

Yee-haw! An inside look at American country music

By TROY OWENS
Guest Writer

To fully appreciate any music genre, you have to learn to deal with certain clashes of style within each stereotype. You begin to accept particularly annoying bands or singers as merely daily hazards, like zits, registration holds, skateboarders or activists. In country music, the same is true. Country music is intended solely as a complement to raising hell or drowning sorrows. Let's face it, country is not fun for dancing or air guitar. But, in the onslaught of a good cry or meaningful inebriation, country music is certainly a cozy companion.

Once again, however, the "American Music Awards" nominees do not fully reflect the better offerings of country music. Several of the better-known names are missing from the nominations (such as Conway Twitty, Don Williams, Dwight Yoakum, Dan Seals, George Jones and Willie Nelson), so claiming that these nominees are the best of country music is like saying that G105 plays the best rock 'n' roll. Nevertheless, it might be fun to sort through the confusion and pick the winners. Here goes:

Favorite Male Vocalist: This is a tough decision this year, because all of these are respectable contenders. But, George Strait doesn't write his own stuff, couldn't go beer for beer with Aunt Bea, and Strait and Randy Travis are both just too pretty for the honor. The winner, then, is Hank Williams Jr., definitely not a pretty boy, and a good bet to drink Aunt Bea under the table.

Favorite Female Vocalist: Easy win here for Reba McEntire. Two reasons: No competition, and her voice does things a whole symphony on L.S.D. could never do.

Favorite Duo or Group: (Refer to Rule #2 towards the end of this column)

Despite country music rule #2, I have to choose somebody. Alabama's out. (They're the WHAMI of country music.) The Oak Ridge Boys are out, too. (They did for country music what Sylvester Stallone did for arm wrestling in "Over the Top.") That leaves us with The Judds as champions, which brings up two important questions: First, which came first, Winona or Naomi, and second, has anyone ever been with both of them at once, and, if so, how was it? (I love your Judds, baby!)

Favorite New Artist: Definitely Patty Loveless, because she must have been in at least three good porn flicks. (She's the one with the num-chucks and the blow torch.)

Favorite Single: My pick here is Alabama's "Fallin' Again" running a close second to Randy Travis' "I told You So." The man's voice is



The Oak Ridge Boys: Sure to be beaten out by The Judds in the "Favorite Duo or Group" category.

still new, still amazing and the guy's belt buckle is just too damn big to ignore. Go get 'em Randy!

Favorite Album: This is another close one. George Strait's "If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Livin'" is his eighth and one of his strongest, but it can't compete with Randy Travis' "Always and Forever," which has been on the charts for about 47 years and is one of George Bush's kinder, gentler favorites. This album could make Ollie North break down crying and confess anything. Ricky Van Shelton's "Wild Eyed Dreams" is also a pretty good effort but I'd say Randy is in command now.

Overall, there are some relatively mediocre nominees for the awards, but I'm still troubled by some of the content and character of the modern country sound. According to David Allen Coe, certainly a clean-cut and well-groomed guy, and the perfect role model for every young man, "the perfect country and western song" should include something about "Mama - Trucks - Trains - Prison or Gettin' Drunk." I guess it's hard to find all these crucial elements in every song, so I've taken it upon myself to provide you with a few guidelines for choosing optimum country music:

Rule #1: Girl country music reeks. (Except for Patsy Cline, who's dead, and Reba McEntire, who has "the voice.")

Rule #2: Country duos or groups reek. They are generally regarded as namby pamby pseudo-country creations of the "Hee Haw" generation. (Except, of course, for the Bellamy Brothers.)

Rule #3: Ideally, good country music singers should be able to quaff down a fifth of Jim Beam and a case of Bud before and after they do anything productive in the morning. (Randy Travis and

Buck Owens are obvious exceptions, and I think Johnny Cash is on the wagon now - but that's okay because his kids were born drunk.)

Rule #4: Under no circumstances shall any country singer be labeled as "good" if he practices either of the following "Urban Cowboyesque" sins: BIG HAIR or I.B.S. (Imported Beer Sipping). No exceptions.

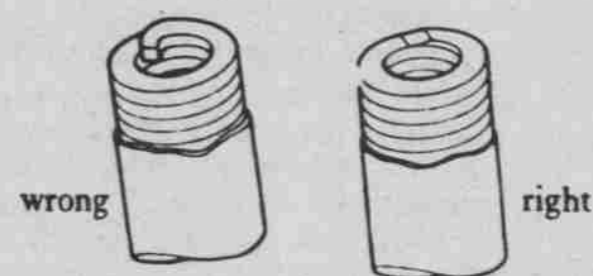
Rule #5: (somewhat optional) Good country songs are usually played repeatedly in local bars about one hour before closing time with the entire clientele acting as enthusiastic backup.

Troy Owens is a senior advertising major from Raleigh whose mother knows he doesn't really like beer and that he's never been in Bub's or Troll's past 9 p.m.

WXYC TOP 20

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|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Gipsy Kings | Gipsy Kings |
| 2. Donnor Party | Donnor Party |
| 3. The Fall | I am Kurios Orani |
| 4. Wolfgang Press | Bird Wood Cage |
| 5. Lou Reed | New York |
| 6. Syd Barrett | Opel |
| 7. Violent Femmes | 3 |
| 8. Death of Samatha | Where the Women Wear the Glory and the Men Wear the Pants |
| | Fugazi |
| 9. Fugazi | Never Mind the Sex Pistols |
| 10. Bongos Bass and Bob | Roger Manning |
| 11. Roger Manning | Dust Bowl Ballad |
| 12. Woody Guthrie | Hidden Charms |
| 13. Willie Dixon | The Eddie Chatter Box |
| 14. Camper Van Chadbourne | Double Love Trio Album |
| 15. Jonathon Segal | Storytelling |
| 16. The Reivers | End of the Day |
| 17. Bad Brains | Live |
| 18. Midge Ure | Answers to Nothing |
| 19. New Order | Technique |
| 20. Various Artists | Brazil Classics One |

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