

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE COUNTRY PUBLICATION

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COUNTRYMUSICTM

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Introducing Our
BULLET AWARDS
For New Talent:

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RABBITT**

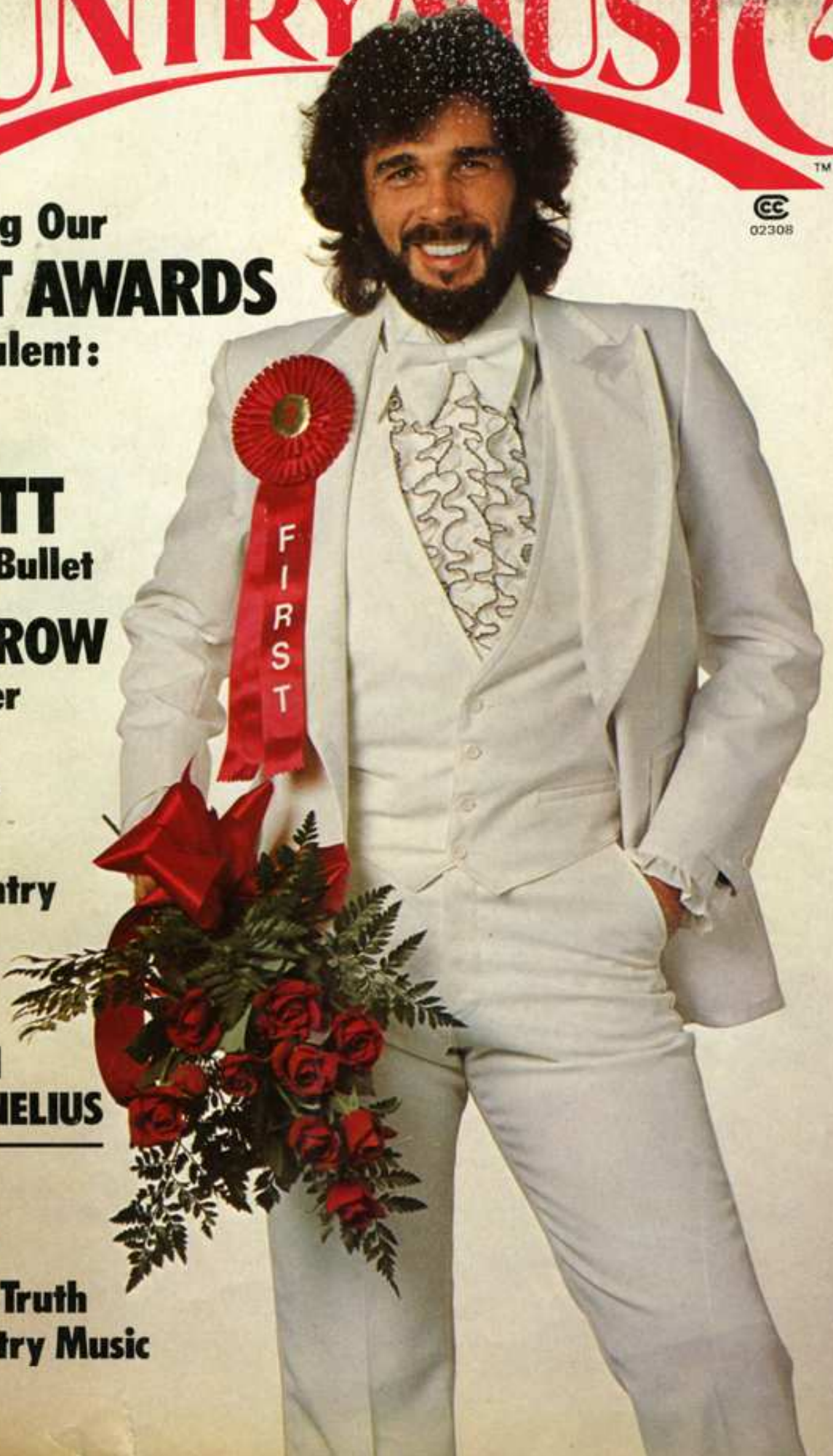
#1 With A Bullet

ALVIN CROW
Texas Topper

**CRYSTAL
GAYLE**
Torchy Country

Best Sound
**JIM ED
BROWN** and
HELEN CORNELIUS

PV
CARTER
Reveals The Truth
About Country Music



Country Scene

Ramblin'

Ronnie Milsap, Crystal Gayle Top CMA Awards For '77

After a couple of wild years of outlaw-mania, things settled back to normal last October, with the Country Music Association annual awards going to a predictable, if talented, grouping. Ronnie Milsap was the big winner, with the top award for Entertainer of the Year and two awards for Male Vocalist and Best Album (*Ronnie Milsap Live*).

Noticeably lacking in the nationally televised award presentations were awards for Willie and Waylon, who had earlier expressed their disgust with the awards.

The evening's surprises came with the selection of Jim Ed Brown and

Helen Cornelius as Duo of the Year over such heavyweights as Conway and Loretta, and with the selection of the Original Texas Playboys as Instrumental Group of the Year. Newcomer, Crystal Gayle overcame a long list of established greats (including sister Loretta Lynn), to win Female Vocalist of the Year.

A full list of CMA winners include: Entertainer of the Year – Ronnie Milsap

Song of the Year – *Lucille*

Album of the Year – *Ronnie Milsap Live*

Female Vocalist of the Year – Crystal Gayle

Male Vocalist of the Year – Ronnie Milsap

Best Vocal Group of the Year – The Statler Brothers

Best Duo of the Year – Jim Ed Brown and Helen Cornelius

Best Instrumental Group of the Year – The Original Texas Playboys

Instrumentalist of the Year – Roy Clark

The CMA also selects a new member for the Country Music Hall of Fame each year. This year's winner was Merle Travis, one of the world's greatest guitar players and Country Music's own choice for the Hall of Fame. To Merle, and to all the winners and nominees, we offer our congratulations.



Crystal Gayle



Ronnie Milsap



Best New Female Vocalist

CRYSTAL GAYLE

Our writers were almost universal in their praise for Crystal Gayle—one of the finest voices to grace country music.

Don't it make your brown eyes blue?

Just about a year ago, we selected Crystal Gayle as a Rising Star and both Crystal and her manager/producer predicted that the upcoming year would be her year for success.

Could've been they had a crystal ball.

This year has definitely been a good one for Crystal. Without half-trying she's been successful in both the pop and country fields, something many artists can't do when they're even more than half-trying.

Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue, almost lyrically simplistic, is a pretty song mainly because of Crystal Gayle's pretty voice. And it comes on top of several other hits: *This Is My Year For Mexico*, *Somebody Loves You and I'll Get Over You*, snowballing Crystal from being merely Loretta Lynn's little sister to being one of the big-name country women singers in her own right.

Brenda Gail Webb grew up listening to and singing along with Leslie Gore—not Loretta Lynn. But she toured with Loretta, and the mixed tutelage has paid off. As Crystal Gayle (she changed her name upon Loretta's advice, so she wouldn't be confused with Brenda Lee), she's as familiar to pop listeners as to country. Her looks—beautiful long hair, an arresting face and stylish clothes—are pop. Her voice is that Olivia Newton-John never-never land voice: Never country, never pop, always both.

Unlike Olivia, however, her voice has a depth to it that we can see growing as Crystal grows. But it's not bad now, not bad at all.

Crystal's worked hard to get to the top. While some might think she "had it made" being related to one of the most popular country singers around, it at times proved more of a bane than a boon. Rather than ride Loretta's granny dress-tails to stardom, Crystal developed her own style, totally different

from the nasal twang of Loretta's. This attempt to steer clear of imitating Big Sister has also contributed to Crystal's diversity, the inability to stick her in one musical category and forget about her.

Another major factor in Crystal's success is Allen Reynolds, that producer/manager who predicted the good year. His careful choice of material and fine hand with production had much to do with Crystal's crossover—that was no "by chance" move.

And now everybody seems to be taking the term crossover a little bit better than this time last year. At least half the numbers performed on the televised CMA awards were pop—or it took a good imagination to make them out to be country. When Crystal performed *Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue*, it sounded downright country in comparison to, let's say, Dave and Sugar.

Her latest album, *We Must Believe In Magic*, contains more of the same sounds, but it also contains some real country. *Going Down Slow* is done in the Tanya Tucker style—and done well, as is the rest of the material on the album. Unlike many pop-country artist's albums, *We Must Believe In Magic* is not drowned in strings and other methods of over-production. Rather, Reynolds relies on Crystal's voice which is strong enough to tackle the various material without wavering.

At the CMA ceremony, Crystal was voted Best Female Country Singer, winning over, among others, Loretta Lynn. And to her ever-lasting credit, rather than choose this time to be coy about being the little sister, she chose this time to acknowledge the fact that Loretta has helped her tremendously by thanking her for that help.

Now, with that good year behind her, Crystal's really going to soar.

Don't it make your blue eyes brown? ■

