

Viewers will be seeing quite a bit of MCA's **Mel Tillis** on television in the near future. He has recently taped guest appearances on "Dinah" for CBS and "Hollywood Squares" at NBC. This month Tillis will tape "Laugh-In" and a new comedy show, "Just For Laughs." This will mark the first television appearance for Tillis on an all-comedy show. And early in January he will act as a celebrity "gonger" on "The Gong Show." Taken from his latest album, "Love's Troubled Waters," Tillis' new single, "What Did I Promise Her Last Night," will be released this month.

Elektra artist **Eddie Rabbitt** has been touring out west the last few weeks. He has appeared in Arizona, and up and down the California coast. Rabbitt played Hollywood's Palomino Club two nights, and he also taped Harry Newman's Armed Forces Radio Show which is heard by over 500 million people worldwide.

In addition to working on a new album here last week and a renewed concert schedule including numerous upcoming television appearances, Phonogram/Mercury's **Jerry Lee Lewis** will play a role in a new movie, "American Hot Wax." Also, Billy Carter has put out the word that he has always wanted to see Jerry Lee perform. And it seems that promoters are trying to get the President's brother to one of Lewis' shows.

**Kitty Wells**, who is honored as a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, recently celebrated her 40th wedding anniversary with Johnny Wright.

Texas songwriter **Townes Van Zandt**, whose melodic songs of simple beauty have inspired and influenced such writers as **Mickey Newbury**, **Guy Clark** and **Jerry Jeff Walker**, will soon release an unusual songbook of his own compositions. Published by Wings Press of Houston, Tex., "For The Sake Of The Song" will feature 14 of Van Zandt's songs with remarks by Townes concerning the origin of each song. A biography and original color photographs will also be included in the book which will be sold through record and book stores. John Lomax, manager for Van Zandt, said, "We will present Townes' lyrics as poetry. I think his lyrics are strong enough to stand alone." Van Zandt is working on a new album at American Studios here with Chips Moman doing the production work. **Emmylou Harris**, **Hoyt Axton**, **Marcia Routh** and **Steve Young** have all recorded Van Zandt songs.

ABC/Dot's **Roy Clark** will appear as a special guest on the "Kraft 75th Anniversary Special," a 90-minute CBS show which taped recently in Los Angeles.

**Vern Gosdin** appeared recently on the Opry North Radio Show in Toronto, Canada. The show is syndicated across Canada and overseas via Canadian Armed Forces Radio. The Elektra artist is working on a new album with producer Gary Paxton.

MCA comedian **Jerry Clower** recently raised around \$20,000 at a benefit performance in Morgan City, La. for the East St. Mary Chapter of Ducks Unlimited.

**Glen Campbell** will host the 5th annual "American Music Awards" Show, airing live January 16 on ABC-TV. Campbell has hosted the show twice. He has been nominated for an American Music Award three times and has won all three times. Natalie Cole and David Soul will join Campbell on the show, which is produced under the direction of Dick Clark.

United Artist's **Crystal Gayle** got a first-hand look at the violence in Ireland recently. She flew to Belfast for a concert and discovered the hotel in which she had planned to stay had been destroyed by a bomb. The RIAA has certified as gold her "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" and her album "We Must Believe In Magic." Gayle and UA's **Kenny Rogers** will present awards on the Dick Clark "American Music Awards Show" airing in January.

MCA's **Merle Haggard** has been relaxing lately on a houseboat he purchased. He is redecorating the boat and plans to head out to sea when he needs to escape the grind of touring and recording.

**Hank Williams, Jr.** kicked off a tour with RCA's **Waylon Jennings** Nov. 25 in Indianapolis, Ind. Williams, Waylon and Waylon's wife **Jesse** will play some college dates, including Notre Dame. The tour will end Dec. 10 in Stillwater, Okla. Williams, Jr. will have a new single, "Feeling Better," released soon on Warner Bros. His new album, "The New South," was produced by Waylon and Richie Albright.

Phonogram/Mercury's **The Statler Brothers** will tape NBC's "History of Country Music" special here Jan. 10 and 11.

MCA's **Loretta Lynn** will begin a two-week run at the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas, Nev. beginning Dec. 27. In addition to her regular band, Loretta will work with a section of 17 strings and four background vocalists.

**Margo Smith** recently checked out of the hospital where she underwent surgery. The Warner Bros. artist will begin a two-month tour with MCA's **Conway Twitty** and CBS's **Sonny James** in January. Ms. Smith's "Take My Breath Away" and "Love's Explosion" were top-10 hits for her, and a new single, "Don't Break The Heart That Loves You," will be released soon.

bob campbell

## Mowrey Wins 1977 ASCAP Competition

NASHVILLE — Robert T. Mowrey has won the \$250 first prize in ASCAP's 1977 Nathan Burkan competition for his paper on "The Rise and Fall of Record Piracy," written during his final year at Southern Methodist University School of Law.

"The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers sponsors the competition nationally for law students who are interested in the field of copyright law," said Ed Shea, southern regional director, "and we are proud that the best entry this year came from a native of our area."

Mowrey is currently serving in Nashville as clerk for Chief Justice Harry Phillips of the United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. He was graduated from Princeton in 1974 before attending law school at SMU.



**GOSDIN SIGNS** — Elektra/Asylum recording artist Vern Gosdin recently signed a contract with Universal Management, which will handle all of his personal appearance bookings. Pictured above at the signing are (l-r): Ron Blackwood of Universal Management and Gosdin.



**COUNTRY EXCHANGE** — A quartet of RCA Records artists recently appeared on the "Morning Exchange" television show, which originates in Cleveland, Ohio. Pictured during the show are (l-r): Dave Roland, Vicki Baker and Sue Powell of Dave & Sugar; Charley Pride; and the host of the WEWS-TV show, Fred Griffith.

## Don Williams Examines The Essence Of Country Music

(continued from page 39)

appeared in concert with such artists as Jerry Jeff Walker and Waylon Jennings over the last few months.

Williams is not against expanding his audience. But his main concern is a fear of alienating his current fans.

"The only thing I would say is that there have been a lot of people in this country who have been very good to me — I'm talking about fans," Williams explained. "I would not want to work with anybody that had the type of show that my fans who come to see me would feel any embarrassment or discomfort at seeing. I don't care if I am working to audiences of young people or not. I am going to do the same kind of show as I would for a family because that is the way I feel about my music."

Williams is also adamant that the possibility of crossover records will not affect his product. Again a great deal of his apprehension concerns his fans.

### Concern For Fans

"If I change, I will find myself in a compromising position that I wouldn't feel honest about," he said. "I would feel like I had left the people who have been loyal to me. Another thing is that new fans would keep thinking — 'what will he do next' — and then I would be caught right in the middle of this whole confusing thing. I just can't do that. I have figured out that if I have anything to say, it is my job to say it in the best and most honest way I know how and let the rest take care of itself. Anything else is playing some kind of game. When I finish a record and let the record company have it. I don't worry about it. I have no control over it any more."

Williams has loved country music ever since he was a small boy growing up in Texas. Major changes are affecting the country music industry now and he expressed some definite views on the direction of country music.

"I am very concerned about a lot of things in country music now," Williams said. "One of the things is radio. It concerns me that country radio is taking on pretty much the same format as rock. They are making small playlists, not playing albums and are not paying attention to their own market. It's unfortunate that when a person, say a Hank Snow fan, calls in and wants to hear such and such record, somebody says, 'Well, I'm sorry we don't play those album cuts any more.' I think the dangers in this have been discussed by a lot of people."

"As far as the direction country music is taking, I think it will go from one extreme to another, and then settle down," he added. "The only thing I am really saying is that I hope when we come back and settle down, it will be a good, comfortable place for people who have loved country music all these years."

### Sophistication

Another strong bone of contention with Williams is the attitude by some people in country music that the medium needs added sophistication in order to compete in today's market.

"I don't appreciate a CMA show where it has got to be a Vegas-type show, and we have to show the world that country music has to be high class and sophisticated because, in my opinion, it is already high class."

"In the kind of songs I write and have recorded," he explained. "I really have done everything with the attitude that country loving people are really far more intelligent than a lot of people have believed them to be for a long time. Country people like something said in a direct, uncomplicated way, and a lot of people confuse ignorance with simplicity. It really does concern me that some of country music — the acceptance of it or the big shows — have to be so influenced by the pop charts. I think this is wrong."



**LES DONATES AXE** — Famed guitarist Les Paul recently donated his historic solid-body guitar, which he calls "the log," to the Country Music Hall of Fame, where it will be displayed in an exhibit showcasing the evolution of the current Gibson Les Paul guitar. Pictured above are (l-r): Roy Horton, member of the board of trustees of the Country Music Foundation; Diana Johnson, director of the Country Music Hall of Fame; Paul; Margy Landgraaf of Gibson in Nashville; and Bill Ivey, executive director of the Country Music Foundation.