

A close-up photograph of a man singing into a microphone. He has his eyes closed and a focused expression. He is wearing a dark jacket over a red and black patterned shirt. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the microphone.

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COUNTRY

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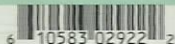
1. **Don't Rock the Jukebox**
Alan Jackson
2. **It's a Little Too Late**
Mark Chesnutt
3. **The Shoes You're Wearing**
Clint Black
4. **Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)**
Pam Tillis
5. **Blame It on Your Heart**
Patty Loveless
6. **Down Home** Alabama
7. **Pickup Man** Joe Diffie
8. **Don't Let Our Love Start Slippin' Away**
Vince Gill
9. **Love a Little Stronger**
Diamond Rio
10. **Why Didn't I Think of That**
Doug Stone
11. **No News** Lonestar
12. **Six Days on the Road**
Sawyer Brown
13. **This Woman and This Man**
Clay Walker
14. **That's as Close as I'll Get to Loving You**
Aaron Tippin
15. **What Part of No**
Lorrie Morgan
16. **I See It Now**
Tracy Lawrence
17. **Money in the Bank**
John Anderson
18. **Every Once in a While**
BlackHawk
19. **Heads Carolina, Tails California**
Jo Dee Messina
20. **I Can Still Make Cheyenne**
George Strait

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R958-22 TCD844



CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY

THE MID-'90s

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

R958-22
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1. Don't Rock the Jukebox 2. It's a Little Too Late 3. The Shoes You're Wearing
4. Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life) 5. Blame It on Your Heart 6. Down Home
7. Pickup Man 8. Don't Let Our Love Start Slippin' Away 9. Love a Little Stronger
10. Why Didn't I Think of That 11. No News 12. Six Days on the Road
13. This Woman and This Man 14. That's as Close as I'll Get to Loving You
15. What Part of No 16. I See It Now 17. Money in the Bank
18. Every Once in a While 19. Heads Carolina, Tails California
20. I Can Still Make Cheyenne

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CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY

The Mid-'90s

In the early '90s, young honky-tonk singer Alan Jackson, the first act signed to Arista Records' new country division, was on a crusade. The music he loved best—the hard-country sounds of George Jones, Merle Haggard, Conway Twitty and the like—was being pushed aside by new acts who seemed to be getting signed more for how they'd look in videos than for how they sang. On tour in support of his debut album, Jackson was between sets at a truck stop near Dalton, Virginia, when he leaned against the jukebox his bass player was checking out, jostling it. His sideman yelled, "Hey,

Alan! Don't rock the jukebox! I'm trying to read the songs." Jackson liked the phrase enough to scribble it on a slip of paper, and six months later, while writing with Keith Stegall, he pulled it out and they began toying with it, almost for laughs. But despite its lighthearted tone, **Don't Rock the Jukebox**, which makes a lyrical appeal for more George Jones music, was a song Jackson and his fans took very seriously when he played it in his live shows. And once Jackson got around to recording it, the song won nearly every award imaginable. Meanwhile, Jackson became good buddies

with his idol, and even sang a snatch of his *Choices* at the 1999 Country Music Association awards show.

The country charts were dominated by newcomers in the early '90s. Alabama was virtually the only "old" act with any staying power (and their first significant hit was in 1980). From its earliest days, one of the band's specialties was Southern pride: Their first top-20 hit was *My Home's in Alabama*, and their first No. 1 was *Tennessee River*, both from 1980. They followed these with such Dixie ditties as *Mountain Music*, *High Cotton* and *Song of the South*, and **Down Home** extended the tradition into the '90s. Sawyer Brown, which originated in 1984, transformed the trucker's anthem **Six Days on the Road** into a song about a touring band.

Originally a No. 2 hit for Dave Dudley in 1963, the song was written by Earl Greene and Carl Montgomery, weekend musicians who drove a truck up and down the eastern seaboard for Robbins Floor Products of Tusculumbia, Alabama. The three members of BlackHawk, one of many self-contained bands to surface in the wake of Alabama, wrote **Every Once in a While** after a bull session spent reminiscing about high school girlfriends and "what might have been." **Love a Little Stronger** was intended for a harmony trio being put together by Billy Crittenden and Gregory Swint, two of the song's three writers. But when that group fell apart before recording, the song turned out to be a perfect fit for Diamond Rio.

Patty Loveless was the veteran female

artist of the period, having had her first hit in '85. The No. 1 **Blame It on Your Heart** was her first single after surgery to remove nodes from her vocal cords, coming off her premier album for the new label she signed with at that time; that was Loveless's first album to be produced by her husband, Emory Gordy. Though she generally resisted spouse-bashing songs, she says she succumbed to this one for its sense of humor. Pam Tillis's **Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)** was inspired by a Chicana gang member who appeared on Geraldo Rivera's TV show with the phrase tattooed on her shoulder. Lorrie Morgan always did well with defiant songs, and **What Part of No**, an abrupt put-down of a barroom pickup artist, became the biggest

hit of her career. Jo Dee Messina left her native Massachusetts for Nashville just days after high school graduation, so **Heads Carolina, Tails California**—with a few details changed—could have been her own story of fleeing a stifling hometown in search of the good life. Messina's power-packed vocals on this one broke her career wide-open, but her management soon dissolved and she came near bankruptcy before being able to set her affairs in order and proceed.

Though his career has enjoyed several peaks, Vince Gill's 1992 LP *I Still Believe in You* is widely considered his apex, thanks to soulful efforts like **Don't Let Our Love Start Slippin' Away**, which became Gill's biggest single upon its release. Clay Walker and Mark Chesnutt, both

hailing from Beaumont in east Texas, explored similar territory with **This Woman and This Man** and **It's a Little Too Late**, respectively, though Walker took a decidedly more optimistic position on the end results. **I See It Now** was the title song from Tracy Lawrence's third album, the first that he produced himself—and he must have felt he'd done something right, because the album spawned five No. 1 singles in the course of going platinum. Clint Black's **The Shoes You're Wearing**—co-written, like most of his hits, with his guitarist, Hayden Nicholas—had a very specific message. After hearing some underprivileged kids say on television that \$150-a-pair tennis shoes were part of the front they needed to put on in order to get anywhere in

life, Black wrote a song for people who see only what they can't do instead of what they can, and who use their outward appearance as a substitute for the inner drive that's really needed to succeed. It's perhaps easier to make such observations when one is sitting as pretty as Black is, but he probably realized that, too: During the 1997 110-city *Nothin' but the Tail-lights* tour, named for the album from which *The Shoes You're Wearing* was pulled, Black collected about a hundred thousand pairs of shoes from his fans that he donated to inner-city charities.

—John Morthland

DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard country chart position

1. **Don't Rock the Jukebox** Alan Jackson • Music and lyrics by Alan Jackson, Roger Murrah and Keith Stegall. Arista 2220 (1991). Acuff-Rose Music Inc./Murrah Music Corp. BMI. WB Music Corp. ASCAP. © 1991 Arista Records, Inc. Courtesy of Arista Records, Inc. No. 1*
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