

THE TENNESSEAN **Living** Monday, March 12, 1984

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## THE SONGWRITERS ASSOCIATION International

## Beep, Blink, Flash Your Fridge Has a Message!

**By WILLIAM J. BROAD**  
1984 N.Y. Times News Service

**NEW YORK**—For better or worse, the digital revolution has come to the laundry and kitchen. Appliances are beeping, blinking, flashing messages and signaling when doors are ajar, cycles over and motors burned out. And the pace of the revolution will probably pick up. Manufacturers are already tinkering with appliances that listen and speak.

Moreover, electronic technology is just one sign of change in the traditionally staid world of home appliances. A series of tremors have shaken the industry, with sizable repercussions for consumers.

Appliance costs in real dollars are generally down over the past decade because of fierce competition among manufacturers—but so is overall selection of washers, dryers, refrigerators, freezers, ranges and dishwashers. Quality has improved because of increased automation in factories—but so has appliance complexity, oftentimes with disastrous results.

**INDEED**, if choosing an appliance today seems a frustrating experience, it is probably because industry innovations have contributed to an unusual pattern of consumer conflict. Digital appliances can confuse the increasingly diverse group now reaching for the controls, including men, children and others not traditionally confronted with household chores. Even adept homemakers can get flustered while trying to reprogram a digital dishwasher.

"The family is changing," said Paul Dittmann, director of marketing services at the Whirlpool Corp. More than half of all women are working. Men and children are operating appliances. Plus we've got an aging population. Overall that means a need for ease of operation. We're not there yet. Appliances are probably too complex for lots of people."

Another complication that confounds manufacturers is that the spectrum of American incomes has grown wider than ever before. "The market is polarized," said Sunil Mehrotra, a consumer researcher at the General Electric Co. "People either want tremendous values or luxury items. There is a diversification of buyers that makes it hard to meet all the demands."

For instance, affluent consumers clearly want products that deal with the "poverty of time," according to Dittmann, while other groups may not. Hectic lives have resulted in increased demands for such time-saving products as microwave ovens and larger freezer compartments in refrigerators. To meet consumers' time constraints, major manufacturers are also experimenting with "reverse microwaves," cooling units that rapidly chill foods and beverages.

**THE REWARDS** are sizable for manufacturers who can satisfy market demands. Last year manufacturers sold \$8.4 billion worth of major home appliances to retailers, according to the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, an industry group in Chicago.

The biggest change in decades has been the introduction of digital electronics, which made its debut in the late 1970s. Today electronic circuitry is found in many top-of-the-line

White legendary songwriter John D. Loudermilk sings "The Bluebird" at the Nashville Songwriters Association International's spectacular Friday night Songwriters' Showcase, 10-year-old Cassie Molehan performs a ballad in the background.

## Songwriting Duo Named 'Best' At 17th Annual NSAI Awards

**By SANDY NEESE**

Larry Herley and Jeff Sibor were named Songwriters of the Year at the Nashville Songwriters Association International's annual awards banquet Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

The talented duo is responsible for such smashes as Jane Fricke's *He's a Heavens Loosener*, for *Place to Happen* and Gary Morris' *The Wind Beneath My Wings*.

Holding *Her and Loving You*, a hit for Earl Thomas Conley by Music Shoatz writers Wall Aldridge and Tommy Bradfield was honored as Song of the Year.

Fourteen other songs and songwriters were honored by the NSAI at its 17th annual ceremony. Finalists for Songwriter of the Year were Tommas Van Zandt, Kerry Chater, Randy Owen and Barry Beckett.

**WHAT MAKES** the NSAI awards particularly special is that the honored songs are named by the organization's members, other songwriters. Accepting his certificate for *Holding Her and Loving You*, Bradfield said, "This comes from people out there I've idolized for years, and I really appreciate this."

Austin Roberts, who co-wrote the *Lee Greenwood* hit, *I GU* with L.A. writer Kerry Chater, expressed a similar sentiment. "Standing up here in front of all you people," he said, "it's like hitting a home run in Yankee Stadium."

The awards ceremony was the high point of a weekend devoted to panel discussions, critique sessions and a spectacular standing-room-only Songwriter's Showcase Friday night at the Hyatt sponsored by NSAI.

—Staff photo by Pat Casey Coley  
Songwriters Larry Herley, left, and Jeff Sibor, right, chat with Gary Morris, who had a hit on their "The Wind Beneath My Wings." Herley and Sibor were named Songwriters of the Year at the Nashville Songwriters Association International's annual awards banquet Saturday.

**A HOST OF** industry notables and an impressive roster of top luminaries were on hand for the evening. The Songwriters Guild was represented by president George David Wise, one of the showcase performers; executive director Lou Bachman and Kathy Hyland of the Nashville office. The three performance rights societies, Broadcast Music Incorporated, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, and SESAC, were present in full force. The Country Music Association's Helen Farmer and the Country Music Association's Helen Farmer and the Country Music Association's Helen Farmer.

—Staff photo by Pat Casey Coley

**TO MAKE THE** benefits of digital electronics outweigh the drawbacks, manufacturers are struggling to reduce complexity. At Whirlpool, microwave ovens now have numerical buttons arranged like those on a telephone. At General Electric, some flashing messages from new digital dishwashers are in plain English.

"There's always the danger of producing advanced technology that people can't relate to," said Samuel J. Pearson, director of advanced product engineering for Whirlpool in Benton Harbor, Mich.

Moreover, an awareness is growing among manufacturers that digital electronics for its own sake is not enough. At General Electric, Perry McCollum, an industrial designer, said the company had envisioned taking the digital revolution one step further with talking dishwashers. "We tried a male voice, then a female one. Everybody was pretty uncomfortable with it. In general, products that respond to verbal commands probably have some benefits, but having them talk back is altogether different."

## Fans Sing Along While Cougar Prowls Opry's Stage

The Grand Ole Opry House finally got down and got loose last night.

They've had pop music shows out there for a couple of years, but it took the spirit, the pep and the dancing of John Cougar to really rock the joint. By the sheer force of his boyish enthusiasm, the power of his superb band, and the charisma of his stadium he transformed the steel hall into a place of celebration and ecstasy.

The crowd in the packed house buzzed with tangible anticipation long before the cocky rocker took the stage at 9:15. There was a good smattering of "over-30s" in the audience, and it looked like virtually every high school in town was represented.

**WHEN THE LIGHTS** went down a roving cheer went up, as hundreds streamed down the aisles to the front of the stage. They and most of those on the main floor of the Opry House remained

**Robert K. Oermann**  
**REVIEW**

Sure enough, Cougar couldn't help himself. He shook that tiny hiney like he was a kid at his first junior high school sock hop.

**AND HE** wasn't the only one. The short "boogie" leader was joined in gyrations by his mini-skirted backup singers Carolee Saw Hall and Pat Peterson. His rhythmic/beat guitar trio—Miles Wanchick, Tony Myers, Larry Crane—reined around the stage with abandon that almost equaled Cougar's.

The stage was stark and unembellished. The star was free to stalk his domain unimpeded.

He began the concert by paying tribute to his influence: the drama of Elvis Presley, the ferocity of The Animals, the sophistication of The Left Banke, the soul of Lee Dorsey, and the modernity of The Velvet Underground, all mainstays of the music of the 1960s.

He grinned as though he were the best buddy of every kid in the place as he swung into his huge hit *Jack and Diane*.

"Everybody clap one time!" he shouted at the start. They did. "You sing it!" he exhorted on the last chorus. They did.

**BY THIS TIME**, even the people in the balcony were standing. Without even the slightest pause, the band tore into *Crumbs for the Lady*, which Cougar delivered with even more energy than on his slaveringly-ominous Cougar.

From then on, number steamrolled into number as drummer Kenny Aronoff kept up a relentless attack. During *I Need a Lovin'* teenage girls danced wildly in their seats, arms flailing above their heads, completely under Cougar's spell.

Cougar's rock anthem *Play Guitar* was the guys' turn to go nuts, as lights punctuated every line right on the beat.

Four-and-a-half thousand pairs of hands in the sold-out hall clapped as he during the "ain't that America" chorus of

**Pink Houses** as Cougar barked out his ode to working-class reality. We all sang and screamed, our throats raw and hoarse by song's end.

**HE PAUSED** afterward, hands on his ears, to accept a spontaneous outpouring of shrieking affection and stamping-foot approval from the entire audience. His face beamed like that of a boy who's just hit his first Little League homerun.

After *Hurts So Good* he brought the house lights up to acknowledge Nashville songwriter John Price's influence; then he and keyboardist/engineer John Agnew led the crowd in singing the Cougar/Price co-written Jackie O. The gesture and the moment were heartfelt on both sides of the footlights.

Opening act *Dino & The Brunettes* seemed to salute Music City, too, for they played a "punkabilly" style of rock that partook a little of country music.