



DISCLAIMER

by ROBERT K. OERMANN

ALL RIGHT, JEFF WHITE!

Considering how disgusted I have been with the degradation of country radio and how bored I have been with mainstream Nashville music lately, this was a surprisingly good listening session.

Two good omens were the quality products from the jazz and bluegrass communities. In the former, I heartily recommend an ear-cleansing experience from Tachoir and/or Bela Fleck & The Flecktones. Both have outstanding new albums. The bluegrass world issued product in abundance—Larry Sparks, The Reno Brothers, Del McCoury, Jeff White and IIIrd Tyme Out all issued new discs for this evening's edification.

One of them, **Jeff White**, is such a superb artist that he won the **DISCOVERY AWARD** for this issue. As I write, we are burying Bill Monroe in Nashville. It makes me feel good inside to know that there's such a fine young talent as Jeff out there to "carry the torch."

Before I move along to the other award categories, let me point out that there are other newcomers who are worth your attention. Jeff's competition included Gary Vincent & The Swamp Honkys, Burnin' Daylight, Sam Brooker and Parlor James. Seek 'em out. They'll all brighten your day.

I am told that **Burnin' Daylight**, by the way, refers to a line from a John Wayne movie. Ask the band about it when you talk to 'em. And I have a feeling we'll *all* be talking to this act once people hear "Love Worth Fighting For." The newcomers' single wins **Disc of the Day** against such powerhouse competition as the newbies by Brooks & Dunn, John Michael Montgomery, Tim McGraw and Tracy Byrd. And that's no mean feat. Listen and believe.

Susan Ashton paced the gospel field. And how. The CCM diva has issued two singles simultaneously. I guess that's because this tiny genre has so many different radio formats. Personally, I think she's better at the softer stuff, like "Body and Soul" than she is with edgier rock material. But whatever.....

The good folks at **Arista Records** bring you Lee Roy Parnell, BR5-49 and Brooks & Dunn this week. Thus, they earn our **Label of the Day** honor.

Welcome to Country Music Week, the Grand Ole Opry Birthday Celebration, the SRO Convention and everything else that makes October such a merry month in these parts. Welcome to our music and to our hospitality. We're glad you're here. Now hear.

JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY "Ain't Got Nothin' On Us"

Writers: Wendell Mobley/Jim Robinson; Producer: Csaba Petocz; Publisher: Warner-Tamerlane/New Works/WB Music/J.E. Robinsongs, BMI/ASCAP; Atlantic CDX.

As relaxing as a swing on a back-porch hammock. Swing fiddle, bluesy Dobro, lazy roadhouse piano and a tempo so loose-limbed it'll make you shake your shoulders. Roll me easy, John Michael.

TRACY BYRD "Big Love"

Writers: Michael Clark/Jeff Stevens; Producer: Tony Brown; Publisher: Warner-Tamerlane/Flying Dutchman/Jeff Stevens, BMI; MCA CDX.

A nice, fat, meaty sound with plenty of bass and stomp. This is gonna play on the dance

floors, for sure. Get on board when this train leaves the station.

GEORGE STRAIT "I Can Still Make Cheyenne"

Writers: Aaron Barker/Erv Woolsey; Producer: Tony Brown/George Strait; Publisher: O'Tex/Hit Street, BMI; MCA CDX.

Aren't we tired yet of rodeo cowboys and their occupational and relationship problems? Isn't there anybody left in country music interested in truckers, miners, factory workers, secretaries, waitresses and everybody else who makes up the audience?

BROOKS & DUNN "Mama Don't Get Dressed Up for Nothing"

Writers: Kix Brooks/Ronnie Dunn/Don Cook; Producer: Don Cook/Kix Brooks/Ronnie Dunn; Sony-ATV/Buffalo Prairie/Showbilly/Don Cook, BMI; Arista CDX.

We all agree that Ronnie is one of the greatest country singers who's breathing today. But I submit that Kix's drawling, lackadaisical, conversational phrasing is, in its own way, just about as delightful. He gives this tale of a domestic weekend frolic marvelous wit and wink. Full of character and charm, with a killer guitar hook to boot.

TIM MCGRAW "Maybe We Should Just Sleep On It Tonight"

Writers: Jerry Laseter/Kerry Kurt Phillips; Producer: James Stroud/Byron Gallimore; Publisher: Noosa Heads/Emdar/Texas Wedge, BMI/ASCAP; Curb CDX.

I can't figure out which I like better, his wonderful country-boy vocal or the sparkling, stars-on-the-water production. Whichever it is, this is one helluva single. Rockin' and hurtin' in all the right places.

LONESTAR "When Cowboys Didn't Dance"

Writers: Richie McDonald/T. Kyle Green; Producer: Don Cook/Wally Wilson; Publisher: Music Genesis/Pepe Marchips, ASCAP/BMI; BNA CDX.

Ridiculously overblown and self-important.

WADE HAYES "Where Do I Go To Start All Over"

Writers: Skip Ewing/Chick Rains; Producer: Don Cook; Publisher: Sony-ATV, BMI; Columbia CDX.

We're so used to his lower register that it's a little startling to hear Wade trembling with emotion up in his tenor range. A very effective change-of-pace ballad.

LEON ROBERTS JR. "Louisiana Boy"

Writer: Leon Roberts Jr.; Producer: Larry Roger; Publisher: Lichelle/Paducab, no performance rights listed; Mr. Twister 10001 (track) (615-327-4927).

Snappy rhythm, nice production and backwoods vocal. This boy's as good as any of the major leaguers out there. Bring him up to the plate again.

BELA FLECK & THE FLECKTONES "Oh Darling"

Writers: Lennon/McCartney; Producer: Bela Fleck; Publisher: EMI-Blackwood, no performance rights listed; Warner Bros. 46247 (track).

Taken from the new double live album by Nashville's brilliantly imaginative jazz combo, this six-minute workout on The Beatles' goldie features some wonderfully dense banjo/piano interplay, plus a hair-raising guest vocal by Bela's former New Grass Revival partner John Cowan. Top, top drawer.

SAM BROOKER "Popcorn Box"

Writers: E. Hamilton/J. Armstrong; Producers: Mark Montgomery/Cbris Milfred; Publisher: CurbSongs, no performance rights listed; Chelsea 806961 (track) (615-371-5119).

It's got that '70s troubadour/singer-songwriter pop vibe—hints of Paul Simon, Randy Newman and Marc Cohn, with a soul-sister chorus and some horns tossed in for spice. Label and producers sound like they're in the front ranks of non-country Nashville. Live long and prosper.

CALVIN WIGGETT "I Know What It's Not"

Writers: T. Bruce/J. Jarrard; Producer: R. Harlan Smith/Ron Gelman/Jamie Oldaker; Publisher: none listed, no performance rights listed; Royalty 9653 (403-461-7788).

He's singing well. But the song is routine and the band is completely on automatic pilot.

DEL MCCOURY BAND "Love Is a Long Road"

Writers: Tom Petty/Mike Campbell; Producer: Jerry Douglas/Ronnie McCoury; Publisher: Gone Gator/Wild Gator, ASCAP; Rounder 0363 (track).

Blindingly fast picking and highest of high-lonesome vocals. The song might come from Tom Petty, but Daddy Bluegrass would have been mighty, mighty proud.

JEFF WHITE "I Never Know"

Writers: Jeff White/Billy Thomas; Producer: Jeff White; Publisher: Shiroisan/High Seas, BMI; Rounder 0385 (track).

If there's one drop of Appalachian soul in your blood, you're going to fall head over heels in love with this minor-key, bluegrass waltz. I think that's Vince Gill on high harmony. But whoever it is, I dug this in every cell of my brain.

BURNIN' DAYLIGHT "Love Worth Fighting For"

Writers: Marc Beeson/Sonny LeMaire/Kurt Howell; Producer: none listed; Publisher: EMI-April/K-Town/EMI-Blackwood/Ticket to Ride/Warner Tamerlane/Mac Truk, ASCAP/BMI; Curb 1296.

Immensely stirring. He holds back on the verses, then opens his heart wide open on the chorus. Big, layered production, soul-deep sonic power. A monster harmony act.

MARTY BROWN "Too Lonely Too Long"

Writers: Marty Brown/Don London; Producer: Marty Brown/Bruce Bromberg; Publisher: Bug/High & Dry/Track of Don, BMI; Hightone 8075 (track).

A tired old song idea, delivered unimaginatively. What happened to his sharp hillbilly edge?

ROCKY BURNETTE "Tear It Up"

Writers: Johnny Burnette/Dorsey Burnette/Paul Burlison; Producer: Zeke Zirnigebel/Rocky Burnette; Publisher: Johnny Burnette/Chrysalis/20th Century Fox, no performance rights listed; Core 488779465-2 (track).

State-of-the-art rockabilly from 1980's "Tired of Toein' the Line" popster. The song, by the way, was originated by his father and uncle, Memphis's legendary Burnette brothers.