advantages. First, he had been introduced to a number of key people while wearing his Army uniform, which created a strong, positive first impression. Kristofferson's personality and ability to meet people--he was a worldly man who had lived in Texas, California and England, had read great books, gotten a college degree, studied at Oxford and served in the military--gave him the social skills to meet strangers and make a good impression.

Finally, he had a publishing company to call home which would work with him. Most young writers arrive in Nashville with nobody to help them with their songs; they have to spend time connecting with other songwriters and auditioning for publishers--who generally only want to take single songs from new writers and don't want to give a weekly draw. It would take Kristofferson about five years to really break through with his songs, but he had a place to hang his hat and people to teach him the craft of songwriting.

Letter From Mom

Soon after Kristofferson moved to Nashville, Marijohn Wilkin recommended he take a job as a substitute teacher to make some money and "He looked at me like I was out of my mind."

Instead, Kris landed a job as a bartender at the Talley Ho Tavern, located on Music Row, about a block from the offices of RCA and Columbia.

He had a wife and a three-year-old daughter when he moved to Nashville; about a week after he got to Nashville he bought a motorcycle. It was a bit of a celebration; Kris Kristofferson had his first song recorded after he'd only been in town for about a week, a song inspired by an anti-war protest he'd seen in Washington D.C.. The song was "Talking Viet Nam Blues" and it was recorded by Jack Saunders as a demo for Buckhorn, released on Dot and received a good amount of airplay on Armed Forces Radio.

Henry and Mary Ann Kristofferson drove to Nashville from their California home--they had moved back from Saudi Arabia after spending about nine years there--picked up their daughter-in-law and granddaughter and drove back to San Mateo the next morning. "It was a very uncomfortable scene," remembered Kristofferson. In her frustration, Kris' mother wrote him a letter after they arrived back in California, telling him that "nobody over the age of 14 listens to that kind of music and, if they did, it wouldn't be anyone we'd want to know." She also told him "don't visit any of our relatives, you're an embarrassment to us."

There were also statements in the letter "like, 'You've given us moments of occasional pride but it'll never measure up to the tremendous disappointment you've been to us.'" said Kristofferson. "They couldn't tell their friends at the bridge club that their Rhodes Scholar son was digging ditches in Hicktown, U.S.A., which is what they considered Nashville."

That letter hurt Kristofferson deeply and he admitted "For a while I was really eaten up by this. I could have answered with an angry letter, you know. But you can either let it eat you up or you can cut it off, which is what I wound up doing."

Columbia Studios

About six months after arriving, around the first of February, 1966, Kris landed a job at Columbia Studios as "Set Up Man" which he generally referred to as a "janitor." Actually, it was a bit more than being a janitor; the set-up man was responsible for getting the mics and music stands ready for a session, for running errands for engineers and producers (everything from food to demo tapes to getting equipment). The pay was $85 a week and the job opened up because Billy Swan, who'd had the job, quit.

"He took the job so he could meet people," Marijohn Wilkin told writer Michael McCall. "These people were his idols. But he was Mr. Suave. He was very charming."

On February 14th, about a week after Kristofferson took the job, one of his heroes was in the studio recording--but he did not meet him. Bob Dylan, whose lyrics showed Kristofferson that songs were the poetry of the 20th century, was working on his *Blonde on Blonde* album.

Kristofferson had first heard Dylan "When I was in the army. I loved him," he said. "I read on the back of one of his albums where he said something about Hank Williams being as important as Norman Mailer. At the time country music was still fightin' for respectability and I thought that was a great thing to say."

Security was tight while Dylan was in town. "I was the only songwriter allowed in the building," said Kristofferson. "They had police around the studio [because] they had so many people trying to get in. Bob Dylan was very important."

About a month after he started work at the Columbia Studios, Kristofferson' first chart song was released; "Viet Nam Blues" by Dave Dudley was on the radio. In June, Kris turned 30 years old.

During the time he worked at Columbia, he met many of the artists who recorded there: Johnny Cash, Lefty Frizzell and Roger

Miller. He also met Audrey Williams, widow of his hero Hank, who recorded some of Hank's old songs.

The Songwriter

It wasn't long before Kris Kristofferson only thought about songs; or, as he put it, he "fell in love with the songwriting life." This life wasn't just writing songs; it involved hanging out at all night parties where there was plenty of drinking, carousing and guitar swapping. It was called "roaring" (a term that probably originated with Roger Miller) and it meant anything but a normal nine to five job and button down lifestyle. There were no clocks, no rules and no boundaries. For someone who had been locked into a rigid, highly organized lifestyle in an Army full of rules and regulations, this was incredibly freeing. It was almost like getting out of prison.

Kristofferson told Jack Clement about that letter his mother had written and Clement, a close friend of Johnny Cash, relayed that story to him. It brought some more respect and attention from Johnny Cash, a man who lived beyond boundaries himself. It also brought a sense of liberation to Kristofferson, although he was still wracked with guilt from being disowned by his parents.

He was not living this life alone. Kristofferson remembers that "You had these great guys like Harlan Howard who just encouraged all of us. You could hang out with Willie [Nelson], Bill Anderson and Hank Cochran. Tom T. Hall had started getting songs cut. And there were all these young hotshots arriving--Mickey Newbury, Tony Joe White, Billy Swan, Chris Gantry, John Hartford. Shel Silverstein was coming down from New York. In general, we all just tried to knock each other out. You tried to find a way to impress the other writers, to get some attention for what you were doing. We felt like we were fighting for respect--from each other, from Music Row, from the world at large."

As for his songwriting, "He always had his own style of writing lyrics," said Marijohn. "But he had been a poet and an English teacher so his songs were too long and too perfect. I, in no way, was ever the writer Kris was, but I knew the problem he was having. His grammar was too perfect."

"His first songs all sounded [like] Hank Williams musically," she continued. "He had that real basic rhythm. I told him he had to develop his own style, one that better fit his words."

"I always felt like we were writing in the tradition of the old country music," said Kristofferson. "To me country music was about telling it like it was, about being honest and about your life in your music. Pop music was pretty bland, but country music was about cheating, drinking, going to jail. It was the white man's blues music, and that's what I wanted to write."

"I was listening to Dylan and the Stones and Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings," he continued. "You wanted your songs to be that good, to have that kind of power. We were dead serious about music back then. I thought music could change the world. I still do."

Dave Dudley's record of "Viet Nam Blues" came out about a month after "The Ballad of the Green Berets" by Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler. Sadler was a Green Beret and had served in Viet Nam. Sadler's song reached number two on the country chart but went number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart.

First Single

In 1967 Marijohn Wilkin--who had recorded two albums for Columbia--convinced producer and head of Columbia A&R Billy Sherrill to release "The Golden Idol" by Kristofferson, which he had recorded as a demo, as a record on the Epic label (a sister label to Columbia). Wilkin had been knocked out by the line "Til you watch the face you're washing disappearing down the drain" because so many women at that time wore heavy make-up. Sherrill

agreed to release the record after telling Marijohn that he had "no idea" what the song was about. The "B" side of the record was "Killing Time." The record flopped.

Buckhorn and Marijohn Wilkin

During his three years with Buckhorn, Marijohn Wilkins worked with him to help him improve his songs but it was primarily Kristofferson's inner drive that drove him towards becoming a songwriter who wrote great songs.

"I was a good writer when I got to town but I floundered around quite a bit," said Kristofferson. Marijohn Wilkin agreed and added that Kristofferson was "Avid to surpass himself and his peers."

Kristofferson told writer Michael McCall, "I had to get better. I was spending every second I could hanging out and writing and bouncing off the heads of other writers. They'd tell you when it worked and when it didn't. I remember Marijohn said [my songs] were all a bunch of losers, but they did like my style."

"When I went to be a songwriter, I did it for the love and not for the money," continued Kristofferson. "I loved everything about it and admired the people who were good at it."

"We didn't write these things because we wanted to have hits," Kristofferson told writer Tom Roland. "We wrote them because we were trying to write great songs...We took it seriously enough to think that our work was important, to think that what we were creating would mean something in the big picture...Real creative and real exciting. And intense."

There was a price to pay for those songs. "God it was hard on the people around me, like my family," said Kristofferson. His wife, Fran left with Tracy, came back, then left again.

In August, 1967 Kristofferson used his experience in the Army as a helicopter pilot to obtain a job flying workers to oil rigs

in the Gulf of Mexico. For two weeks a months, he would fly men from New Orleans to the oil rigs; the other two weeks he was in Nashville, working on his songs.

Actually, he wrote a number of songs while doing his flying job and also branched out from songwriting and started a novel but never finished it.

The money was pretty good--$900 a month--better than bartending or as a janitor. He needed more money; his second child, a son, Kris, Jr. born in 1968, had problems with his esophagus and had to be hospitalized, running up a hospital bill on top of Kristofferson's other expenses, like the divorce from his wife.

The extra money he earned helped but it still wasn't enough to pay child support and have a lifestyle.

The advantage of this job was that Kris spent a lot of time driving his Opel down to New Orleans and back. There was no radio in the car, so Kris spent a lot of that driving time thinking up songs.

The first song that really came together--in a commercial sense--for Kristofferson was "Jody and the Kid," recorded by Roy Drusky, which entered the *Billboard* country chart on July 20, 1969 and rose to number 24. The song was not a huge hit, but it caught the attention of other songwriters and artists in Nashville. The idea came to Kristofferson when he and his young daughter came into the Tally Ho Tavern one day and one of the regulars there said, "Here comes Critter and the Kid." ("Critter" was what some called Kristofferson.)

Kristofferson pitched the song to Roy Drusky, who was in the hallway outside the Columbia Studio for a recording session. Drusky liked the song and agreed to cut it, then Bobby Goldsboro heard the song and wanted to record it. Goldsboro had just come off a huge hit, "Honey," and a cut by Goldsboro stood a good

chance to be a big hit on pop radio. It was a tough choice for Kristofferson but he chose to keep his word with Drusky and let the country singer have the song.

This song was published by Buckhorn and released before his contract was up at the end of 1968, making him attractive to other publishers in Nashville.

Early in 1969 Billy Walker released "From the Bottle to the Bottom" which stayed on the country charts for 13 weeks and rose to number 13. Again, it was not a huge hit, but brought some more attention to Kristofferson.

At the end of 1968, Kristofferson left Marijohn Wilkins and Buckhorn Publishing for Combine Music. Combine was owned by Fred Foster, who also owned Monument Records, and Bob Beckham, who ran the company. Kristofferson had come to their attention through Chris Gantry, who also joined Combine.

The impetus for leaving Buckhorn came from Marijohn Wilkins' desire to take a break from the company and go to Europe for awhile. During the time Kristofferson was at Buckhorn, Marijohn's marriage ended, she suffered bouts of depression and was drinking heavily. Kristofferson, a loyal man who was somewhat reluctant to leave Buckhorn, felt that Buckhorn was actually leaving him. He thought briefly about going to New York to try his hand there at songwriting, but Marijohn encouraged him to stay in Nashville.

Fred Foster wanted Kristofferson not only as a writer, but as an artist on Monument Records.

Combine Publishing

When he joined Combine Publishing, Kristofferson met some songwriters who would have a major affect on his career. Late each afternoon, Bob Beckham would put a tub of beer in a room and songwriters would gather and sing the songs they'd written. Writing for Combine were Donnie Fritts, Billy Swan, Dennis

Linde and Chris Gantry. Mickey Newbury wrote for Wesley Rose at Acuff-Rose Publishing, but he was a good friend of Beckham's and often came to these songwriter gatherings.

Newbury's big hit was "Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)" by Kenny Rogers and the First Edition, which was a top five pop hit in 1968.

"I learned more from Mickey than from any other single songwriter," said Kris. "He could make simple melodies and simple words work together in a way that said so much. It was exciting every time I got to hear him do a new song."

Mickey Newbury took songwriting as seriously as Kris Kristofferson; each line in a song had to knock you out but melody was also important. When Kristofferson met Newbury, Kris was primarily interested in the lyric; Newbury showed him how the melody had to fit the lyric in order to make a "song."

On April 15, 1969, Kristofferson was fired from his job of flying helicopters in the Gulf after he was caught sitting fast asleep in a helicopter with the blades going full speed overhead. His double speed lifestyle had caught up with him and he had not allowed enough time "between the bottle and the throttle."

He went back to his room at the Evangeline Motel in Lafayette, Louisiana where "it looked spooky, with a neon Jesus out front, no TV, nothing but a dirty floor. I knew I was going to get sent to jail for non-support or something because I owed $500 a month child support to my wife. My kid was in the hospital with a bill that seemed astronomical at the time--$10,000."

Back in Nashville he called Mickey Newbury, who told him to come down to the Ramada Inn on James Robertson Parkway where he had a room. There were two television shows taping--"The Johnny Cash Show" and "Hee Haw"--so "we can pitch songs to artists on both shows," said Newbury.

Kristofferson spoke with Fred Foster and Bob Beckham about his financial woes and they agreed to give him enough money to send to his wife for back-payments and to cover the insurance for his young son's hospital bill.

Mickey Newbury had told Roger Miller he needed to hear "Me and Bobby McGee," a song that Kristofferson had written after Fred Foster had given him the title. Kristofferson had told Fred that he felt he was "dry" and didn't have any songs left in him. Legendary songwriters Boudleaux and Felice Bryant, who'd written classics such as "Rocky Top" and the Everly Brothers hits "Wake Up Little Susie" and "Bye Bye Love" had an office in the same building as Monument. Their secretary was "Bobby McKee" and Foster told Kris, who was getting ready to leave for one of his trips to New Orleans, about the musical name and "she was a girl!" Foster gave Kris some extra money and said "see if you can write a song 'Me and Bobby McKee.'"

Kristofferson mulled over the idea for several months before the song started to come together while he was flying helicopters down in the Gulf. He had misunderstood Foster's title and so his title was "Me and Bobby McGee."

Kristofferson had been humming Mickey Newbury's song, "Why You Been Gone So Long," which has a thigh-slapping jaunty feel about it. He was also thinking about a young lady he had spent time hitchhiking around Europe with one summer. He also remembered a Fellini movie, *La Strada*, where the young man gets his freedom from a girl, but ends up crying on the beach; freedom is a double-edged sword. And he was down in Louisiana so "Baton Rouge" and "New Orleans" played into the picture. As he put together the song, the line "with them windshield wipers slapping time" seemed to pull everything together; that was a rhythm and image that fit Newbury's song as well as the one he was working on.

And as for "freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose," well that came fairly easy to a man who had lost his family, the respect of his parents and former peers and his future as a well-respected man about town. He'd also had his apartment broken into and some things had been stolen. Kris Kristofferson was certainly "free" but that, too was a two-edged sword. At this point, what else did he have to lose?

Kristofferson played "Me and Bobby McGee" for his songwriting buddies and quickly noticed the song got a different reaction than his other songs had gotten.

One friend, Vince Matthews, suggested he cut out the line "Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose" because it took away from the concise, colorful narrative that Kristofferson had built in the verse. "He told me, 'God you've got all these concrete images and then all of a sudden you come out with this abstract philosophy,'" remembered Kristofferson. "But I decided to keep it. I thought it worked. And, looking back on it, that was the moment I really began to trust myself. In my mind, I had become good enough, and I decided I could go my own way."

The song had first been recorded by Bucky Wilkin for his solo album *In Search of Food, Clothing, Shelter and Sex*. Newbury loved the song and communicated that to Roger Miller who, at that point, was a country superstar known for his great songwriting. However, living the fast lane life doesn't leave you much time for introspective songwriting, so Roger hadn't been writing any songs. Still, he had a record contract and an obligation to record an album and release some singles.

Newbury found Roger at the Ryman, where he was taping Cash's TV show. Miller wanted to hear the song but had to get to Los Angeles to tape an appearance on the TV series "Daniel Boone." Miller invited Newbury and Kristofferson to fly with him to L.A.--and bought their tickets--then gave them each some

walkie-talkies and told them to help keep him off pills. Roger Miller used to swallow uppers like they were M&Ms and you can't really do dialogue on uppers because you talk too fast. Kristofferson was asleep in a motel room when Newberry came and told him they were going to L.A.; Kris drove to the airport with 50 cents in his pocket.

On the plane trip out, Miller never slowed down enough to hear the song; all during the time in L.A. he was going fast forward so it wasn't until they were flying back to Nashville that Miller turned to Kristofferson and asked, "What about that song?"

Kristofferson sang it to him on the spot and Miller said, "Shit, that's good."

In May, Roger Miller recorded "Me and Bobby McGee" on a session where he recorded nine different songs; in fact, he cut "Me and Bobby McGee" twice--a long version at the start of the session and a short version that ended the session. He also recorded two other Kristofferson songs, "The Best of All Possible Worlds" and "Darby's Castle."

"Me and Bobby McGee" was released the following month and entered the country charts on July 5th, reaching number 12 and staying on the chart for 16 weeks; this was Kris Kristofferson's first real hit. And it came from a recording by a songwriter's songwriter, a man who Kris had admired from his first days in Nashville. "Roger Miller was the first songwriter I really related to," said Kris. "He was writing incredible stuff in the mid-60s."

Kris Kristofferson: Artist

Roger Miller's version of "Me and Bobby McGee" was the real breakthrough for Kristofferson in terms of public--and Music Row--acceptance of his songs. On November 1, 1969, two Kristofferson songs entered the chart: "Your Time's Comin'" by Faron Young and "Sunday Morning Coming Down" by Ray

Stevens. On January 2, 1970, Jerry Lee Lewis entered the country charts with a Kristofferson song, "Once More With Feeling." All of these songs were published by Combine, Kristofferson's new publishing company, and can be attributed to the work of Bob Beckham, who was actively pitching Kristofferson's songs to country artists.

Ray Stevens' version of "Sunday Morning Comin' Down" was the most elaborately produced Kristofferson song ever; Stevens poured his time into that song (spending 30 hours in the studio), painting a work of art with his production. In the end, it was not a commercial success (it only reached number 55 on the country charts) which Stevens attributed to the fact that "the song didn't fit my image--I wasn't like the guy in those lyrics." Stevens turned down the opportunity to do "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head" for the *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* movie because he devoted so much attention to Kristofferson's song, so he paid a professional price for it. But Stevens' recording brought a lot of attention from Music Row to that song because the poetry of those lyrics was so obvious in the production. The song was released on Monument, Fred Foster's label, and it looked like a good time for Kris Kristofferson to include that song on an album of his own.

Fred Foster had been impressed with four Kristofferson songs when he signed the writer: "Jody and the Kid," "To Beat the Devil," "Duvalier's Dream" and "Best of All Possible Worlds." He wanted to sign Kristofferson with the agreement that Kristofferson would record an album; Kristofferson replied, "I sing like a frog." Foster liked the way the songwriter communicated his songs and pushed on.

First Album

The album *Kris Kristofferson* was released in April, 1970. There are twelve songs on the album, a mixture of songs he wrote

at Buckhorn and songs he wrote at Combine. The first cut on the album was a song written with Bucky Wilkin at Buckhorn: "Blame It On The Stones."

This was a giant step away from "Viet Nam Blues," where Kristofferson didn't seem to particularly care for the younger generation; now, in this song, he defends it, taking up for The Rolling Stones, who were rock's bad boys.

The next song, "To Beat the Devil," also from his Buckhorn catalog, became a classic. Inspired, Kristofferson said, by seeing an emaciated Johnny Cash at the Columbia studio during the time the songwriter was a janitor, the song is autobiographical.

If people were not aware of the genius of Kris Kristofferson, that song would have convinced them. And so would the next one: "Me and Bobby McGee." The fourth song was another Buckhorn song that Roger Miller had recorded on his "Me and Bobby McGee" session, "The Best of All Possible Worlds" and the fifth song was "Help Me Make It Through the Night." The song was written in the basement of Bill and Dottie West's home on Shy's Hill in Nashville during a time Kristofferson was staying with them. The title came from a statement Frank Sinatra made in a magazine interview about coping with life with "a bottle or a woman or whatever I need to help me make it through the night."

Kristofferson first offered the song to Dottie West, who thought it was too suggestive for her (she later recorded it).

Kris had some of the song written before he came across the title line. It was first produced by Jerry Kennedy on singer Bill Nash but Kennedy decided against releasing it. "Help Me Make It Through the Night" was then recorded by both Ray Price and Waylon Jennings. A publisher controls the first release of a song; after it is released, anyone can record and release it after obtaining a performance and mechanical license (for airplay and sales). During the time Price and Jennings were lobbying for first release

of the song, Kristofferson ran into Sammi Smith, an old friend and unknown singer. Kris taught the song to her and her version became the first release.

In "The Law Is For the Protection of the People" Kristofferson once again puts some distance between his "Viet Nam Blues" and the man he had evolved into over the past five years. "Casey's Last Ride" is about an adulterous affair that a working man is having. This is an urban song--the man is catching a subway home. It is also reminiscent of his time in England; Casey drinks "a pint of bitter" rather than a can of beer at the "Golden Crown."

Kris Kristofferson wrote two great songs about the frustration and loneliness of trying to be a songwriter in Nashville. "Just the Other Side of Nowhere," like "Sunday Morning Coming Down," points out that a Sunday is not a day of rest when you're craving something meaningful to happen with your life and your songs.

"Darby's Castle" was written during the time Kristofferson was at Buckhorn and Marijohn remembers Kris playing it for her and she wondered how long the country audience would take to catch up to him.

"For the Good Times" was written at Buckhorn for his wife as they were breaking up. Kristofferson wrote the song while driving from Nashville to the Gulf. After Birmingham, the roads ran through dark Mississippi backroads. Kristofferson had just passed through a small town when the line hit him "Don't look so sad, I know it's over." While driving, he got the first verse and the chorus quickly but wondered if he could play the song on his guitar; the melody was so different from a three chord country song that he didn't know what chords to play. It would be another month or so before he finished the song, which was first produced by Jerry Kennedy on Bill Nash. That single did not hit but Ray Price heard it and recorded his version.

(NOTE: Fred Foster claimed he sent a copy of the song to Ray Price eleven times before the singer heard it and decided to record it.)

The First Movie

Soon after Kristofferson's debut album was released, Dennis Hopper contacted him about coming to South America where Hopper was directing and starring in *The Last Movie*. Hopper had heard "Me and Bobby McGee" and wanted Kristofferson to sing it in the film. Hopper had starred with Peter Fonda and Jack Nicholson in the surprise hit of 1969: *Easy Rider*. Kristofferson went to Peru where he was filmed, sitting on a rock singing "Me and Bobby McGee." He was unbilled in the movie, but it got him out of Nashville during a key time.

The Troubadour

After Kristofferson returned from Peru he received a phone call asking if he like to open for Linda Ronstandt at the Troubadour in Los Angeles. When he heard the offer Kristofferson countered with, "Is this a trick question?" Someone connected to the Johnny Cash television show had instigated the request by talking up Kristofferson to the Troubadour management. Assembling a group of musicians who hung around Combine--Dennis Linde, Billy Swan and Donnie Fritts--Kristofferson headed out to L.A. where he performed at the Troubadour on June 23rd, the day after his 34th birthday.

Listening clubs were the place where singer-songwriters played during the 1970s and the two most famous were the Troubadour in Los Angeles and The Bitter End in New York. During that first performance in L.A. music critic Robert Hilburn from the *Los Angeles Times* came and wrote a glowing review. The club extended the one night performance to a week-long

engagement and Kris suddenly found himself the toast of the town, with movie stars and other celebrities all coming to the Troubadour to watch him perform. That same week, "For the Good Times" by Ray Price entered the country charts at *Billboard*. One night at the Troubadour, Johnny Cash joined him on stage. How could anyone get a bigger endorsement than that?

During the daylight hours, Kristofferson was invited to meetings with movie producers, actors, directors and TV bookers who all wanted him to write songs for TV shows and movies or try his hand at acting. Some even gave him scripts to look over.

Kris Kristofferson had charisma. He was slim, handsome, had a full head of long, thick hair, and the ladies were attracted to him. At the same time, men were also attracted to his manliness. When Tinsel Town found Kris Kristofferson they found a diamond in the rough--but not too rough. A shallow town is in awe of intellectual depth, especially when combined with physical beauty. Kris Kristofferson had it all.

After he returned to Nashville, Kris was interviewed by Jack Hurst with the *Chicago Tribune* and confided he was a bit confused and perplexed about his future. First, he had discovered that while he was gone "I was suddenly the hottest thing here. While I'd been gone, it turned out, Cash had just been pushin' hell out of my songs."

It had taken a long time to establish himself as a songwriter in Nashville and he wasn't prepared to just walk away for some movie offers. "I think I maybe just want to be a songwriter," he told Hurst. "Don't get me wrong. I don't know about it all yet. But you get too busy with all these other commitments and...I'm afraid it would drain you. You wouldn't have enough time to spend writing anymore."

He used the example of Roger Miller to make his point. "Roger Miller is one of the finest songwriters country music has

ever had, and he hasn't written anything in years because he's been all mixed up with TV shows and motels and things like that."

The Hit Songwriter

In 1970 it all came together as a songwriter for Kris Kristofferson. In January, "Once More With Feeling" by Jerry Lee Lewis entered the country charts in *Billboard* and reached number two. On June 27th, during his week-long engagement at the Troubadour in Los Angeles, "For the Good Times" by Ray Price entered the *Billboard* country charts and became Kristofferson's first number one song; it even reached the number 11 position on the pop charts and remained on the country charts for 26 weeks.

At the end of August, "The Taker," written by Kristofferson and Shel Silverstein, entered the *Billboard* country charts and reached the number five position. Then, on September 5th, Johnny Cash's record of "Sunday Morning Coming Down" entered the *Billboard* country chart. This would be Kristofferson's second number one record, remaining on the chart for 15 weeks.

Johnny Cash recorded "Sunday Morning Coming Down" before a live audience at the Ryman during a taping of his television show. Before the performance there was a discussion about the line in the song "wishing Lord that I was stoned." The network representatives from ABC did not want that line aired and offered an alternative, "wishing Lord that I was home." In fact, the network executives insisted the performance would not be aired on ABC if Cash sang "stoned." Cash listened to them but kept his own counsel and did not comment.

Kristofferson also listened to the discussions but did not offer any input; he was thrilled that Johnny Cash was going to record one of his songs and really didn't care what line he sang. At this point, only the broadcast of the song was certain; there was no agreement that it would be released as a record.

Finally, the backstage cleared and the taping began. Kristofferson was seated in the balcony of the Ryman. With the bright lights on him and cameras rolling, Cash stepped to the microphone on stage and sang the song. When he got to the line "wishing Lord that I was stoned," he looked straight at Kristofferson and sang the line as the songwriter had written it. Although the network reps said the performance would not be aired if Cash sang "stoned," the song was aired as it was sung.

On December 19, "Help Me Make It Through the Night" by Sammi Smith, entered the *Billboard* country chart; a week later, Bobby Bare's record of "Come Sunday" came on the chart. Bare's record would reach number seven on the country charts in 1971 but Sammi Smith's version of "Help Me Make It Through the Night" would remain number one on the country chart for three weeks in a row and cross over to the pop charts where it reached number eight and become Kris Kristofferson's first million-selling song.

Janis Joplin

In August, 1970, Kristofferson performed at the Bitter End in New York and met Bobby Neuwirth, who loved Kristofferson's songs and brought his friends to the show. Neuwirth, who had heard Roger Miller's record of "Me and Bobby McGee" and taught the song to Janis Joplin that spring, offered to introduce Kris to Joplin. The two drove cross-country to the San Francisco area; Joplin lived in Larkspur, a community just outside of that city. When they arrived, Janis was ready to party so Neuwirth and Kristofferson went over to her house. Handsome Kris quickly caught Janis' eye; "she thought he was a honey" and the two hit it off.

Kristofferson and Neuwirth stayed with Joplin in Larkspur for a couple of weeks, hitting the bars in Sausalito and drinking

plenty of booze. Kristofferson hoped she would record "Me and Bobby McGee," since she knew it and seemed to like the song. In September, just a month before she died, she recorded the song and her version of "Me and Bobby McGee" was released in January, 1971 and became a number one pop single--her only one. It also brought a lot of attention to Kris Kristofferson from the pop world.

The Silver Tongued Devil and I

In July, 1971, Kristofferson's second album, *The Silver Tongued Devil and I* was released and this would be the album that firmly established him as country music's premier singer-songwriter. The album begins with the autobiographical title song, where the singer goes to his former place of employment, the Tally Ho Tavern, and seduces a young lady.

The second song on the album is "Jody and the Kid," then "Billy Dee," a song about a drug addict who overdoses. The fourth song on the album is "Good Christian Soldier," a song written by Billy Joe Shaver, a new songwriter in town who was making quite an impression; Kristofferson would produce Shaver's first album for Monument.

The fifth song, "Breakdown (Long Way From Home)," is another autobiographical song from Kristofferson where he confronts his past in relation to a present, taking the measure of the road he's traveled. "Lovin' Her Was Easier" was written while Kristofferson was in Peru and "The Taker," was written with Shel Silverstein in a Ramada Inn hotel room while drinking a bottle of wine. The wordplay in the song is reminiscent of the writing of Roger Miller. "When I Loved Her" is another autobiographical song from Kristofferson

The "Chapter 33" in the title of the song "The Pilgrim: Chapter 33" refers to Jesus Christ, who was 33 years old when he

was crucified. It was also the age of Kristofferson, Dennis Hopper and many in the crew of the Hopper movie in Peru filmed at the Indian village of Chincero. "People down there would ask us how old we were and we'd say '33' and they'd say '33, the age of Christ,'" said Kristofferson. Although on the record Kristofferson begins this song by listing a number of people this song is about, in truth it is mostly Kris Kristofferson writing about himself. It has become a classic singer-songwriter song that can be applied to any number of Nashville songwriters.

He's a poet, he's a picker
He's a prophet, he's a pusher
He's a pilgrim and a preacher
and a problem when he's stoned
He's a walkin' contradiction,
partly truth and party fiction
Takin' every wrong direction
on his lonely way back home

The final song on the album, "Epitaph," was written for Janis Joplin, who died of a drug overdose on October 3, 1970.

Cisco Pike

During a visit to Los Angeles after his appearance at the Troubadour, actor Harry Dean Stanton went out drinking with Kris one evening and told him about a script, "Dealer," written by film student Bill Norton. There was a problem with the film and an opportunity for Kristofferson.

Seymour Cassel was set to star in the movie but, at the last minute, backed out. The director desperately needed someone to star in the movie and Kristofferson was in the right place at the right time and available. He was also a fresh face and had the looks the counter-culture could relate to.

Kristofferson had turned down movie offers "until Harry Dean gave me that script," said Kristofferson. "He helped me go through the screen test, did a scene with me. I read it, and I felt like it was something I could do believably. Although it was about a drug dealer, I didn't even know how to roll a joint at the time. But I could certainly identify with the guy's problems, trying to deceive his old lady and having a lot of things coming down on him. It was interesting and it had good people in it: Gene Hackman and Karen Black."

Harry Dean Stanton was also in the movie, renamed *Cisco Pike* (he played Kristofferson's buddy in the picture), which was directed by Bill Norton. Kristofferson played an ex-rock star who had become a drug addict but was now out of jail and trying to go straight. However, a corrupt cop blackmails Pike into selling a some bricks of marijuana for him.

The movie was filmed in the fall of 1971 and released in 1972. This would change the direction of Kristofferson's life; he soon moved to Los Angeles, where he obtained roles in movies and increasingly became known as an actor.

When not working on a movie, Kristofferson was on the road performing with his band. It was a fast paced, action packed life. "I had to get plastered to go out there," said Kristofferson. "I didn't play sober. I thought, 'Who would want to?'"

After he began performing on the road "I expected to live an accelerated life. I wanted to experience and taste as much as I could." And he did.

Awards and Rewards

In 1971, the momentum continued rolling for Kristofferson. "Help Me Make It Through the Night" and "Come Sundown" peaked that year and so did Janis Joplin's version of "Me and Bobby McGee. In March, "I Won't Mention It Again" by Ray

Price, the follow up to "For the Good Times," was released and reached number one on the country chart, remaining in that position for three weeks, and crossed over to the pop chart, where it reached number 42.

Peggy Little released "I've Got to Have You," a song from the Buckhorn catalog and Bobby Bare released "Please Don't Tell Me How the Story Ends," which became a top ten song on the *Billboard* country chart.

In August, the third straight Kristofferson song by Ray Price was released as a single; "I'd Rather Be Sorry" reached the number two spot on the country charts and crossed over to pop radio, where it reached number 70 on the pop chart.

On August 21, the single "Loving Her Was Easier" by Kristofferson from *The Silver Tongued Devil and I* album entered the *Billboard* pop chart and reached number 26; it did not receive enough country radio airplay to find a spot on the *Billboard* country chart. However, that same month Roger Miller's version of that song did chart from country radio airplay, reaching number 28.

"Loving Her Was Easier" was the first single by Kristofferson to reach any of the trade charts and further solidified his reputation as an artist. But it showed him to be a "pop" artist--although he was a country songwriter. It also embarrassed him because he had promised Roger Miller that he would not release the song as a single and contacted his publisher to convey that message. However, Monument went ahead anyway and released the single on Kris, which hurt Miller's chance of a pop crossover.

Also in August, Kristofferson's first album was re-released with a new title: *Me and Bobby McGee*.

In the Spring of 1971 the Academy of Country Music awarded "For the Good Times" their "Song of the Year" award. At the Country Music Association Awards Show in October, "Sunday

Morning Coming Down" was up for "Song of the Year" against "Okie From Muskogee" by Merle Haggard.

"Okie" was truly a revolutionary song; it articulated the thoughts and feelings of President Richard Nixon's "Silent Majority" and the core audience for country music. The Viet Nam War was increasingly unpopular; there were no songs in country music supporting the war but Haggard's song expressed disapproval of those protesting the war. It was an anti-protestor song at a time when the rock world was filled with anti-Viet Nam War songs.

The 1971 awards show, broadcast live on CBS to honor the songs and artists of 1970 was dominated by Merle Haggard, who won "Single of the Year" for his record of "Okie," "Male Vocalist" and the top award: "Entertainer of the Year." But he and "Okie" did not win "Song of the Year"; that honor went to songwriter Kris Kristofferson for "Sunday Morning Coming Down."

While country artists, songwriters and executives sat in their finest outfits, and country fans all over the United States watched in their living rooms, a disheveled, long-haired Kris Kristofferson shuffled to the stage after tripping over the top step. He was not wearing a rhinestone outfit or a tuxedo.

"It was probably the most incredible moment of my life--certainly the most shocking," said Kristofferson. "I mean, I was in heaven just being there. I was sitting right behind Merle, who I thought was going to win, and Marty [Robbins] was right behind me. I was so stunned when it happened, my head snapped back and I hit it so hard on those wooden pews in the Ryman that it nearly knocked me out. I remember Marty Robbins had to tell me, 'Get on up there!' I hadn't paid attention when they told us how to get onstage before the show, and in all the excitement, I stumbled on the way up there. And I got there and couldn't think of a thing

to say. I think I finally said I was glad I wasn't up against 'Today I Started Loving You Again.'"

Kristofferson was accused of being stoned at the awards show; he denied it but did admit he'd had two beers before the show.

It was the ultimate triumph for a songwriter who came to town with a dream and who had struggled for five years to get his songs cut. In one sense, Kris Kristofferson was on top of the world of country music; however, in another sense, it was also a good-bye of sorts to country music. After 1971, Kris Kristofferson spent less time in Nashville because he was on the road performing or in Hollywood making movies.

In 1972, Kris Kristofferson moved to Los Angeles, although he kept his apartment in Nashville. He was no longer just a "country" songwriter; now he belonged to the wide world of music and the world of Hollywood with his movies.

Sources used for this article:

"32 in U.S. Named Rhodes Scholars," *New York Times*, December 23, 1957.

"Dave's Diary--21 July 2005--Kris Kristofferson." http://www.nucountry.com.au

"Kris Kristofferson." http://www.janisjoplin.net

"Kris Kristofferson." http://allmusic.com

"Kris Kristofferson." http://movies.yahoo.com

"Kris Kristofferson." http://www.casenet.com/people.

"Kris Kristofferson." http://www.nndb.com/people.

"Kris Kristofferson: This Old Road." http://www.pastestore.com

"Kristofferson celebrates 70th with music, family." *Associated Press* June 23, 2006.

"Man At His Best: Kris Kristofferson." *Esquire*: March, 2006, p. 84

Bowman, David. "Kris Kristofferson: The Great Gravel-Voiced One talks of films, beautiful actresses, the importance of Dylan and chillin' with the Sandinistas." http://www.salon.com.people. September 24, 1999.

Brady, James. "In Step With: Kris Kristofferson." *Parade Magazine*, July 10, 1994, p. 18.

Cooper, Peter. Liner Notes, *The Pilgrim: A Celebration of Kris Kristofferson*. American Roots Publishing, 2006.

Friskics-Warren, Bill. "Kris Kristofferson: To Beat the Devil: Intimation of Immortality." *No Depression*. March-April, pp 90-105.

Ghianni, Tim. "Me and Kris: time-traveling with a legend on Music Row." The *Nashville Tennessean*. December 12, 2003 pp 1, 7.

Gordon, Roxy. "Partly Truth and Partly Fiction: A pilgrim's perspective on Kris Kristofferson." *No Depression*, November-December, 1999. pp. 82-93.

Hemphill, Paul. "Kris Kristofferson is the New Nashville Sound." *New York Times*, December 6, 1970.

Mathews, Jack. "Wanted: Kris Kristofferson," Interview by Jack Mathews. http://www.findarticles.com.

McCall, Michael. "Freedom's Not Just Another Word," *Nashville Scene*, September 18, 2003.

McGregor, Carig. "I'm Nobody's Best Friend." *The New York Times*, July 26, 1970 p. 68.

Mr. Bonzai. "Lunching with Bonzai: Kris Kristofferson: Road Scholar," *Mix*, November 1994.

Personal Interview with Don Cusic via phone from Hawaii, June 28, 2006.

Scott, Vernon. "Scholar Cowboy." UPI, January 13, 1998.

Smith, Tracy. "Kris Kristofferson: A Sex Symbol at 70," http://www.cbsnews.com. February 5, 2006.

Roland, Tom. "Kristofferson finds 'A Moment of Forever.'" "Weekend" in *Nashville Tennessean*, January 12, 1996, p. 3.

Vintage Guitars

An interview with George Gruhn
by Brandon Choghri

CHOGHRI: *Let's start* with you and how you got into the business of selling vintage guitars.

GRUHN: I had friends when I was in high school at the height of the folk music boom in the late '50s early '60s who were very, very much into the music scene. My particular interest at that time wasn't that much in music. It was more in zoology. What I found looking at the instruments is that you can look at them almost as though they were specimens in a taxonomic order. It was remarkably easy for me to look at instruments and categorize them and learn about them.

When I got interested in collecting instruments back in 1963, at the time when I bought my first guitar, they were readily available pretty cheap in music stores, pawn shops, and classified ads in the newspaper. There was no Internet. But for every one that I would find that was suitable for my personal collection, I unearthed 15 or more that were great deals on things that I didn't want.

You go into a pawnshop looking for an old Martin and instead they have an old Les Paul Gibson, and its 75 bucks, which back then that's what you could get them for in a pawn shop. Seventy-five to a hundred dollars if it said Gibson on it. The pawnbrokers didn't know much as long as it said Gibson or Martin they wanted $100. But if it was a Martin pre-war D-45 they wanted the same price as if it was a Martin 0-17. If it said Martin that's a hundred dollars, so I would buy those things. I didn't want most of them. But I knew where I could flip them quick. I'd already done the work of finding them.

It's sort of like if you're deciding that you want to be a gold prospector and you pick a likely looking stream and you get a sluice box set up and you start going through all the gravel. At the end of the month you've been through 200 tons of gravel, and every time you see a gold nugget you pick it out and put it in a little pile. But if you come across a piece of iron pyrite that's fool's gold you put that in another pile.

It's disappointing, but you know it still has some value; you can sell the stuff and you know if it's a lump of copper you put it in a different pile. If it's a lump of turquoise you put it in another pile and at the end of the month you've got 200 tons of pretty clean gravel and some paving contractor will pay you to haul it away. They want it. They can use it. And the copper and the turquoise and all this other stuff, you can sell that too. At the end of the month you find you have a quarter ounce of gold, which is not enough to make a good-sized ring, but you made a lot of money on the other stuff.

I sort of accidentally got into wheeling and dealing guitars also because, as a college student without a job and with my parents supporting me, the only way I could support that guitar collection was by selling those other things. At the beginning of each month my parents would give me money for apartment rent, books and food and whatever, and I'd spend every nickel of it on guitars. Within a week I'd sold enough guitars and I had all the money back to pay my bills and I had some guitars left over. So that's how I got started.

That was when I was still in college just doing it in my first year. I was actually in a dorm. I had have six or eight guitars in my dorm room. From there on I had an apartment that I shared with another student, but my bedroom was filled with guitars. College was at the University of Chicago; I majored in ethology, animal behavior studies. At Duke University I did graduate work for a

year, majoring in zoology, but still animal behavior studies. By that point, my bedroom was filled with guitars. Then I did further graduate work in Knoxville with a professor that I knew when he was a graduate student at the University of Chicago and I was an undergrad. I studied with him for a semester in Knoxville and by that point I had a three-room apartment and one bedroom was completely filled with guitars. Then one day I got a call from Hank Williams Jr. who said that he'd heard from Sonny Osborne from the Osborne Brothers that I had a bunch of guitars. He was calling me from Nashville. I was in Knoxville telling him a few of the things I had and he said "I could be over there in four hours." That was before there was an Interstate between Nashville and Knoxville; I-40 hadn't been completed yet, this was in 1968. He showed up in four hours driving a Jaguar E.

The amazing thing is (a) he made it in four hours over the two-lane roads over the Cumberland Plateau, and (b) it's amazing that he made it in a Jaguar since that was when the British made Jaguars were totally unreliable. If you didn't have a British trained mechanic driving with you half the time you wouldn't make it to where you were going. Anyway, he showed up and he bought as many guitars as his car would haul, which was about three. A Jaguar doesn't have much hauling capacity. He said he could be back the next day with a bigger car, which he did; he came in his Cadillac Eldorado the next day and filled that up. He said there wasn't anybody like me in Nashville and if I ever wanted to move to Nashville and set up a business that he'd help me and have an apartment waiting. I wasn't quite ready, but a few months later I decided that I was getting disenchanted with the academic scene. Even if I got my Ph.D., it was not going to give me much of an income studying reptile behavior. There's not many openings in that. I decided to move to Nashville and he *did* have an apartment waiting for me. We never went into business together. Our

personalities were just sufficiently different so we would not have had a good business partnership, but I did stay in Nashville and ended up setting up a music store.

Prices back then were ridiculously cheap compared to now, even inflation adjusted.

CHOGHRI: You could pick up a pre-war Martin or something like that for a hundred bucks from somebody who didn't quite know what they were worth, right?

GRUHN: Well, back then they didn't have much resale value, but they had more resale value than what some of those folks knew. I could pick things up for half of what I could flip it for within a week and I didn't have to lie to anybody. I just paid them what they asked for.

Also, keep in mind that this was quite a few years ago, When I opened my store, in January, 1970, a 1960 sunburst Les Paul was a 10-year-old guitar. That's the age of a 2007 guitar today.

A Fender Broadcaster, Leo Fender's first commercially successful round neck Spanish neck electric solid body guitar was a 20-year-old guitar in 1970. Today, 20 years ago was 1997. I don't think of 1997 as being a long time ago. A 1997 guitar today is considered a recent issue used guitar.

In 1970, a 20-year-old guitar could be a Fender Broadcaster. The oldest Stratocaster in the world in 1970 was a 16-year-old guitar. Even a 30-year-old guitar today is not viewed as old; it's a 1987 guitar which is not even as good as the new ones. A lot of the stuff made today is better in quality than what was made in 1987 but a 30-year-old guitar in 1970 was from 1940. That could be a D-45 Martin or a herringbone D-28, or a 1940.

In 1940 Gibson was still doing the Charlie Christian model bar pickup Gibson ES-125. In those 30 years from 1940 to 1970 there was a huge, *huge* change in quality and in the evolution of products, because for electric guitars, the Les Paul didn't come

out until 1952, so the oldest Les Paul in 1970 was an 18 year old guitar.

CHOGHRI: Very interesting point.

GRUHN: Most of the evolution of the type of electric guitar that we today view as iconic happened between 1949 and 1960. All the major models that sell really well today evolved pretty much during a ten year period.

The evolution of guitars now is quite different because acoustic guitars were pretty well perfected by the mid-1930s with the exception of cutaways like a cutaway archtop. They didn't come out until '39 when Gibson introduced the archtop L-5P, L-5 and the Super 400 Premier, but the flat top models were pretty well perfected by the mid-thirties.

Most of the evolution of the electric guitar models that are popular today happened between 1949 and 1960, mostly between '50 and '60 during a 10 year period. There is nothing obsolete about a 1959 Les Paul or a Flying V or an Explorer, a ES 335, and Fender Telecaster. A 52 Tele? There's nothing obsolete there.

The P-Bass was first introduced in 1951 and by '57 they had modified it to the bigger peghead and a split pickup which is again completely modern by mid '57.

There's not a whole lot of new electric guitar model designs that sell very well right now. Fender still makes their money off Strats and Teles, and for Gibson it's Les Paul models, but the Les Paul models they make today that sell the best are the ones that most closely resemble what was done in '59.

CHOGHRI: *T*he most expensive ones for Fender and Gibson are the Custom Shop attempts at recreating those vintage ones.

GRUHN: There's hardly anything that any new-fangled design could do to make the old ones of the 1950s obsolete.

They didn't have MIDI guitars, but how many people do you know play MIDI guitars? Not many. Yes, they exist, and they have high-tech features, but the simple fact is that the vast majority of electric guitar players today don't want all these fancy features on their guitar. They're playing instruments that closely resemble in performance and appearance what was available in the 1950s.

CHOGHRI: What would you consider to be vintage now?

GRUHN:I think that you have a problem at this point with the term "vintage." I know I have used the term vintage a lot in marketing, but people want to say "how old does something have to be before it's vintage?" and I think that maybe the better question would be "what is *collectible*?"

The fact is that there are some makers whose brand new instruments are highly collectible and others that may be quite old and never have been collectible and probably never will be. Instruments by Harmony or Kay may be old, but they're not very good. There are some who pay $1,000 or slightly more for the right Harmony or Kay. It's a retro, interesting looking thing that may look good in a photo or in a video, but they're not great to play.

*T*here are certain models that are iconic and are from golden eras, and the golden era for different products is actually not the same time. For example, with Martin guitars there might be two great golden eras. Martin has been around since 1833. C.F. Martin Sr.'s work is certainly sought by collectors, but they're all gut string guitars that are not designed for most modern styles of music, but there are some people who collect those. They are beautiful pieces of craftsmanship, but the average player today doesn't use them. For bluegrass and old timey, they want the stuff from the 1930s, which are some of the best sounding steel string guitars ever made by any company. Certainly, those are the best Martins for modern music, but there are new guitars that are remarkably close. Much, much better than what they made 40 years ago.

Sunburst Les Pauls from mid '58 through 1960 are very collectible, but the point is that the stuff that people are collecting now, in most cases, is the exact same stuff that I was looking for in 1970. They view those as collectible. There's not a heck of a lot of stuff made after that which has gone on to be collectible, certainly as far as Martin, Fender and Gibson. Models made after 1970 that are highly collectible? Get real. They are *not*; they are used guitars.

They've made attempts at these various companies to do limited edition instant collectibles. They came out with a lot of limited editions. Fender came out with their Harley-Davidson Stratocaster with a metal engraved body. When they were brand new with a limited supply, dealers were getting literally over list price.

Try selling one of those things now and see how great a collectible it really is. They're bringing in half of what they once did. People lose money investing in a bunch of that stuff. There were all sorts of limited edition Martins and Fenders and Gibsons that were touted as being instant collectibles.

Some buyers spent literally hundreds of thousands of dollars amassing collections of this stuff. What I find pretty uniformly is that if you are trying to sell that stuff now, the resale value even 20 years later is not as good as what you paid for it.

If you want to see a golden era for Martin acoustics, it's the 1930s. If you want to see golden era Gibson flat-top models it's also the 1930s. Golden era for Gibson mandolins, the ones that are the most sought, are the early to mid-1920s. There are earlier ones that are collectibles to an extent, but many of them are bringing less money now than they did a while ago.

Most of the players who are collecting or wanting to play the ultimate Gibson mandolins are looking for ones from the 1920s. For Gibson banjos, without a doubt the golden era was the 1930s.

Gibson has made banjos since 1918, but the earliest Gibson banjos were not very good. They didn't perfect their designs until starting around 1929 so the ones that bring the most money are from 1929 through the '30s. As for electric guitars, the vast majority of the most sought after electrics are those made in the 1950s. In 1970 that was what we were looking for and today it's also what we're looking for.

It's just like with Italian violins; the most sought after violins are the ones made in Cremona, Italy from the mid-1500s through the mid-1700s, and the most sought after are actually the latter part of that time when Stradivari and Guarneri were alive and they had perfected their violin designs. If you wanted to be a concert soloist you could play a violin acoustically with no amplification and no microphone and still be heard. If you're playing a solo in front of a symphony orchestra where the people at the top of the balcony can hear the soloist, those are violins made from the late, late 1600s into the 1730s or, in the case of Guarneri, the very early 1740s.

The golden era hasn't changed, but to imply "vintage," well if it's an individual luthier like Stromberg, his best ones were his last ones. If it's a company like Martin that's been in business since 1833, the company has been in business for several human lifetimes, and most people agree their best instruments for the steel string guitars are from the 1930s.

The new ones, especially custom shop stuff they're making right now, are quite good and they're definitely stage worthy, whereas the late 60s and into the 1970s, the quality of a lot of those guitars was not up to today's standard.

Fender was bought by CBS in January, 1965 and they cut quality drastically. The Gibson company president, Ted McCarty, left at the beginning of '65 and quality went downhill rapidly

under new management because they were trying to cut corners and then they sold the company to Norlin in 1970 and quality went down even more. Martin, under Frank Martin's management in the 1970s,, was run very badly. So, that's what's up.

The '70s guitars were not the best stuff by any means. A lot of those companies were acquired by holding companies which bought the major manufacturers, but got out of it later because, by the early 1980s, the guitar market was changing dramatically. Music was also changing dramatically.

The baby boomers were the ones really driving the guitar market in the 1960s and into the mid '70s. A lot of the trends in the fretted instrument market are set by companies making new instruments. They don't make their money on vintage so, of course, they want to sell new ones. If Martin made the greatest guitar ever in 1935, that's not helping them in 1970.

If they see it again it's because it comes back for warranty work and it costs them money. They don't want to see it ever again. They want to make new ones, and if they give a lifetime warranty and they see it again, like I said that costs them money.

Market conditions changed because it used to be that there were two times in a person's life when they were most likely to buy a guitar. That was puberty through about age 25, and then after about age 25, most of the players were male, not that many women were playing, so after age 25 they have the expense of a wife, children, house, car, upward mobility and a job. By the time they came home at night they were tired. If they did want to take the guitar out, it would wake up the kids and piss off the wife, who would make them put it back in the case. So, unless they were a professional musician, they quit playing or if they were professional musicians they solved the other problem by getting divorced.

The second wave of buying historically used to be upon retirement. People would take up the hobbies they had when they were of dating age and you'd find, like in 1970, there were groups of retirees playing Dixieland music, the stuff that was popular when they were dating. There were bunch of retirees getting together and enjoying playing mandolin orchestra music in the '60s as well. That was the music that was popular when they were of dating age, but people in middle age weren't buying that much.

When I first got interested in music was at the height of the folk music boom '59 to '63. That was followed by the Beatles and The Rolling Stones and the British invasion, which was primarily 1964 through about '68. That was followed by folk rock like Crosby Stills Nash and Young, who had acoustic and electric rock and that was primarily '69 through '75. Starting in 1976 it's like the whole thing fell off a cliff. The baby boomers had the expensive wife, children, house, upward mobility, job and all that; they dropped out and things changed. Generation X was not nearly as interested in the same type of music. You find a bit of hip-hop, or early predecessors. In the late 1970s, but there was disco and then some funk and some punk, but it was mostly pop stuff, shallow penetration and short duration, lots of brief little flings.

There wasn't a whole lot of great guitar activity and this was a time when profit margins for the various major guitar manufacturers were plunging. Quality had been eroded due to bad management. By the time 1980 rolled around companies like Fender and Gibson and Martin were all on the brink of collapse, so CBS sold Fender to the predecessors of the present management in 1985 for, inflation adjusted, less than what they paid for it. Gibson was sold at the beginning of 1986 for an absolute pittance. Norlin sold Gibson for $5,000,000, but they did it on an IOU, the owner financed it and they took no money down.

So, in effect, they gave it to the present management. Today, Gibson has grown a lot bigger, although that's another story in itself because, in my opinion at this point, Gibson is about as stable as if they had one foot on a banana peel and the other on a bar of soap.

Martin, by the early '80s, was in deep deep deep trouble. You can look at a Martin serial number list and graph it. Martin has consecutive serial numbers so you can take a Martin serial number list and find that the list gives you the last number of each year. That's about how many guitars they made in the entire company history as of the end of each year. So, with simple addition or subtraction you can also tell how many they made each year and it's a fascinating graph.

Even in the Great Depression they were making at least 4,500 guitars a year and that doesn't reflect ukuleles, which had no serial numbers or their mandolins, which had a different number system; they were making close to 6,000 ukuleles each year. In the 1930s they were making fully as many ukes per year, if not more, than they were making guitars and mandolins combined. They didn't build a new big factory when the folk boom hit; they were still in the old North Street factory, the same factory they had in the 1930s. So when the folk music boom hit, Martin's production didn't go up beyond about 6,500 instruments a year because they didn't have the capacity in that building to make more. It wasn't until the very late '60s that they built a bigger plant, then production went up. In '72 at the height of that folk rock boom they made 22,637 guitars that year, but after that it started to plunge. By 1982, they were so far in the doldrums they made 3,153 guitars and were just on the brink of bankruptcy.

In '82 the music scene was awful. The only guitar player who was a big, big hit back then was Eddie Van Halen and he wasn't

playing acoustic and he wasn't playing a Gibson or a Fender either. He wanted a Floyd Rose type trem and Floyd Rose had an exclusive deal with Kramer. Gibson and Fender didn't have electric guitars that the heavy metal people wanted, so Gibson and Fender were on the brink of collapse. Martin was on the brink of collapse and the economy was lousy.

Not only had the baby boomers dropped out of the market and hadn't yet had their mid-life crisis and hadn't re-entered the market, but it was economically a horrible time. In Jimmy Carter's period, interest rates were rising. During Ronald Reagan's administration, Paul Volcker was the Present Chairman of the Federal Reserve and to curb inflation, which had gotten very high – close to 15 percent, he raised prime rate interest to 23 percent. You can't imagine 23 percent prime and home mortgages costing 20 percent. Nobody could buy a house sensibly on a mortgage at 20 percent interest. Business people couldn't borrow money to run a business. And certainly consumers were not going to borrow money when the credit card interest was well over 25 percent.

It pinched the market for what little market was left. The demographics of the market were against us. The economics of the market were against us. Musical trends were against us, and guitar sales just plunged. The only company that was selling many guitars was Kramer and it was badly managed and ended up imploding.

CBS sold Fender cheap. It took years for Fender to get back on its feet. Gibson was sold by Norlin cheap. Chris Martin came in as the new company president of Martin; they kicked out his father, Frank Martin, as company president and brought in Chris, but it was a real struggle getting Martin back on its feet. It took years.

One thing that saved the market's ass was that something historically unprecedented happened. I had explained before that

the market was dominated by two age groups; puberty to age 25, and retirees with not that much in the middle. But starting around late '84 or early '85 I began noticing a new trend that I had never seen before. That was middle aged people 40 plus years old calling me wanting guitars and banjos and mandolins. First, they wanted stuff like the early folk boom and within a year or so I was getting more and more calls from people wanting vintage electric guitars. These were baby boomers who were re-entering the market. Baby boomers did something that was historically unprecedented; they had a mid-life crisis. They bought little red sports cars, tennis and racquetball equipment and other toys. It took me a while to figure out what the heck was going on because this had never happened before. You could look back on a hundred years worth of musical buying trends and it was always youth and a bit of the retiree market. I finally figured out, at least in my own mind, what sets baby boomers apart and made them do something that was unprecedented.

Baby boomers are unique from every previous generation of humanity going all the way back if you want to go back to Ardipithecus or Australopithecus or whichever pithecus you want to pick, some three to four million years ago and up to today. Baby boomers are the first human generation in all of humanity's history that took for granted from an early age onwards that they were going to live to grow old and therefore they could have a midlife crisis.

Before that, in ancient Greece or Rome it was known somebody could live to be 80 or even 90 but it was incredibly rare. If you got to be age 40, you didn't figure on it being midlife because you could stub a toe, get an infection and *you die*. You get pneumonia, *you die*. You get a bad tummy ache that turns to appendicitis, *you're going to die*. Numerous other things, *you die*.

Even young folks. If you go back as far as say 1900, nobody got as far as first grade without knowing personally siblings or playmates who had died. They get a bad cold or strep throat and it could kill you. You get pneumonia and it could kill you. Lots of children died. It was routine. It was sad, but it was routine. No human took for granted that they were going to live to grow old.

I've set the stage for now asking you, why was that? What is it that caused that complete change in attitude where everybody expected to live and get old? What did the baby boomers have to cause that change? Why could baby boomers take for granted that they would live to grow old when no previous human generation could?

CHOGHRI: Well, there were plenty of scientific advances, and they didn't have any sort of world war looming over them.

GRUHN: Wars have been around for a long long time and could happen again. Look at what's happening in the world today, if you live in the Middle East you don't take for granted you're going to live to grow old.

CHOGHRI: No, absolutely not.

GRUHN: But what was the one advancement that caused people to take for granted that they would live to grow old? That came out right about the end of World War II, that was not available before the war? Something that was absolutely unavailable in 1940 and by 1945, '46 you could get that caused people to take for granted that they would now live to grow old.

CHOGHRI: Advancements in modern medicine like shots and antibiotics?

GRUHN: There were no antibiotics in 1940. The first one, penicillin, was a complete wonder drug and it was followed quickly by streptomycin and others. Penicillin, an antibiotic, did not become available until late during the War. In 1944 the Army

had a limited amount of very, very, very expensive penicillin for emergency cases; it was not yet available to the general public. Immediately after World War II they came out with better ways to refine it, though it was still quite expensive. It was an absolute wonder drug because none of the bacteria were immune to it; at that point they were not resistant.

One shot of penicillin and *wham* it did it did wonders, far, far more than it will do today. Today we're rapidly approaching a time when there's a lot of bacteria mutating faster than we can come up with new medications, and there are predictions that we may find ourselves heading back to the bad old days when we can't take for granted that we're going to easily live to grow old because we can get infections that we cannot cure.

Antibiotics radically changed the guitar market and every other market because people took for granted that they would live to grow old. My parents' generation grew up during the Depression and they grew up (a) not taking life for granted that they live to grow old because they didn't have any antibiotics and (b) they certainly had a different attitude toward money because they lived during the Great Depression. Economic ups and downs have been a factor for a long time. What sets the baby boomers apart from every other previous generation so far is their taking for granted that they will live to grow old. Baby boomers are the first human generation ever that grew up able to take for granted that they would live to grow old. That causes people to think differently and make different types of decisions.

As a direct result, companies like Fender, Gibson and Martin had their asses saved because the guitar market had plunged, it was in the doldrums. Baby boomers had dropped out of the market and Generation X didn't care nearly as much about music in general.

Record sales were down for music of all kinds; it only really sold with shallow penetration and short duration fads. Then, starting in the mid '80s, the baby boomers had their midlife crisis and companies like Martin, Fender and Gibson started to thrive. Almost immediately after the holding companies divested themselves of the guitar companies, the new owners thought that due to their own great brilliance they had turned things around, when in fact, no, not really. They were in the right place at the right time.

Baby boomers were driving the market, buying lots and lots of guitars, including a lot of high end guitars. Then, starting around 1990, if you look at the Martin graph, production just picked up extraordinarily. They brought in CNC computer numeric controlled equipment and now they could make a lot more guitars a lot faster, and production went up dramatically, to the point where it just *zoomed.* It was a huge spike in production. In 2015 Martin made 114,730 guitars.

CHOGHRI: *Wow.*

GRUHN: Last year their production was down; they made 10,044 less last year than they did the year before. The market had gotten flooded.

A lot of these companies are now having to make adjustments. Companies like Martin and Taylor are working short weeks, and Gibson has laid off some people and they have a heavy debt load. There's a lot going on.

CHOGHRI: You mentioned that prior to the baby boomers there were two specific age groups that would normally purchase guitars. Who's buying guitars now?

GRUHN: The baby boomers, to a large extent, have dropped out. They're now approaching retirement age; some of them are already beyond retirement age. I'm 71, and by 70 I was going to funerals more than ever. I noticed by the time I was 70 that half

the funerals I went to were for people my own age or younger, and that was an uncomfortable feeling.

I had originally thought there might be three phases when I noticed that baby boomers were buying guitars. I thought "Oh well, now there's three times in a person's life when they'll buy, the previous two plus middle age" but I was wrong.

If you bought 50 or more guitars and now have a guitar collection that you assembled when you were between 40 and 55 years old, why would you need more guitars when you're 65-plus?

You've already bought them, and they don't wear out. In the 1970s I sold Neil Young about 20 guitars and he hasn't bought any from me since! He's still using the same ones!

They don't wear out in a person's lifetime; if you take care of them, they can last 300 years. There are still people today playing Stradivari and Guarneri violins. Stradivari died in 1737, but they're still playing his fiddles.

A pre-World War II Martin guitar is not obsolete. It may need some maintenance, but people get them repaired or restored and they continue to play them. If you bought a new guitar, some fancy new one in 1985 or 1990, whatever, it's something that you can play, your kids can play, your grandkids can play, and even your great-grand kids can play if it's taken care of. It doesn't wear out. The baby boomers are not coming in droves to buy guitars; they're hardly buying any of them.

The people who now are having their midlife crisis are Generation X, and many of them didn't care about guitars when they were in their youth and they don't now either. Now we have younger folks who often enough, if they want an electric guitar, don't even plug it into an amp. They plug it into some iPhone app or into some studio gear. It's a different scene. They don't care that much about vintage. Electronic dance music or rap or

hip hop don't use guitars much. A lot of that music is created on a computer keyboard where there's not even any recognizable musical instruments.

A lot of the guitar companies now face a time when the demographics have shifted dramatically, and when the technology shifts dramatically, musical trends are quite different. The younger folks, if they're interested in retro, may be interested in Asian-made copies or retro-looking things that look vaguely like the old Harmonys and Kays except they play better.

The other thing that I can point out is that the vintage guitar market had gotten built up into a huge bubble from mid-2002 through late 2006 or early 2007. Some of the electric models went up tenfold or more, they just got bid up crazy by speculators. An example would be a gold top Gibson Les Paul from 1956 with P-90 pickups, tune-o-matic bridge, and stop tailpiece. In early 2002 that would be about a $7,500 guitar.

By late '06, early 07, that was an $85,000 guitar. It's quite a jump, but the problem is that was an unsustainable pace of growth. It couldn't be sustained. The other thing that happened is that speculators bid the price higher than anybody who actually intended to keep one had ever been known to pay.

There are three fundamentally different types of buyers. There's utility tool users, people who may be great, great players. They're buying with no interest in collectability; they just want one that plays well and whose sounds will suit them. Some of the best musicians in the world are like that.

Then there's collectors. They ask completely different questions. The way they pick up and look at an instrument is so different that I can tell within the first minute whether they're a collector or a utility tool user. Just look at the way they look at a guitar, hand them a guitar and look at the way they hold it,

the way they pick it up, the way they examine it. It's completely different. They ask different questions and their whole approach is so different that without even opening their mouth to say a word, I know which category they are.

The other category is speculators. They just see the price is X, last year it was half X, so they speculate that next year it will be 2X. They may make their money in real estate or commodities or stock trading or whatever, but they want to diversify their holdings so they get into this. They'll pay full retail price because they anticipate it's going to go up. The main thing they want is a certificate of authenticity from somebody that they trust to show they're buying something that's real. They'll come and say "I'm a collector," but when you talk to them for a few minutes they're talking their spreadsheets and about how much money they've made on it. *They're* not collectors, they're speculators. They're buying it like stocks or bonds.

The problem is that they bid the price up higher than anybody who'd ever been known to keep one was going to pay. The speculators want to hold it for no more than about two years before they sell it. In the case of that gold top Les Paul I mentioned, it got bid up from $7,500 to $85,000 for that model. The problem is that all the collectors had dropped out by the time they reached $35,000. After that the collectors were bellyaching that speculators had pushed them out of the market and they were dropping out. That's a dangerous sign because after that, the speculators are skating on thin air; there was no foundation under it. Foundation is when you've got people buying who actually want to keep one. If none of the buyers have any intention of keeping it, that market has no stability.

It reminds me of a cartoon when you skate on thin air past the edge of a cliff. Which cartoon is that?

CHOGHRI: Wile E. Coyote from Looney Tunes.

GRUHN: Yes, and basically when you go past the edge of the cliff, within two years there's going to be a correction. By mid-2007 I could already see a correction occurring. Things that used to be quick sellers were no longer selling so quickly and some of them became virtually impossible to sell for as much as we used to be able to get.

Today there are many things selling, vintage instruments or golden era pieces, for less money than they were bringing 10 years ago. They were bid up by speculators who bid up higher than any person who ever intended to keep one had ever been known to pay. So there was a correction. It doesn't mean that nobody wants guitars, but they don't necessarily want them for those figures. You can even look at the art market and real estate and you can see trends like that. Things like Gulf Coast condos. There was a period when people were bidding them up to prices that absolutely nobody who was intending to live in one could pay, and nobody who was buying with the prospect of renting them out would pay. You couldn't rent them out for enough to pay the mortgage at the new price, but there were speculators who were buying to flip them and they could briefly do it, but it didn't take terribly long before that blew up.

Some real estate prices have now recovered, but in many areas those condo towers don't sell for as much as they used to at their peak. Some areas are hot as can be but other areas still haven't recovered yet. In lots of commodities, even real estate, there's three types of buyers. People who are going to move in, either to put their own business into a building or a house which they're going to move their family into, and people who buy lots of them and then run them, manage them and rent them out for an income. But there's a limit to how much they're willing to pay

because they know what they can get in rent and what it costs to manage it. The speculators just see that the prices are rapidly rising. You can easily tell them apart. It's just as easy as with the instruments. The utility tool user who buys it and moves in. The collector buys real estate and may spiff it up a little bit fix it up and then it's available for lease. Speculators buy it and they mothball it. They don't even want to rent it. They don't move in and they don't try to rent it because they don't want a renter and they don't want a tenant. Tenants have kids who scrawl on the walls or pets that pee on the floor. If you're only intending to hold it for one to two years before you flip it for a profit, you don't want a tenant.

Lately in Nashville there's been a real estate boom, especially in the downtown area, where people will buy a property and in one year it's been flipped three times and it's doubled its money or in some cases tripled in a year or two, but that's not sustainable for very long. You've got to know when to get in and when to get out of that stuff.

When it's taken over by speculators there's a very high probability that they can at least briefly bid it up to prices that nobody who intends to actually use it can pay, but it's going to correct itself. You see booms and busts due to that.

CHOGHRI: I want to backtrack. You were talking about the three groups of buyers of guitars. These guitars are obviously incredibly valuable due to their age and their collectability, and you have speculators and collectors who are driving them up. What makes them so great to the player? The vintage ones specifically?

GRUHN: Keep in mind not all vintage guitars are so expensive that no player can afford one. Once upon a time, late 2006 through early 2007, an original Les Paul Jr. briefly got up to $15,000, but most of those now can be had for no more than five grand.

What makes a guitar good is not simply how old it is. There are basically four factors that make the guitar or any other item good. Number one is design. Number two is structural workmanship. Number three is materials. And number four is cosmetics because things that are ugly looking don't sell as well. Number one is design. If it's not a good design it doesn't matter how good the materials are or the quality of workmanship is, if it was a bad design it won't perform well. If you have, for example, a badly designed airplane, you can have the finest materials, it can be titanium construction with terrific workmanship, but if it's aerodynamically not properly designed you don't want to be 35,000 feet up in that. You're going to die.

The materials have to be good enough that it doesn't structurally fail. If you have mediocre materials that are strong enough that it doesn't simply implode on you, if you have a great design and mediocre materials it'll perform pretty well. But it'll perform better if you have great materials. Adirondack Spruce to my ear sounds better than Sitka Spruce, but if you have a really great design you can still build a darn good guitar with a Sitka Spruce top. You don't have to have the prettiest wood to sound good enough to take on stage and use professionally if the design is really, really good.

When you combine fabulous design work with fine workmanship and materials, and a lot of the vintage instruments had some of the best design work *ever*, you get great results. They weren't cutting corners, especially during the Great Depression. Even in the '20s and '30s when the economy was good, people expected quality. Labor was cheap, materials weren't that expensive and good materials were readily available so, people demanded quality and quality was affordable. Later, certainly by the 1960s and '70s, labor was getting increasingly more expensive,

materials were getting increasingly more expensive and scarcer and the big holding companies that took over often cut corners and quality suffered. Some of the worst instruments made in the entire history of American musical instrument making were made during the early 1970s, especially the Gibson acoustics. They were virtually unplayable. The electrics were also much poorer quality than they had been previously.

The companies were cutting corners, but today if they're going to survive they have to have quality. The CNC machines reduce handwork and can do a lot of what they do with considerable precision. So when you combine that with some hand work, and they come up with better quality guitars now than they had in the '70s, but not as good as the great golden era.

Why are the vintage ones sought after? They combined the best designs with the absolutely best materials--Brazilian rosewood, Honduran mahogany--good craftsmanship, and that's an unbeatable combination. A lot of those vintage instruments are quite expensive at this point, but they're not as expensive now as they were at the height of the market bubble.

CHOGHRI: Certainly. So it's a combination of *everything* that's gone into those instruments that's made them so desirable.

GRUHN: The design work was well perfected on acoustics by the mid-1930s. For mandolins, really by late 1922 the Gibson F-5 was a fully modern design. They've never improved upon it. For Gibson banjos, 1930 was a peak year. They have absolutely not improved the Gibson banjo since 1930. The new ones are not as good. The design is essentially the same, but now the materials and level of hand workmanship aren't as good as what they had in 1930.

The combination of great design, the very best of materials, and the very best of hand crafted workmanship is something that

was all there before World War II for the acoustics. The electrics didn't have designs perfected until the '50s. In the 1950s is when electrics had all three of those factors, design, materials and workmanship, come together.

Here's another example. Let's take two opposing armies. Both have rifles. One side has cheap ones that are made with steel that's good enough so it's not going to fail in the midst of a battle, but it's not the best quality steel, and they don't have beautiful wood stocks, they have plastic stocks. No ornamentation whatsoever. Just very, very basic.

The other side has beautiful hand crafted guns that took a year of workmanship each to make. Handmade, meticulous craftsmanship, beautiful wood stocks, wood carving and engraving on the metal parts; just gorgeous. The side with AK-47s is going to beat the side with flintlocks by a big shot. Design *matters*.

The design of musical instruments for the acoustics was very well perfected in the '30s, and the electrics were very well perfected during the 1950s, and after that what we have is less availability of the finest of materials, and certainly much less availability of skilled hand labor. We do make up for some of that with CNC equipment.

There's been *some* renaissance of hand labor. In 1970 there was virtually nobody doing hand labor at all. Nobody knew how to do engraving or other stuff. At craft fairs in the early '70s, the hippy-dippy school of craftsmanship was crude and funky, but now when you go to a craft fair you can see some pretty sophisticated stuff, but it's expensive.

The number of people who are well-trained to do handwork is still quite limited. There are some who are very good hand crafters, but they charge a lot of money. Too much to be practical in a factory setting.

The other thing to keep in mind when we talk about a golden era is that companies like Martin, Fender and Gibson have been around a long time and some of their best stuff is vintage. The old, golden era period, which for Fender and Gibson electrics was in the '50s. Fender didn't exist prior to '46, so their golden era was in the '50s, pre-CBS.

For individual luthiers, you can pick somebody like John Monteleone who's still alive and well and building instruments but he's getting $50,000 as a base price for his cheapest instruments. Most musicians *can't buy those.* There's a few collectors doing that. For a lot of luthiers, their best stuff is their newest. John D'Angelico died in '64, but some of his most sought after guitars were made shortly before he died. Charles and Elmer Stromberg both died, father and son, within a few months of each other in 1955 and the best Strombergs were the ones made in the latter part of their career.

If an individual hand crafter has been doing it for 40 years and their best ones are their earliest ones, that means either they've gone senile or they no longer give a damn. It's only logical that you learn as you go and the best work is the latest. For Gibson, some of their best stuff was made by people who are no longer alive and the company's ownership has changed several times. They sold out to CMI Chicago Musical Instrument Company in 1944, and then CMI sold out to Norlin at the beginning of 1970 and Norlin sold to the present owners at the beginning of 1986. It's not surprising that some of that golden era stuff may not be under the current ownership.

Keep in mind that the market is flooded with new guitars. It took Martin from 1833 to 1898, before they started stamping serial numbers; they started with serial number 8,000, which was their estimate of how many they'd made by that time. In 1933,

after 100 years of business, they hit serial number 55,000. In 1947, they hit serial number 100,000. In 1965, they hit serial number 200,000. In 1990, they hit serial number 500,000. In 2004, they hit serial number 1,000,000. *In mid-2006, they hit serial number 2,000,000.*

That means that over half the Martin guitars ever made from 1833 to the present have been made since 2004. If you took every Martin guitar made from 1947 on back, and burned them all, out of the 2,000,000 plus there would be 1.9 million left. So, the market is flooded with lots and lots of new or recent issue guitars. The big competition a lot of these makers have is with their own used product because they have stuff that's not obsolete, that's still in excellent condition. It's in active circulation because people take care of their Martin guitars. I think it's a pretty fair statement to say that most of the Martin guitars ever made in the history of the company are still very much functional. People take care of them and they can last well over 100 years with normal maintenance.

The guitars they made prior to 1930 are somewhat old designs, but in 1930 they were only up to serial number 40,000. So, 40,000 out of over 2,000,000 are somewhat obsolete designs. Right now, they're close to 2,070,000.

The same is basically true of other companies. PRS didn't go into business until 1985, but he has a factory with about 200 employees. They make more guitars now. Basically, they make nearly as many guitars now in a few days as they made for an entire year in 1985. Bill Collings in 1985 was a one-man operation. In '88 he had one part-time helper. Now there's over one hundred employees. Collings turns out as many guitars in a day as he did in a year in 1985. Where do they think they were all going to go?

They don't go obsolete and they don't wear out in the lifetime of your great-grandchild. You keep building more and more and

more, after a while you're up to your eyeballs in guitars. Close to half of what these companies make now is in export sales in Europe and Asia and Australia and elsewhere. But the fact is we're up to our eyeballs in guitars. That should give you more than enough to ponder.

CHOGHRI: We've talked about Les Pauls a few times and how the design was essentially perfected in the '50s but it seems like the Bursts from '58 to '60 specifically are still worth a lot more or even more sought after than even an original '52. Is that based on the design specifically?

GRUHN: Well, the humbucking pickup didn't come in until mid '57, and the Sunburst came in mid '58, and the jumbo frets came in '59.

CHOGHRI: *Which* is what makes the '59 kind of the *pinnacle* and then the '60 has the slim-tapered neck which some people like and some people don't.

GRUHN: Some people like it, but a lot of people don't. The '59s bring more money.

CHOGHRI: I would guess that part of that is not only the design and the humbuckers, but also guitar heroes like Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton playing the Sunburst ones too.

GRUHN: Right. That's true. But they were also playing them because at the time they didn't cost all that much. They could afford them. *They* played them because they played and sounded and looked really neat. You couldn't get anything that played better and the new guitars of the late 1960s through the 1970s were nowhere near the quality of the vintage ones or the new ones available today.

CHOGHRI: Do you think that people now might gravitate towards those guitars though because they were played by their rock and blues heroes?

GRUHN: *Certainly.* But they were also really good. People like what their favorite artists play, there's no question about that. What is there that's better that you could play? Nothing. If you're doing something like Jack White, playing an Airline fiberglass National guitar looks great, *but it certainly isn't the best guitar you can find.*

But if it's a Sunburst Les Paul or a Dot 335, or an Explorer or a Flying V, or a Stratocaster, or a Telecaster, what's better? You're absolutely not going to find something better. That's for sure.

CHOGHRI: *The* Explorer and the V are certainly interesting as well. As far as the originals from '58, they're incredibly rare. Would you consider that to be the holy grail now for collectible electrics?

GRUHN: Absolutely. Those and the right Sunburst Les Pauls, those are the holy grail models. *Acoustically,* there are several different holy grails. A good herringbone D or a pre-war D-45 or a pre-war J-200 are the holy grail acoustics. Or a Lloyd Loar signed F-5 mandolin or one-piece flange flathead Gibson Granada banjo, those are holy grail pieces.

CHOGHRI: *I*t can differ too for electric guitars. If you gravitate more towards single coils, obviously the early Strats or even a Telecaster or a Broadcaster is kind of your holy grail.

GRUHN: *Right.* Although I'd say the Broadcaster is not the holy grail guitar to play as much as a '52 Tele. The Broadcaster still had a few kinks; in my opinion they don't play quite as well as a '52 Tele, but it's a holy grail collectible. Now, for a good clean Broadcaster, I wouldn't play it because their finishes tend to be kind of fragile and flake. If I had one that was really, really clean I wouldn't want to play it much because it will wear quickly and it will damage its appeal and collectability real quick. If you have one that's *beat*, you can play it. If half the finish is already flaked

off, what the hell, but if you have a Broadcaster that's really clean, *don't* play it.

That reminds me, back in the mid '70s I had a girlfriend who I helped get up an antique clothing business. One of the things that she would deal in is vintage antique quilts and we came across one gal who had a cedar chest full of her great-grandmother's quilts which were over 100 years old. They were in absolutely new looking condition and we picked one that we put on our bed and used it. It took only a matter of a few months before the thing just fell apart. *It looked* brand new, but the fabric was very fragile. You can take a quilt that's been in a cedar chest for 100 years and it can look virtually new, but if you start folding it or washing it, that fabric is very fragile. The Broadcasters' finishes are like that. Most of the others have better finishes.

Fender quickly discovered that there were some things like that, which they fixed. Even on the earliest ones like a '54 Stratocaster, those Bakelite knobs, all their white plastic parts fell apart. The pickup covers are fragile and you'd see pick wear that just goes right through the covers. The '57 Stratocaster is a much better guitar to play than the '54.

CHOGHRI: *A '54 would certainly be rarer and worth more money, but as far as a player's guitar, the '57 is the better way to go.*

GRUHN: *The '57 had kind of been* debugged. Sometimes that's said about automobiles; don't buy the first year of issue except as a collectible. If you want it to drive you might wait until it is debugged.

CHOGHRI: Although for the Bursts, specifically the '59s, the Sunburst paint faded on them and that's now part of the look and the prominence of them.

GRUHN: *Yes. In '60* they came out with a dye that didn't fade as much, except it's not as pretty. It's more opaque looking

and it didn't show the wood grain as well. The '60s that *don't* fade are less desirable. It's just not as pretty of a red. Red and blue dyes tend to fade. A lot of blue dyes turn green real quick with UV exposure.

The forces driving the vintage fretted instrument market are not fundamentally different from those of other collectibles markets such as art, vintage firearms, stamps, and coins. It should be noted, however, that the fretted instrument market is quite different from the stock and bond, gold and silver, diamonds, and commodity mineral resources markets as well as the art market due to its much smaller size.

No one person, not even Bill Gates, has the financial resources to take over and corner the market for gold or silver which was clearly demonstrated when the Hunt brothers tried corner the silver market, but the vintage fretted instrument market is small enough that one person who need not be a billionaire, can make a dramatic impact. Many of these instruments are more scarce than Stradivarius violins. There are about 650 well-documented Stradivarius violins currently known to have survived, whereas, for example, there were only 91 Martin D-45 guitars made from 1933 through 1942 and other similarly appointed style 45 guitars in sizes 0, 00, and 000 are not much more common. The number of surviving examples of original pre-World War II style 45 guitars is less than the number of Stradivarius violins in existence today. The same is true pre-World War II flathead one-piece flange Gibson Mastertone banjos, pre-World War II Gibson F-5 mandolins, Gibson flying V and Explorer guitars, Stromberg, D'Angelico, and D'Aquisto archtop guitars, and quite a few other collectible fretted instruments. During the 1970s through the mid 1990s a few collectors, most notably Scott Chinery in New Jersey and Akira Tsumura in Japan dramatically impacted the market

by spending less than $10,000,000 each buying vintage guitars. Unfortunately, Scott died at age 40 and Akira ran into financial difficulties and was forced out of the market. Their departure caused quite a shockwave in the market. While prices of many of these instruments have more than recovered since these two collectors dropped out of the market, many fine vintage archtop acoustic guitars are still bringing less money today than they were in 1990. Today it would take more money to seriously impact the fretted instrument market than it did in the 1980s, but even today if a person were willing to spend as much money as the price of one prime Vincent van Gogh or Picasso painting, one buyer could dramatically impact the vintage fretted instrument market, while an investor willing to spend $100,000,000 on van Gogh or Picasso art will not put a dent in that market.

This interview with George Gruhn by Brandon Choghri was conducted on March 30, 2017.

Donald Trump and Country Music

Don Cusic
Belmont University

Surveys after the election of Donald Trump indicate that his core of support was in the white working class. Since country music, in sociological terms, is the music of the white working class, there must be a connection between country music and Donald Trump.

Donald Trump is certainly aware of the popularity of country music and the popularity of country artists, whose songs often speak for and about the white working class. However, Trump's connection with contemporary country music seems to be tenuous, more transactional. On his TV show "The Apprentice," Trump had three country artists on: John Rich, Trace Adkins and Clint Black. Black was on season eight while John Rich won season 11 and Trace Adkins won season 13. That does not mean that Trump is a "fan" of country music; his only interest outside of his businesses seems to be golf. His background—he is a lifelong resident of New York City—has not stopped many country fans, who tend to look at the Big Apple with suspicion, from voting for him.

Trump's Inauguration

However, a Nashville label embraced the core Trump message. Three days before the inauguration, Curb Records released and album, Make America Great Again, which featured country artists LeAnn Rimes, Lee Brice, Tim McGraw, Ray Stevens, Hank Williams, Jr., Lee Greenwood, Wynonna, Jo Dee Messina, Larry Gatlin, Dylan Scott, the Bellamy Brothers, Hal Ketchum, Clay Walker and the Mike Curb Congregation on a compilation album

that featured songs like "God Bless the U.S.A.," "God Bless America," "America Will Survive," "We're Americans," "Let's Roll America," "Don't Mess with America," "All American" and "America the Beautiful."

There were questions raised why Donald Trump did not have more country singers at his inauguration on January 20, 2017. Of the ones he had, only Toby Keith could be considered a current "superstar," although Lee Greenwood's song "God Bless the U.S.A." has become a classic with country (and Republican) audiences.

The country singers who performed at the Trump Inauguration included Tim Rushlow, former singer of Little Texas, a group who had a string of hits ("God Bless Texas," "What Might Have Been," "My Love"), Richie McDonald, former singer of Lonestar (some of that group's hits were "No News," "Amazed" and "What About Now") and Larry Stewart, the lead singer for Restless Heart" (whose hits include "I'll Still Be Loving You," "Why Does It Have To Be (Wrong Or Right)" and "Bluest Eyes in Texas") but the individual careers of each of those performers have not been as successful as when they were with their groups.

During the festivities around the Inauguration there were also performances by Big and Rich, Darryl Worley and Gary LeVox, lead singer for Rascal Flatts.

It seems logical to wonder why country music wasn't more prevalent during the Inauguration since a number of country singers have a long history with the Republican Party. Probably the best answer is that country artists, like many Republicans, were trying to stay close but, at the same time, keep a distance from the early Trump administration, hedging their bets and not wanting to jump in until things cleared up from the messy, chaotic and divisive campaign and election. Performers want to know if

an appearance at a high profile event will help or hurt their careers and there was no clear-cut answer to that question at the time of the Trump Inaugural.

Another reason why more country artists were not invited to perform during Trump's inauguration may have been that they simply were not asked. Trump has not cultivated a connection with country music like previous candidates, such as both Bushes; he is a New York billionaire celebrity and the country music world is simply not in his social circle. Also, Trump is not really a "music" or "arts" guy; he collects celebrities and, although musical acts might be celebrities, Trump meets them and likes them on a transactional basis because they are celebrities, not because he's a fan of their music.

A reason that country performers might not have been asked could be because for a high profile event, such as a nationally televised inauguration, artist managers and representatives regularly solicit invitations. For the Trump inauguration, a number of artists, managers and representatives laid low and were "not available." Many artists were not against performing for Trump but, unless they were actively solicited, they'd use a "wait and see" approach before they took part in an event with a controversial politician.

Finally, the Republican field was quite large during the campaign and country artists had to pick and choose which candidate to align themselves with. Very few expected Trump to win and so support from those in the country music community was scattered amongst candidates—none of whom won.

The Dixie Chicks provide a clear-cut example of how taking sides in politics can severely hurt a career in country music. The Dixie Chicks are on the opposite side of the political spectrum from the Trump audience but still, there was a lesson learned. Country

music is heavily dependent on airplay and radio is controlled by three big companies. One misstep and the lifeline for a country music career can be quickly severed.

Trump's Messages in Country Songs

Although there were few country artists performing at the Trump Inaugural, the message in many country songs fell in line with the messages heard from Donald Trump during his presidential campaign.

Donald Trump may be viewed as a unique combination of a New York billionaire celebrity and a "good ol' boy." The theme from "The Dukes of Hazzard" TV show defines those good ol' boys as "makin' the way the only way they know how/Well, that's just a little bit more than the law will allow" who "wouldn't change if they could/Fightin' the system like two modern day Robin Hoods."

In short, during his campaign, Donald Trump came across as the Billionaire Bubba. Here was a candidate that the white working class could relate to; he was the Elvis of politics.

The Davos Man

The Trump presidency and the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in 2017 began on the same day. That gathering of "Davos men" advocated globalization while Toby Keith was on stage singing "American Made," a song that told the story of his Dad who has "dirty hands and a clean soul" whose heart is broken when he sees "foreign cars filled with fuel that isn't ours and wearing cotton we didn't grow." Keith sang that his Dad "spends a little more time in the store for a tag in the back that says U.S.A." but "he ain't prejudiced, he's just made in America."

In his article, "Dead Souls: The Denationalization of the American Elite," author Samuel P. Huntington states that the elites "travel the world and their field of responsibility is the world.

Indeed, they see themselves as 'global citizens'" or "citizens of the world." The ordinary, average American is a patriot, proven by the popularity of songs like "God Bless the U.S.A." and numerous other patriotic country songs. Liberal intellectuals are "anti-patriotic" according to Huntington while most Americans "take pride in their country."

The elites, said Huntington, are "increasingly cut off from the rest of society" and live in "a world within a world" linked by "global networks." He observed that in this global arena, "those who stay home stay behind."

Country music is filled with songs about average ordinary Americans who "stay behind." To give just a few examples (a complete list would fill a book!) there's "Country State of Mind," the Hank Williams, Jr. song from 1986 that talks about the joys of fishing and drinking home made wine. "I ain't got a lot but I think I got it made," he sings. In "The Roots of My Raising" Merle Haggard sang that the roots of his raising "run deep/I come back for the strength that I need/And hope comes no matter how far down I sink."

In "Down Home," a song by Alabama from 1991 the group sings, "Down home where they know your name and treat you like family/Down home a man's good word and a hand shake are all you need/Folks know if they're fallin' on hard times/they can fall back on /those of us raised up down home." The group's song "Born Country" (1992) states, "I was born country and that's what I'll always be/Like the river and the woodlands wild and free/I've got a hundred years of down home running though my blood/I was born country and this country's what I love."

In "Where Corn Don't Grow," sung by Travis Tritt, the singer is a young man who wants to leave home and venture out into the big wide world but his father warns him, "the weeds are high where corn don't grow." In "That's What I Love About Sunday"

Craig Morgan sings of a guy who's "usually up to his chest in oil and grease" but is seen at church "wearing his Sunday best." After church, they go home for "chicken and baked beans" and he tells his wife "it's 35 cents off a ground round" so "cut that coupon out." In "Little Bitty" (1996) Alan Jackson sang "It's alright to be little bitty/A little home town or a big old city/might as well share, might as well smile/life goes on for a little bitty while."

Two songs that were recent at the time of the Trump inauguration also address the love of rural and small town America. In "Small Town USA," written by Jeremy Stover, Brian Dean Maher and Justin Moore, Moore sings "I'm proud to say that I love this place/Good ole small town U.S.A." where, on Saturday night with "my baby by my side" on a dirt road he'll be "just fine," followed by a Sunday morning "that's full of grace.

On "I Love this Life," written by Preston Brust, Chris Janson, Chris Lucas, and Danny Myrick, the group Locash sing they love a "small-town world," "a country girl," "a Friday night" and "the sound of an ol' dirt road," finishing with "Man, I love this life."

Country music is the soundtrack for the lives of working Americans, which the elites often refer to as the "little people." In Alan Jackson's song, "Little Man" (1992) he sang that too many "seldom think 'bout the little man that built this town/before the big money shut 'em down/and killed the little man." In Jackson's "Small Town Southern Man" (2007), he sings "Callous hands told his story" and "years wore out his body/Made it hard just to walk and stand," concluding that "You can break the back but you can't break the spirit of a small town Southern man."

There is no manual labor for the elites; they hire that out. But in country music, work is a daily struggle to keep food on the table and the rent paid. There are no expense account dinners with French wine that the Davos man enjoys.

Although life is a struggle, it is not without its pleasures, and country singers often sing about the pleasure of cutting loose on the weekend. There are numerous songs about the hell raising good ol' boys, but they are always confronted with the fact that it's Monday and he "partied too hardy now I'm payin' my dues." (This is "Sure Is Monday" and was sung by Mark Chesnutt.)

For the country music audience, the willingness to work hard is a defining fact of their life and America. There's no shortage of songs about work in country music, although they are not about high-profile, prestigious high powered occupations. There are no country songs about hedge funds or corporate CEOs. For the country fan, work is a duty to be fulfilled; it is not self-fulfilling follow your dream work but rather what someone has to do to pay the bills and provide for the family.

Some good examples of country music's view of working include Aaron Tippin's "Working Man's Ph.D" (1993) where he sings about getting up early and working till there's "sweat on your brow" because "you build the things that really make the world go round." There "ain't no shame in a job well done/from driving a nail to driving a truck," adding that "a few more people should be pullin' their weight" because "if you want a cram course in reality/you get yourself a working man's Ph.D."

Merle Haggard, the "Poet of the Common Man," had a number of songs about work. In "Workin' Man Blues" (1969) he sang "I ain't never been on welfare, that's one place I won't be" and "I'll be workin' long as my two hands are fit to use" and in "Big City" (1982) he sang "Been working every day since I was twenty/haven't got a thing to show for anything I've done/There's folks who never work and they've got plenty/Think it's time some guys like me had some fun."

Country music is not known for protest songs, but there was a protest song about work, "Take This Job and Shove It," written by David Allen Coe and recorded by Johnny Paycheck was a number one hit for two weeks after it was released in 1977.

Hillbillies

The term "hillbillies" is a derogatory terms when leveled at the white working class. On the other hand, it is a kind of endearment when used within that community. It is like "the N word" in American society; it is okay when those within the black community use it but out of limits and forbidden for whites to use it. For years country music was called "hillbilly" music and country performers fought to have their music disconnected from that term. It was demeaning when those outside the country music community used that term to describe the music and the audience that listened to it while, at the same time, it was often used as a source of insider pride within the country community.

Respect

What does the American hard working country fan want? They want respect. The story of country music is, in many ways, a fight for respect. From the early days of being called "hillbillies" and their music "hillbilly music" through the magazine articles from big city-based media that had a condescending tone and smarmy observations to the 1960s when country music was the counter to the counterculture and rock fans looked down their noses at music they considered racist, redneck, backward and the most un-cool of all musics, country music has been engaged in a fight for respect.

Everybody is smarter than you are in something; actually everybody is smarter than you are in a lot of things. The country fan knows this; the elite prefer to think of themselves as "the

smartest guy in the room" or part of an intellectually elite group who believe they know what's best for those they don't know. That really gets under the skin of the average, every day, ordinary American. That tends to lead ordinary Americans to think of the elite as arrogant idiots rather than a group who are intellectually, socially and culturally superior to them. Donald Trump tapped into that sentiment. The white working class does not believe the elite know what is best for the country when it cuts across the grain of the beliefs and experiences of the ordinary American.

For many in the white working class, everything seems obvious. What you know is all you need to know. Life is simple, not complex. Common sense is better than book learning. Things should make sense rather than fit into a philosophy.

Trump tapped into the sentiment that jobs are leaving America and moving offshore while the "cost of livin's high and going up" for the working class. That was a song by Ronnie Dunn where he sang "I gave my last job everything before it headed South/ Took the shoes off of my children's feet, food out of their mouths" although "I got a strong back, steel toes/I rarely call in sick/a good truck, what I don't know, I catch on real quick/I work weekends if I have to, nights and holidays."

The plight of the working men and women who desperately want a job but can't find anyone to hire them is a dilemma the white working class often faces. The elite have connections through networking and those connections can provide opportunities. The white working class connects with each other and those workers can do the work but are not in a position to hire someone. Too often they are the worker bees and not a King Bee.

A view of country music towards the elites is demonstrated in the song "Friends in Low Places" recorded by Garth Brooks. It tells the story of a wedding reception at a country club, a black tie soiree where everyone is drinking champagne. The singer walks

in wearing cowboy boots and announces that he prefers whiskey and beer. The singer notes that "I just don't belong" and that the bride—his former girlfriend—is living in an "ivory tower." That sums up a difference in "class"; she got above her raisin' and now the singer can no longer relate to her—or her crowd. This is the elite vs. the "average ordinary American" conflict captured in song. The Trump supporters are wearing cowboy boots and crashing the country club party, but the country club inhabitants are ruling the world, especially the one the singer lives in.

The irony here is that Trump's exclusive country club, Mar-a-Lago, has no working class visitors; security keeps them out. A $200,000 fee to join keeps the white working class off the manicured golf course where Trump plays.

There is a country song, "Country Club," which uses a turn of phrase to make a point about country clubs with singer Travis Tritt singing "I'm a member of a country club/country music is what I love."

Country music is not monolithic and the audience is not comprised solely of un-hip, redneck, uncouth white trash, although a number of country songs poke fun at those stereotypes. In "Redneck Woman" Gretchen Wilson sings "I'm a Redneck woman, I ain't no high class broad/I'm just a product of my raisin' and I say 'hey ya'll' and 'Yee haw,'" adding that "Some people look down on me but I don't give a rip." In Craig Morgan's "Redneck Yacht Club" he sings that "Astroturf, lawn chairs and tiki torches/Regular Joes rockin' the boat, that's us."

Then there's Tracy Byrd's "Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Famous" where the singer tells the story of a TV crew coming to his home because "they want to see us go hog wild over beans and barbecue" and talk about mama, the bowling league, and his nine point buck hanging on the wall as they have dinner on Elvis TV

trays. For "high class living" the singer has RC Cola and a Moon Pie" instead of "Champagne and Caviar."

However, on the other side of the coin, there's a country song that professionals and elites can relate to in Alabama's song, "I'm in a hurry to get things done/I rush and rush until life's no fun/All I really gotta do is live and die/But I'm in a hurry and don't know why." The singer laments that he's "Shaking hands with the clock, I can't stop/I'm on a roll and I'm ready to rock" and "I better pick up my pace, it's a race/and there ain't no room for someone in second place."

Not every country fan voted for Donald Trump and for the anti-Trump audience who intensely dislike the Trump administration they could also find a country song that fit their view of Trump, such as the Mac Davis song "Oh, Lord, it's hard to be humble/when you're perfect in every way." There were two current songs during the Trump inauguration where the anti-Trump group could look to country music: "It Ain't My Fault" by the Osborne Brothers states "Blame my reason on my name/blame the name on my reason" and "I need an alibi—find me a witness who can testify." Miranda Lambert's song stated "If you've got some guts and got some ink" and "if you like acting like you're the boss" and "if what you see is what you get/then we should be friends." Those songs were not written or sung with Donald Trump in mind but, for many, they seem to fit the President.

Country Music: Facts and Figures

Research by the Country Music Association, released in January, 2017, presents a geographic breakdown of country music consumers, "defined as those who like and listen to country music regularly." According to this survey, 197 million Americans 12 years old or older like country music. Since there are about 325 million people in the United States, that means that about 60

percent of Americans like country music so there's ore country music fans than there were Trump voters.

Let's start with what should be obvious. Not all country music fans like Donald Trump's presidency and not all who like Donald Trump's presidency like country music. Also, not every member of the white working class likes country music and country music does not appeal only to those in the white working class. In a number of surveys done on country music, there are many professionals who like country, many non-whites who like country music and many with high incomes who like country music.

Surveys of country music fans show that the average fan has a household income of $81.5 thousand and that 30 percent have an income of $100,000 or more. Further, 71 percent own their own home, 56 percent are married, 57 percent are college educated and 82 percent have cable/satellite while 78 percent have a smart phone.

However, there is a link between many fans of country music and those who voted for Donald Trump.

During the presidential election of 2016, Hillary Clinton received about 63.6 million votes while Donald Trump received about 61.9 million votes, which tallies up to 48 percent who voted for Clinton while 46 percent voted for Trump.

In New England, 37 percent of the population like country music; this area went for Clinton while in the deep south (Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama and Mississippi), 55 percent of the population likes country music and that region voted heavily for Donald Trump. In the New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey area, 30 percent of the population are country music fans while in the West 42 percent are country fans and in the mid-west (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri), 51 percent are country fans. On the West

Coast (California, Oregon and Washington) 30 percent of the population are country fans.

While there is not a direct correlation between areas of the United States who like country music and those who voted for Trump, there is a definite pattern. Trump won the states of Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, Louisiana, South Dakota, Mississippi, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Iowa, North Carolina, Texas, Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Montana, Tennessee, Alabama, Iowa, West Virginia, Arkansas and Kansas while Clinton won the states of Illinois, Washington, Colorado, Nevada, Delaware, New Mexico, California, New York, Maine, Vermont, Virginia, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland, Oregon and Montana.

There may also be a link between the "America First" nationalist advocates and country music because country music, as a genre, does not have an international market like pop/rock does. Individual artists and individual country songs may have an international audience but the genre does not, primarily because, outside of the United States, there are few formatted radio stations. In the United States, radio is formatted by genres: there are contemporary hits stations, Adult Contemporary, Urban, oldies (by decade) and country music stations that only program that genre. In the United States there are about 1,900 country music stations while radio stations outside the United States with the largest audiences are generally state owned and program pop/rock or classical. (About 20 percent of American radio stations program country music.)

When country artists travel abroad, they generally perform for Americans in the military. Those trips are linked to patriotism and not for the development of an international market. There is a sound financial reason for this: country artists can earn more

money performing in the United States while an international tour is expensive and takes them out of the American market, which is their chief source of touring income. For an American country star, going international usually means starting over as an unknown. Most country stars are unwilling to tackle that struggle again.

Country Music: Old vs. New

The history of country music shows that it has been influenced by the sounds and trends in rock and pop music, and some long time country fans are upset with this.

The early sound of string bands with acoustic instruments was the first "sound" of country music. As electrical instruments were developed, they were incorporated into country music. We hear this happening during the 1940s and early 1950s when, increasingly, the electric guitar and the steel guitar became an important part of the sound of country music. This contrasted sharply with the pop songs of the day, which were often full orchestras backing a singer, whose voice was not the untrained nasal voice of country music singers.

Through the years, "traditional" country music has been rooted in the sound of country music during the 1940s and 1950s.

The first collision country music had with its "sound" came with the advent of rock'n'roll. The early rockabilly performers—Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, the Everly Brothers, Jerry Lee Lewis and others—were initially signed as country acts by labels. They were "country boys" with a country background and their early recordings were on country charts before they were on the pop charts. Rockabilly was a dominant part of the country charts 1956-1958 until country music executives lobbied trade magazines to list those early rock'n'roll performers on the pop chart and not on the country chart.

The sound of the rockabilly performers was rooted in country music but it did not sound like the country music that came before it. Take, for example, “”Don’t Be Cruel” or “Hound Dog,” which were country chart hits for Elvis in 1956 with “Crazy Arms,” which was a country hit by Ray Price that same year, or “Slowly” and “I Don’t Care” by Webb Pierce from the previous year and you hear a completely different sound. That caused fans of the older or “traditional” country music to claim that sound as “real” country music while the new sound of the rockabillies was “not real” country music.

The conflict arose again when the “Nashville Sound” emerged as an antidote to early rock’n’roll. That smooth sound, often with strings instead of a fiddle and a piano instead of a steel guitar, was not the sound of pre-rock’n’roll country. Examples of that sound can be heard with Jim Reeves singing “Four Walls” and “He’ll Have to Go” and Eddy Arnold singing “I Really Don’t Want to Know” or “Make the World Go Away.” However, the sound of pre-rock’n’roll country music remained an essential sound of country music during the 1960s, especially with the Bakersfield sound of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. Still, many of the country music fans who came of age during the years when Webb Pierce, Hank Snow, Carl Smith, Faron Young and Porter Wagoner dominated the country charts disliked the Nashville Sound and claimed it was not “real” country music.

During the 1970s and 1980s there were a number of pop crossovers in country music where performers considered “pop,” such as John Denver and Olivia Newton-John, crossed over to the country chart –and even won CMA Awards--although their base remained in pop/rock music. The “sound” of the records of John Denver, especially, certainly sounded country enough for radio airplay on country stations, but there was controversy

over where the artist's loyalties lay. Country fans want to keep country for themselves and dislike intruders who capitalize on country radio airplay to have hits with the broader country audience.

There were also country artists who had crossover records into the pop market. Country fans often resented country artists who "watered down" their music in order to receive crossover airplay.

Technology and Country Music

Technology has played a major part in creating and producing music in all genres. Disco and then rap and hip hop music made use of samplers, drum machines and synthesizers to produced their sound. This influenced pop and rock musicians, who used this technology to create and produce their music. By the time the twenty-first century arrived, the age of the computer was an important part of everyday life and, increasingly an essential part in record production. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, pop music was increasingly made "in the box," or in a computer using samples, synthesizers, drum machines and software to make a recording. We see examples of this in the pop music of the Backstreet Boys, N'Sync and Britany Spears from the late 1990s as well as other pop acts.

Country music has followed the pop world in making records "in the box" as the sound of country—like in years passed—has increasingly moved towards the sound of pop and rock music. The record labels and the executives who head them will point out that they have to make music that sells and this is the sound that sells. Further—and this is the real culprit if fingers must be pointed—they have to create music that will be played on country radio and country stations want to attract a young demographic as well appeal to the older demographic, generally over 35, that has traditionally been the core country audience.

Rural vs. Metropolitan

Country artists during the 1930s through the 1960s generally had a rural background; many grew up on farms or in rural areas. As the population shifted, beginning in World War II, from rural areas to metropolitan areas, we arrived at the point where 80 percent of people live in metropolitan areas and only 20 percent live in rural areas. This means that contemporary country artists probably grew up in metropolitan areas—generally in the suburban communities located 20 to 40 miles from the downtown area of a major city--and they have been exposed to a wide variety of genres. This is especially true during their high school years when music is a major part of everyday life and their tastes in music are formed. Because of the internet and the widespread availability of "free" music of all types, high school students will hear the music their classmates like and, although high school students generally prefer pop and rock music, they will also hear country music, but most likely not much country music before the 1980s.

It is easy to blame radio and so we shall. There are no country "oldies" stations (although "Willie's Roadhouse" is on Sirius XM) and when a terrestrial country station plays an "oldie," it doesn't go back before the 1980s.

For the country fans who like the "older" or "traditional" country music, or even the high school and college age students or like this "older" music, it is a time of frustration and leads them to the conclusion that what is called country music now is not "real" country music. Although they want to hear this traditional music on the radio, they feel alienated and left out; their voices are not heard.

That is a link between country music and the voters—and core constituency—of Donald Trump. Those working class voters feel that they, too, don't have a voice and have been left out. That

is not really going to change; there will not be a 180 degree turn in the direction the world is heading. Radio is dominated by three major corporations and they will continue to move towards a pop/rock sound and the creators and marketers of country music will have to follow the lead of radio.

Technology is driving American life, and not just in the way we access music. Many music listeners are streaming their music to their phones through sites like Spotify, Pandora and other services, but older listeners are less likely to stream than younger ones. In the American economy, department stores and retail shopping malls are disappearing because consumers increasingly purchase goods on line. Since 2001, department stores have reduced employees by a third or a loss of half a million traditional jobs. The energy section is losing jobs because clean energy like natural gas and solar are cheaper. Overall, about 75,000 traditional jobs are lost (or workers "temporarily" laid off) each day. (Krugman) As much as we may year for life as it used to be, we can't turn back the clock.

Country Music and Politicians

Country music and politicians have mixed for a long time. In the early days of the republic, politicians—including George Washington—found they could attract voters by holding barbecues and having a fiddler play at those events.

After Andrew Jackson became a hero at the Battle of New Orleans, there was a fiddle tune, "The Eighth of January," named after the day of his victory. If a politician could play the fiddle, that guaranteed a connection with the working class. Tennessee Congressman Davy Crockett played the fiddle (even at the Alamo, according to legend) and Tennessee is known for the Taylor brothers, Alf and Robert, who both fiddled and ran against each other (Alf was a Republican, Robert was a Democrat) for Governor in 1886. Robert won that election and served as Governor 1887-

1891 and 1897-1899 while Alf won the Governor's race in 1920. Later, Senator Albert Gore, Senior, played the fiddle on his campaign stops.

The first commercially successful country record was Fiddlin' John Carson's recording of "Little Old Log Cabin Down the Lane" b/w "the Old Hen's Cackl'd and the Rooster's Going to Crow." Carson played at rallies for Georgia politician Tom Watson and then played for Eugene Talmadge when Talmadge first ran for Commissioner of Agriculture in 1926. Talmadge continued his political career and was elected governor of Georgia in 1932. When Eugene Talmadge died, the Georgia legislature elected his son, Herman Talmadge as governor. At the end of his life, Fiddlin' John Carson ran the elevator at the state capitol, a "gift" from the Talmadge's for his long service in their campaigns.

W.Lee O'Daniel

In recent years, country music has been connected to the Republican party but, in terms of politics, country music has long been populist. Stories of the struggle for the "working man" and those whose voices are not heard have been heard for years in country songs.

There have been candidates for public office who were populist and made their name first in country music. Perhaps the best example is W. Lee O'Daniel.

W. (which stood for Wilbur) Lee O'Daniel was born in Ohio but grew up in Kansas, then moved to Fort Worth in 1925 where he became President and General Manager of the Burrus Mill and Elevator Company. The company sold "Light Crust Dough" for making bread. A local band, the Aladdin Laddies, comprised of fiddler Bob Wills, guitarist Herman Arnspiger and singer Milton Brown was sponsored by Alladin Lamps. The group decided to approach Burrus Mill as a sponsor for a show on KFJZ and the

Mill hired them; their first program went on the air in early January, 1931. They called themselves "The Light Crust Doughboys" and Truett Kimzey, the engineer at KFJZ was their announcer. The show was popular; it received a lot of mail and promoted local appearances at dances for the group. However, O'Daniel, who didn't have anything to do with the show, fired the musicians after several weeks because he "didn't like their hillbilly music." (Townsend 69)

Bob Wills requested a meeting with O'Daniel, who agreed to sponsor the group if each member worked 40 hours a week at the Mill; it was the Depression so they agreed. After five or six weeks, O'Daniel agreed the musicians didn't have to do manual labor but required each member to spend eight hours a day at the Mill practicing.

The show was popular but O'Daniel kept his distance until he attended one of their broadcasts at the invitation of the group. The band invited him to say a few words on the air, which made O'Daniel a fan and he began writing continuity for the shows. He purchased an automobile that had ads for Light Crust Dough and the Doughboys painted on the sides and was equipped with a public address system to announce when they were in town. By November, 1931, O'Daniel was the regular announcer for the show.

O'Daniel began writing poems that he read on the air and often requested the musicians to find a tune for them; they complied and that was the origin of songs like "Beautiful Texas," "Put Me in Your Pocket," "Your Own Sweet Darling Wife" and "I Want Somebody to Cry over Me," which he eventually recorded for Columbia Records. (Townsend 71)

O'Daniel wrote programs for the Doughboys to perform for holidays and special occasions; he especially enjoyed doing patriotic songs. He had shows that included his songs

and poems published in pamphlets, which he sent free to those requesting them.

O'Daniel moved the show from KFJZ to WBAP, where it was broadcast daily at 12:30 p.m. In his biography of Lyndon Johnson, Robert Caro noted that "most advertisers wanted their shows to be heard in the evening, when the men were home from work; O'Daniel wanted his show to go on when men weren't home; he wanted to talk to lonely housewives. And when his show went on, at half-hour past noon, he talked to them." (Caro: Path 697)

The show became incredibly popular and was broadcast over the Southwest Quality Network, on stations in San Antonio, Houston, Waco and Oklahoma City.

Bob Wills and Milton Brown quit the band after O'Daniel raised their pay to $25 a week but insisted they quit playing dances, which was an important source of income for the musicians. The groups that Brown and Wills formed became the founders of "western swing" music.

Although W. Lee O'Daniel and his radio show became wildly popular, a reporter said the media "didn't think very much of him. They figured it was the band that was putting the program over" but after the original band broke up and were replaced by other bands, the show kept gaining in popularity." (Caro: Path 697)

"It was not the content of these rambling, informal little homilies" that O'Daniel gave that made them so popular," stated Robert Caro, "nor the soft violins playing familiar sentimental tunes in the background. It was the voice in which they were delivered. The Voice was warm and friendly and relaxed—captivatingly natural. And yet it was also fatherly, soft but firm. It was a voice you could trust." O'Daniel "urged his listeners to go to church, to love one another, to tell the truth, to avoid sin." (Caro: Path 696-697)

In 1935 O'Daniel established the Hillbilly Flour company and had his show, which opened when a female voice announced "Please pass the biscuits, Pappy" before the fiddles and guitars of the Hillbilly Boys played the theme song. Soon, the shows began featuring less music and more O'Daniel.

The image that O'Daniel cultivated was that of a poor, simple country boy, a common citizen, but that image did not fit the real O'Daniel, who graduated from a business college, had run a business and invested in Fort Worth real estate. By 1937 his net worth was over half a million dollars and his listeners "bought whatever he was selling." (Caro: Path 698)

On Palm Sunday, 1938, O'Daniel asked his radio listeners if he should run for Governor, saying that a blind man had requested him to run. O'Daniel invited his listeners to write in whether he should do so and, according to O'Daniel, 54,449 replied and all but three said he should run. (The three outliers said he shouldn't because "he was too good for the job.") (Caro: Path 698)

O'Daniel's candidacy was not taken seriously by politicians or by the press, which noted his total lack of political experience (since he had not paid his poll tax, he was not even eligible to vote)," wrote Caro. "Reporters treated O'Daniels' campaign as a joke, if they mentioned it at all; newspaper articles lumped the 'radio entertainer' and flour salesman… with numerous other fringe candidates who regularly people Texas politics." (Caro: Path 698)

O'Daniel held his first rally in Waco and drew over 10,000. In San Antonio, where a rival candidate drew 183 people, O'Daniel drew 8,000.

The political establishment thought it was the music by his "Hillbilly Boys" band that drew the crowds. The politicians didn't take him seriously because he had never voted and his only

platform was the Ten Commandments. O'Daniel replied that he didn't pay his poll tax to vote "because I was fed up with crooked politics in Austin and hadn't intended to vote for anyone this year."

O'Daniel "sensed the fears and the hopes of people before they actually had them," stated Caro. "One fear that wasn't hard to sense—among the farm people who were O'Daniel's strength—was the fear of old age, when they would no longer be able to do farm work." To answer those fears, O'Daniel proposed a state pension plan where everyone over 65 years old would receive thirty dollars a month. In response to how he planned to pay for this (which would cost $100 million a year or four times the state's budget) O'Daniel proclaimed that it would not be from new taxes.

Since he had no platform, political opponents insisted he had no reason to run for Governor but O'Daniel countered that the reason he was running was to throw the professional politicians out of Austin. He told his audiences that he was not a politician, just a common citizen, and that "his victory would be the victory of common citizens over professional politicians." (Caro: Path 701) During his campaign, O'Daniel pled for a return to the old-fashioned virtues of home, mother, and God and quoted a lot of Scripture.

The politicians and the press believed that, after the novelty of O'Daniel's campaign had worn off, the crowds would shrink; instead, they increased upwards to 40,000 and crowds followed him from campaign stop to campaign stop. At the end of each of his rallies, O'Daniel asked the audience to finance his campaign and they did so with dimes and quarters dropped into little flour kegs with "Flour; not pork" printed on them.

There were 14 candidates running for Governor of Texas in 1938, including two of the state's best known politicians, State Attorney General William McCraw and Colonel Ernest O.

Thompson, chairman of the Railroad Commission. Thompson received 231,000 votes and McCraw got 152,000; O'Daniel received 573,000. There was no need for a run-off. (Caro: Path 702)

After promising during his campaign to fight any legislation enacting a sales tax, he attempted—unsuccessfully—to pass a sales tax proposal that was drafted by his allies in the oil business. Included in that proposed legislation was an amendment that would permanently freeze "at ridiculously low levels—taxes on oil, natural gas and sulphur." Since he refused to fight for raising taxes because there might be taxes on oil, his pension plan was dead. (Caro: Path 702).

As Governor, O'Daniel was "almost totally ignorant of the mechanics of government" and "proved unwilling to make even a pretense of learning, passing off the most serious problems with a quip." (Caro: Path 702)

During his term as Governor, O'Daniel ignored the political machinery and "tried to appoint to key government posts either men with absolutely no experience in the areas over which they were to be given authority or reactionaries, including members of the Jeffersonian Democrats, an extremist group that had bitterly opposed Roosevelt's re-election in 1936." (Caro: Path 702)

"He offered few significant programs in any area," stated Robert Caro, "preferring to submit legislation that he knew could not possibly pass, and then blame the Legislature for not passing it," "He vetoed most significant programs passed by the Legislature. The Legislature in return rejected many of his nominees. His problems were exacerbated by his personality; that of a loner." (Caro: Path 702-703)

Although the political establishment disliked O'Daniel, the voters loved him and O'Daniel knew he could connect with them

through radio so every Sunday morning he continued to broadcast his radio show from the Governor's **mansion** in Austin.

In 1940, W. Lee O'Daniel ran for reelection because "he didn't want his pension plan to fall into the hands of demagogues." During the campaign, while his opponents debated state finances, O'Daniel "talked about Communists and Nazi-fifth-columnists—who he said had infiltrated industrial plants in Texas." He claimed to have lists of their names but would not disclose them. O'Daniel also insisted that "Communists and racketeers had also infiltrated the state's labor unions" and continually used the phrase, "Labor union leader racketeers." (Caro: Path 703)

"He'd just drum, drum, drum with his little catch phrases: 'professional politicians,' 'pussy-footing politicians,' 'labor leader racketeers,' 'Communist labor leader racketeers'" stated Robert Caro. "He just got up at his rallies, and said in effect, 'I'm going to protect you from everything.' And the people believed he would." (Caro: Path 703)

On election day he received 51 percent of the vote, down from 53 percent in 1938, but still the "greatest vote getter in Texas history." (Caro: Path 703)

W.Lee O'Daniel in the Senate

In April, 1941, Senator Morris Sheppard died; in May, "Pappy" O'Daniel announced he would run for the vacant seat. One of his opponents was Lyndon Johnson. O'Daniel was a staunch Prohibitionist and this caused alarm with the liquor lobbyists in Texas, who were afraid that O'Daniel would make good on his promise to rid Texas of liquor. The liquor lobby as well as the politicians knew he was unpredictable and that they could not control him; they were scared of him so they decided to pull together to put O'Daniel into the Senate and out of the Governor's office. On election night, Lyndon Johnson was the

winner by 5,000 votes and announced he had won but during the next several days the liquor lobbyists found enough ballot boxes to stuff to declare O'Daniel the winner. During that election, Lyndon Johnson made a critical error: he announced that he had won by 5,000 votes, giving the opposition a target to overcome. They did. Lyndon Johnson never made that mistake again. (Caro: Path 734)

"Pappy" O'Daniel's term in the Senate was not successful. By 1947, his popularity "had been rapidly eroding because of his buffoonery on the Senate floor," wrote Caro. There were also reports of O'Daniel profiting in Washington real estate so he did not run for re-election in 1948. Instead, Lyndon Johnson won that election after holding his vote totals until his opponents had announced their's and then presenting enough ballots to be the winner. (Caro: Means 141)

It is not difficult to compare Donald Trump's campaign with W. Lee O'Daniel's; both used their celebrity to gain an audience and promote a populist agenda and both were elected to a high office without any previous experience in government.

Governor Jimmie Davis

In Louisiana, there was another candidate for Governor who was popular because of country music.

Jimmie Davis was born in northern Louisiana and received a bachelor's in history from Louisiana College. In 1927 he earned a master's degree from Louisiana State University and then taught for a year at Dodd College for Girls in Shreveport. In 1938 Davis began working as a clerk for the Shreveport Criminal Court and then was elected public service commissioner of Shreveport. In 1942 Davis was elected to the Louisiana Public Service Commission.

From 1929 until 1933 Davis recorded for RCA Victor; he was a Jimmie Rodgers imitator and also recorded a number of risqué songs like "Tomcat and Pussy Blues" and "Organ Grinder's Blues."

In 1934 he began recording for Decca Records and had several national hits, "Nobody's Darling But Mine" (1937), "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland" (1938), and "Gold Mine in the Sky" (1938). In 1940 he released "You Are My Sunshine," which he claimed to have written but was probably written by Paul Rice of the Rice Brothers and originally recorded by them. That song was a national hit for Davis and was covered by Bing Crosby and Gene Autry.

Davis campaigned with a band that included pianist Moon Mullican, mandolinist Joe Shelton and steel guitarist Charles Mitchell. He sang "You Are My Sunshine" during his campaign stops, a campaign that was influenced by the success of Pappy O'Daniel. While the other candidates gave political speeches, Davis told the crowd that, instead of a speech, he'd sing them a song and he always sang "You Are My Sunshine."

Jimmie Davis was elected and in 1944 he was sworn in as Governor of Louisiana. During his time as Governor, Davis had hits with "Is It Too Late Now," "There's a Chill on the Hill Tonight," "There's a New Moon Over My Shoulder," "Grievin' My Heart Out for You" and "Bang Bang."

Before he was elected Governor, Davis had gone to Hollywood and appeared in singing cowboy westerns *Strictly in the Groove*, *Riding Through Nevada* and *Frontier Fury*. During his time as Governor, he left the state for long stretches of time to go to Hollywood and appear in two films, *Cyclone Prairie Rangers* and a story about his life, *Louisiana*. After his term as governor, he appeared in two more films, *Mississippi Rhythm* and *Square Dance Katy*.

Davis continued to record after he left office and in 1959 launched another campaign for governor. Campaigning on a pledge to fight segregation in schools with the theme "He's one of us," Davis was elected and served 1960-1964.

George Wallace

The first presidential campaigns that made extensive use of country music was George Wallace's in 1964 and 1968.

George Wallace was born in southeastern Alabama and graduated from the University of Alabama School of Law. During World War II he served in the Army Air Force and flew combat missions. He was fascinated with politics from an early age and worked in his grandfather's campaign for probate judge in 1938. He won election to the Alabama House of Representatives in 1946 and was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1948. He became Circuit Judge of the Third Judicial Circuit in Alabama in 1952 and made his first campaign for governor in 1958.

Wallace was reluctant to use country music singers when he first ran for Governor of Alabama but was persuaded to invite Minnie Pearl to perform at his first rally. Minnie Pearl's appearance resulted in large crowds so the next week he invited her back and she came. At that point, Wallace's campaign staff realized that he had made no arrangements to pay her $3,000 plus expenses for each appearance, which was her usual fee. Somehow, the campaign found the money to pay her. (Carter 90)

Despite the popularity of Minnie Pearl with Alabama voters, Wallace lost his bid to become governor in 1958. However, from that point forward he began to use regulars from the Grand Ole Opry and gospel singers on his campaigns. (Malone 238)

During his 1962 campaign, which began in March, Minnie Pearl was invited back to campaign for Wallace. She and a number of other country singers sang to a crowd at Montgomery's civic auditorium. (Carter 105)

In his book, *The Nashville Sound*, published in 1970, author Paul Hemphill noted that "During the 1968 Presidential campaign, Music Row was practically a battlefield command

post for George Wallace, who drew supporters while he ran." Hemphill named Hank Snow and Doyle Wilburn of the Wilburn Brothers who "stood up for George on a paid national telecast." (Hemphill 162) Hemphill noted that within the country music community during the 1968 campaign, Roy Acuff and Tex Ritter stood for Nixon, "dozens for Wallace [but] not a soul for Humphrey." (Hemphill 90)

Hemphill described the country music audience he witnessed during the late 1960s while doing research on his book. He stated that those who attended country music shows were "white lower-middle-class people who drive trucks and keep house and work in factories, and most of them are somewhere between thirty and forty-five years old. Their politics is simple and conservative, and in '68 they were voting Wallace." (Hemphill 153).

Hemphill also noted that he saw Wallace stickers on a number of cars driving on lower Broadway in Nashville, where the Grand Ole Opry was held at the Ryman Auditorium.

During Wallace's campaign in California, events featured country music by the Sunshine Sisters and the Oak Ridge Boys to warm up the crowds, then Wally Fowler "would lead a rousing rendition of the Wallace campaign's version of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" ('He stands up for God and country, against all our satanic foes')." The campaign theme song, "Stand Up for America," included lyrics stating there was "rioting and looting and the cities are being burned" and even though the Constitution gave the states the "sovereign right to choose," the "sovereign state with rights" was about to be destroyed "by the Great Society." (Carter 314)

In his book, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of the New Conservatism and the Transformation of American Politics*, author Dan Carter states that in country music "The lyrics, derided by sophisticates for their sentimentality,

captured the intensely personal preoccupations of a traditional culture: love unfulfilled or gone wrong, faithless women, bad whiskey, and the ultimate triumph of traditional morality. To the extent that there were politics in country music, they were usually the fatalistic politics of individuals conditioned to see failure and success, sinfulness and virtue as ordained by God" and noted that in Merle Haggard's songs "his heroes were inevitably men who drank hard, worked harder, loved their country, and had little use for welfare cheats or unpatriotic hippies. More and more, country music was becoming the conservative voice of young white working-class Americans across America." (Carter 315-316)

"A country music performer's success rested upon a direct and intimate relationship with the audience," wrote Carter. "A performer who 'got a big head' or tried to 'high-hat' fans was soon finished. George Wallace understood this." (Carter 316)

Bill Malone in his book, *Don't Get Above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class*, stated that "The ideology of the Wallace movement, with its populist-tinged contempt for intellectuals and social planners and its resolve to preserve the older racial hierarchies, undoubtedly attracted many of the performers who shared its fears and presumptions. But Wallace's appeal among country musicians also came from the fact that he actively courted their support as no other candidate had done. This was important for a musical form that was self-conscious about its alleged inferiority and anxious for acceptance. Wallace and the country musicians shared a common ground, apart from ideology, in their origins in the southern working class with their common accents, religion, food tastes, and social memories. Although he played the role to the hilt, Wallace's cultivation of the Good Ole Boy image rested on legitimate working-class foundations, and he communed easily with men and women in

the workplace and with country entertainers who shared both his background and his aspirations." (Malone 238)

Patriotic Songs

Americans grow up hearing the phrase "We live in the greatest country on earth." We say it and we believe it but it holds different meanings for conservatives and liberals. For conservatives it means case closed, door shut, there might have been mistakes made in the past but they're irrelevant. What matters is that we are now the greatest country on earth. Done!

For liberals, it means that we are "the greatest country on earth" because that is our aspiration, a goal we are striving towards. We must try to amend for mistakes in the past and protest what is viewed as mistakes in the present. We must strive towards human rights, equality and an ideal of what America should be. For liberals, it is a journey towards a destination; for conservatives we've already arrived.

This is expressed in the patriotic songs in country music. The young audience in pop and rock carries the idealism of youth, rap and hip hop carry the frustrations, anger and hope of blacks in America. For the white working class fan of country music, there is a source of pride and honor in what we are today.

There have been patriotic songs as long as there has been country music. The best example today is "God Bless the U.S.A.," written and performed by Lee Greenwood. The song begins by stating that if he'd lost everything, there was still hope because he lived in America. The chorus states "I'm proud to be an American" and that I'll "defend her still today" because "I love this land—God Bless the U.S.A."

During World War II one of the most popular songs was "There's a Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere" and during the 1960s, when country music was a counter to the counterculture,

there was "It's for God, and Country, and You Mom (That's Why I'm Fighting in Viet Nam)," by Ernest Tubb, "Soldier's Prayer in Viet Nam" by Benny Martin with Don Reno, "Dear Uncle Sam" by Loretta Lynn, "The Ballad of the Green Berets" by S. Sgt Barry Sadler, "Private Wilson White" by Marty Robbins, "The Minute Men (Are Turning in Their Graves)," by Stonewall Jackson, "My Son" by Jan Howard, "God Bless America Again" by Bobby Bare, "Ragged Old Flag" by Johnny Cash and "Fightin' Side of Me" by Merle Haggard; they were all chart records.

More recently there was "Have You Forgotten" by Darryl Worley, "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)" and "American Soldier" by Toby Keith, "Letters From Home" by John Michael Montgomery, "Arlington" by Trace Adkins, "Some Gave All" by Billy Ray Cyrus, "It's America" by Rodney Atkins, "If You're Reading This" by Tim McGraw," "Only In America" by Brooks and Dunn and "I Drive Your Truck" by Lee Brice, to name a few that were chart records.

There's also "You've Got to Stand for Something (Or You'll Fall for Anything)" which is not a patriotic song per se but captures the American "spirit."

Suffice it to say that there are a large number of patriotic songs in country music and the white working class embraces those songs and that patriotism.

Andrew Jackson

It seems appropriate that Nashville is the home of Andrew Jackson as well as country music and that connection was spotlighted when Donald Trump received major press coverage when he hung a portrait of Jackson in the Oval Office and visited Jackson's home and grave in Nashville on Jackson's birthday shortly after he took office. Jackson was a Trump-like figure who suffered ridicule and was disparaged because he was not part of

the Washington elite. Andrew Jackson represented the wisdom of the common man and the elites could never accept that.

However, there are those who insist that Donald Trump is no Andrew Jackson because Jackson was a military hero and had political experience before he was elected President. There is no doubt that comparisons between Jackson and Trump *will* continue and they will be controversial.

The White Working Class and the Rich

The issue of inequality confronts America but country fans—and the working class-do not dislike the rich, according to surveys. It may be because they don't know any of the really rich—there is virtually no contact—or that the working class believes the rich have earned what they have. However, there is a "suspicion" about the rich, as J.D. Vance noted in his book, *Hillbilly Elegy*, when he stated his mother held the firm view that "not all rich people were bad, but all bad people were rich." (Vance 35)

The rich lifestyle of Donald Trump has not alienated the core voters who voted for him; surveys show that only two percent regret their vote for Trump and, if they had to do it again, would vote for Trump.

Loyalty

Loyalty is a two-edged sword. On one hand, it is a shining virtue, a willingness to stick with someone even when they have fallen on hard times. It means someone has got your back—or you have someone else's back. Loyalty is something—and someone—you can count on no matter what.

On the other hand, loyalty can mean putting up with things that you should not put up with, tolerating behavior that is destructive and sticking with something or someone when it is not in your best interest—or even theirs to do so.

In his memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*, author J.D. Vance states that the white working class has "an intense sense of loyalty, a fierce dedication to family and country." On the other hand, "we do not like outsiders or people who are different from us, whether the difference lies in how they look, how they act, or, most important, how they talk." (Vance 3)

Vance states that "working—class whites are the most pessimistic group in America. More pessimistic than Latino immigrants, many of whom suffer unthinkable poverty. More pessimistic than black Americans, whose material prospects continue to lag behind those of whites." (Vance 4) There are "too many young men immune to hard work. Good jobs impossible to fill for any length of time… a feeling that you have little control over your life and a willingness to blame everyone but yourself." (Vance 7) Vance sums this attitude up as "everything in the world [is] a problem except me." (Vance 20)

"Many folks talk about working more than they actually work," states Vance (Vance 57) and there is "a strict line between work acceptable for men and work acceptable for women…a massive ignorance about how to achieve white-collar work (Vance 58)

This group is "deeply religious but without any attachment to a real church community," states Vance. (Vance 93) Although Southerners and Midwesterners claim to attend church often, in reality they hardly attend at all, even though they claim their Christian faith as a bedrock in their lives.

There is a suspicion that if you did a survey of Southerners who claimed they attended church and measured that against the number of seats in churches you'd find that there wouldn't be enough seats to accommodate all those who say they attended. It is rare for a church-any church—to be packed full on a Sunday morning.

A One Party South

The South has been a one party region for years; most southern states are deep red. Before Ronald Reagan, that party was the Democratic party, primarily because Abraham Lincoln was a Republican who freed the slaves and Reconstruction came under Republican presidents. During Franklin Roosevelt's terms, there were essentially two Democratic parties—one in the North and one in the South. There was a term used in the South, "a yellow dog Democrat," which meant that if the Democratic party ran a yellow dog, they'd vote for it.

Southerners disliked Harry Truman, who was a Democrat, and many voted for Eisenhower and Nixon when they ran for President, but in local and Congressional elections, the South voted the Democratic ticket. That changed during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations as many voted Republican at the top of the ticket—or for an independent like George Wallace (who was a Democrat in Alabama elections) but it was not until Ronald Reagan came along that it was acceptable for a Southerner or part of the white working class to be a Republican. Now, there are "yellow dog Republicans" populating the South.

Donald Trump benefitted from this loyalty to the Republican party. During the 2016 election, southerners in the white working class voted for Trump, even if he wasn't their first choice when the campaign began; they did it because he was a Republican.

Conclusion

If anyone believes that the white working class will someday wake up and see that they've been taken in by Donald Trump, that they will view him as doing things against their welfare, they don't understand the underlying value of loyalty within the white working class. Trump would have to do something much worse than institute policies against their best interests for them to

abandon him. Trump even made a statement during his campaign that he could shoot someone dead in the street and his followers would remain with them.

Donald Trump isn't just a politician for the working class; he is a hero. Part of that hero worship comes from him being a television celebrity. Being on television regularly is considered an achievement of success—although that doesn't necessarily apply to newscasters. He is a hero because he is their voice to an America they feel has left them behind.

Donald Trump spoke the language of the white working class during his campaign. He gave direct answers to questions in simple, one and two syllable words. The working class, would not say "improvised," they'd say "made up," they wouldn't say "substantive," they'd say "real," they wouldn't say "alternative" they'd say "other," they wouldn't say "comprehend" they'd say "figured out" or "understood," they wouldn't say "psychotic" they'd say "crazy" and they wouldn't say "rhetoric" they'd say "talk." Trump's words were not the words that other politicians—or the elite—used, his phrases were not their phrases but they were the words and phrases that the average ordinary American used and they didn't have to look them up in a dictionary after Trump used them.

In the Merle Haggard song, "Rainbow Stew," the singer sang that "when the President goes through the White House door and does what he says he'll do," then we'll all be "eating that Rainbow Stew." Many in the white working class believe Haggard's lyrics apply to Donald Trump. In the song, "Down Home," Alabama sang of a place "where a man's good word and a hand shake is all you need." The fans of Donald Trump heard in those songs a promise and a hope that, unlike other politicians, Trump said what he meant and meant what he said. His speeches conjured up visions of Andy Griffith's Mayberry.

Many songs in country music express a longing. It may be a longing for a lost love or better days in the past but it is a longing that captures the hearts of many country fans who wish country music sounded more "country" and America was a lot more "American." What Trump says and the way he says it gives him a connection to the white working class. There is a disconnect between the life Donald Trump leads and the lives of ordinary Americans but the white working class has overlooked this. Instead, they find an emotional connection with an outsider whose views and language are echoed in country songs.

Sources

Caro, Robert. The Path to Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson Volume I. New York: Vintage Books, 1981.

Caro, Robert. The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

Carter, Dan T. The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Hemphill, Paul. The Nashville Sound: Bright Lights and Country Music. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.

Huntington, Samuel P. "Dead Souls: The Denationalization of the American Elite."

Isenberg, Nancy. White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America. New York: Viking, 2016.

Krugman, Paul. "Why Don't All Jobs Matter?" New York Times, April 17, 2017

Malone, Bill C. Don't Get Above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Research by the Country Music Association, released in January, 2017.

Townsend, Charles R. San Antonio Rose; The Life and Music of Bob Wills. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976.

Vance, J.D. Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis. New York: Harper, 2016.