

Certifications Abound In '90

1990 was a stellar year for country record sales, with 23 gold, six platinum, and five multiplatinum album certifications. The year also provided a number of firsts.

- Among those picking up their first certifications this year were Garth Brooks, Rodney Crowell, Vince Gill, Vern Gosdin, Highway 101, K.D. Lang, Lorrie Morgan, the Kentucky Headhunters, Alan Jackson, Kathy Mattea, and Travis Tritt. And Brooks, Morgan, the Headhunters, Jackson, and Tritt did it on their debut albums.

- Brooks's "No Fences" LP was one of this year's biggest phenomena — going gold, platinum, and multiplatinum within three months of its release.

- Jackson's gold award for "Here In The Real World" provided Arista/Nashville with its first such honor in just over a year of existence.

- Brooks, Mattea, and the Headhunters' successes provided the first awards for their respective labels in a number of years.

101's New One

- Highway 101's search for a new lead singer is over. Nikki Nelson, a 21-year-old Nevada native, will go into the studio with Curtis Stone, Cactus Moser, Jack Daniels, and producers Paul Worley and Ed Seay in January. A new single is due in March. Nelson currently works, among other places, at Randy Travis's old haunt, the Nashville Palace Restaurant.

Former 101 singer Paulette Carlson heads into the studio next

month with Jimmy Bowen at the controls.

Bits & Pieces

- Randy Travis will make his television acting debut on NBC's midseason comedy, "Down Home." In an episode titled "Strange Bedfellows," Travis plays himself as he visits Hadley Cove, TX seeking solitude while writing some new songs. NBC has not announced a premiere date for the series or set a date for the Travis episode.

- Larry Gatlin & The Gatlin Brothers will serve as Grand Marshals of the Cotton Bowl Parade, and will sing the national anthem before the bowl game. Both events will be on CBS-TV January 1.

- Condolences to Mark Chesnutt and his family on the death of his father, Bob, and to Bill Monroe and his family on the death of his daughter, Melissa Kathleen. Chesnutt, who died of a heart attack November 30 at age 56, scored a number of regional hits in Texas during the late '60s and early '70s. Monroe, who had a brief recording career on Columbia in the early '50s, died December 3 at 54 of heart and kidney ailments.

— Ken Tucker



GILL'S GOLD — Vince Gill (r) hoists his gold album for "When I Call Your Name" as MCA/Nashville President Bruce Hinton looks on.



NSAI GUITAR PULL — The Nashville Songwriters Association International recently hosted a Texas-style guitar pull featuring Waylon Jennings, Lyle Lovett, Guy Clark, and Mickey Newbury, and guests Emmylou Harris and songwriter Townes Van Zandt. Posing at the post-pull party are (l-r) Newbury, actor David Keith, NSAI President Roger Murrah, Clark, and Lovett.

1990's Biggest Albums

The following albums achieved gold, platinum, and/or multiplatinum status between January and November.

Multiplatinum

Garth Brooks/No Fences (Capitol)	(2,000,000)
Clint Black/Killin' Time (RCA)	(2,000,000)
Willie Nelson/Stardust (Columbia)	(4,000,000)
Willie Nelson/Willie & Family Live (Columbia)	(2,000,000)
Randy Travis/Always And Forever (WB)	(4,000,000)

Platinum

Garth Brooks/Garth Brooks (Capitol)
Kentucky Headhunters/Pickin' On Nashville (Mercury)
Randy Travis/No Holdin' Back (WB)
Conway Twitty/The Very Best Of . . . (MCA)
Don Williams/I Believe In You (MCA)
Hank Williams Jr./Greatest Hits Volume 2 (WB/Curb)

Gold

Alabama/Pass It On Down (RCA)
Rodney Crowell/Diamonds And Dirt (Columbia)
Charlie Daniels Band/Simple Man (Epic)
Vince Gill/When I Call Your Name (MCA)
Vern Gosdin/Chiseled In Stone (Columbia)
Highway 101/Highway 101 (WB)
Alan Jackson/Here In The Real World (Arista)
K.D. Lang/Absolute Torch And Twang (Sire/WB)
Kathy Mattea/Willow In The Wind (Mercury)
Reba McEntire/Live (MCA)
Reba McEntire/Rumor Has It (MCA)
Ronnie Milsap/Lost In The Fifties (RCA)
Lorrie Morgan/Leave The Light On (RCA)
Restless Heart/Big Dreams In A Small Town (RCA)
Kenny Rogers/Something Inside So Strong (Reprise)
Ricky Van Shelton/RVS III (Columbia)
George Strait/Livin' It Up (MCA)
Randy Travis/Heroes & Friends (WB)
Travis Tritt/Country Club (WB)
Keith Whitley/Greatest Hits (RCA)
Keith Whitley/I Wonder Do You Think Of Me (RCA)
Don Williams/Best Of Don Williams Volume 3 (MCA)
Hank Williams Jr./Lone Wolf (WB/Curb)

For The Record

Neal McCoy's "At This Moment" Atlantic LP was released last week, not in March '91 as reported (R&R, 11/30).

NEW ARTIST FACT FILE

Pam Tillis

Born: 7/24/57 Plant City, FL
Current Single: "Don't Tell Me What To Do"
Current Album: "Put Yourself In My Place"; due 1/91
Producers: Paul Worley, Ed Seay
Label: Arista
Management: Mike Robertson/1030 Music Group
Booking: Triad Artists
Publishing: Tree Publishing
Musical Influences: Mel Tillis, the Beatles, the Wilburn Brothers, Flatt & Scruggs

- **Background:** Tillis grew up around music — her father is Mel Tillis. "Dad encouraged the ham in us. We put on a lot of living room performances. Once he took us on the Porter Wagoner show, and I think we envisioned ourselves as a country Jackson 5," she remembered. She took classical piano lessons for 11 years, and learned to play guitar by watching country stars and "some woman who gave folk guitar lessons on Saturday afternoons" on TV.

She began writing songs as a teenager "because of that introspective time you go through. And I was always grounded, so I had a lot of time to create." At 15 she "hit the streets" with her music, performing in Nashville clubs.

Tillis began playing professionally during the period she calls "the

After enrolling in college, she hooked up with a rock band and "two quarters later I had a bad case of exhaustion." She later formed a duo with Ashley Cleveland (now an Atlantic rock artist).

Working summers at her father's Sawgrass Publishing company, Tillis "got the bug to be a Nashville songwriter." She sang demos for the company, and soon her work was in demand around town. That eventually led to a record deal with Elektra in the early '80s. But the pop music she recorded wouldn't come into vogue until later in the decade. "I've always been a little ahead of my time," she said.

After leaving Warner Bros. (which had absorbed Elektra), Tillis focused on performing and writing. Her songs were cut by Highway 101, Juice Newton, Judy Rodman, the Forester Sisters, Chaka Khan, Conway Twit-



Pam Tillis

ty, Janie Frickie, Barbara Fairchild, Wild Rose, and Cee Cee Chapman.

- **Signing:** She was signed to Tree Publishing as a writer and was working on a production deal with Tree's Paul Worley, when Arista/Nashville VP/GM Tim DuBois caught her show one night. He remembered what he had told her ten years earlier when she sang demos for him: "If I'm ever in a position to help you, I will." He contacted Worley and Tillis was signed. "I didn't know much about Arista, but I knew about Tim's honesty and integrity," she recalled.

- **Songs:** Tillis wrote or co-wrote seven of the record's ten cuts. Other contributors include Harlan Howard and Max D. Barnes (the current single), Paul Overstreet, Billy Hill's Bob DiPiero and John Scott Sherrill, and Rodney Foster.

Though she has a famous father, Tillis said, "It's important to me to make it on my own. I'm my own musical entity. I will stand or fall with my own music. And I feel like I'm just now hitting my stride."

COUNTRY FLASHBACK

1 YEAR AGO TODAY

• No. 1: "Who's Lonely Now" — Highway 101

5 YEARS AGO TODAY

• No. 1: "Bop" — Dan Seals

10 YEARS AGO TODAY

• No. 1: "That's All That Matters" — Mickey Gilley

15 YEARS AGO TODAY

• No. 1: "Easy As Pie" — Billy "Crash" Craddock