

88-10-01



K. T. OSLIN

★ FAN CLUB

27 Music Square East, Suite 180 • Nashville, TN 37203

NASHVILLE, TN
OCT 7
PM
1988
10/88



Coming soon . . .

- ★ NEWSLETTERS - Quarterly
 - Tour Schedule
 - Personal Information
 - Past Performances
 - Upcoming Special Events - Fan Fair
 - Pen Pal Information
- ★ FAN CLUB MEMBER'S ONLY CATALOG
 - Special Merchandise Available Only Through The Club

Club Membership is free of charge. Have your friends and neighbors write in their request for membership!

DIANE L. HOLLAND
502 N WILLOW AVE 233
FREEPORT, ILL 61032

Club Central — K.T. Oslin '88

INDIANAPOLIS, IN
STAR

D. 229,595—S. 400,150
INDIANAPOLIS METROPOLITAN AREA

OCT 21 1988

10/21/88

K.T. Oslin's satin factor rising

Singer is among country music's hottest stars

By JILL WARREN
STAR STAFF WRITER

In the past few weeks, K.T. Oslin has won two Country Music Association awards, been honored as writer of the year by the licensing group SESAC, and watched her newly released second album, *This Woman*, race up the charts.

So why is this woman, who is regarded as one of Music City's leading exports, working as opening act for Alabama, a band that hasn't been commended by the industry in years?

"That was all arranged six or eight months ago, before things started popping for me," explained Oslin, who will open a show for Alabama Saturday at Market Square Arena.

"But I tell you, it's an opening act's dream. We own nothing, but we use Alabama's state of the art equipment. We play all the major halls, all sellouts. Shoot, nothing can beat that."

Nothing, perhaps, except a headline tour of her own? "Sure, I'd love that, but that's still down the road. Maybe we'll do a co-headline tour with another artist. But we've got to wait and see what this new album does over the winter."

Oslin takes a decidedly realistic view of her sudden fame and growing fortune. Though openly confident of her songwriting strength and power to affect fans with her compelling vocals, she knows that "in this business you're only as good as your last five minutes."

All her awards and honors, she said, are kept in the music room of her Nashville home. Like old photos, they serve as a constant reminder of fleeting moments of rapture.

"Those awards are wonderful to look at, but they're also terri-

NIGHTLIFE

Bands — Alabama, Merle Haggard, and K.T. Oslin

Opening act — Hampton Valley Band

Location — Market Square Arena

Times — 7:30 p.m. Saturday

Prices — \$16 and \$18 (\$1 from each ticket will benefit Second Harvest, the national food bank, and Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana Inc.)

fyng," she said. "They make you think about how you'd feel if you never win another, about how terrible it would be.

"It's very nice to come out of the chute and be awarded with all these things, but it's also a responsibility. Even a burden.

"Once you get involved in any facet of this business as a professional, the so-called glamour and fun goes right out of it," said Oslin, who worked as a jingle singer, acted in commercials and was a Broadway chorine before hitting it big last year with her first record, *'80s Ladies*.

"It's bread and butter, it's your rent; it's not about dressing up in pretty clothes and guys meeting you at stage doors with flowers. It ain't gonna happen."

Oslin said she used to be amused when people would visit her backstage in a handsomely appointed Broadway theater and find her sitting under a bare lightbulb, surrounded by grime and mice.

"It's funny: People think you're reclining back there on your satin settee while people are rubbing your feet," she said. "That's what I thought it was going to be. Hell, I was disappointed, too."

And today? "I still rub my own feet, and there ain't no settee to sit on, but the satin factor has gone way up.

"As with anything, you get



K.T. Oslin: From *'80s Ladies* to *This Woman*.

used to things and then you want more. You never feel like you can just stop and be satisfied."

Oslin hasn't had much time to luxuriate in her accomplishments. *'80s Ladies* was the highest charting debut ever by a female country singer, and there was pressure for her to match that success on *This Woman*.

"Back in the winter, when we started to record, we planned on getting it down in about two weeks. Then things started to go crazy for me. All of a sudden, people who wouldn't give me the time of day absolutely had to have me right then.

"So it took a lot longer than we expected. I never had time to think about trying to top *'80s Ladies*. I'll never try to write another one like that; I'm just trying to write good songs."

This Woman has given Oslin

a chance to record a couple of her older songs, including *Round the Clock Lovin'*, a hit for Gail Davies in 1982, and *Where is a Woman to Go*, recorded in 1984 by Dottie West.

Oslin said she was particularly pleased to include *Round the Clock Lovin'*, a gem that she had never recorded.

"We've been doing it in the live show all summer, just to have an 'up' tune. It's also another song of recognition: I've been out introducing myself to people all summer. A lot of them don't know me beyond a few songs they might have heard on the radio."

Oslin's desire to include a few upbeat songs provides a good balance against the album's more melancholy, introspective cuts. These songs have a personal, intimate edge, but Oslin cautions against searching for autobiographical references.

"Everybody assumes that every song you write is about you. There are bits and pieces of me in everything — you've got to know enough about a subject to write about it — but no, they're really not autobiographical."

Oslin, who has longed for a chance to sit back and consider all that's happened since *'80s Ladies* changed her life, will soon take an extended break from her concert tour.

"I want to take some time off and enjoy what I've done," she said. "I don't want to kill myself for five years and then expect to have fun. I want to enjoy it now before things get too insane."



10388-03
8870-03

10/88

LEISURE & ARTS

K.T. Oslin: Country Music's '80's Lady'

By PAM LAMBERT

Nashville, Tenn.

Not too long ago, the odds of K.T. Oslin's becoming a country music star looked about as good as Spuds McKenzie's chance of capturing the Kentucky Derby. For starters, she was in her mid-40s, an age associated with comebacks, not debuts. She was overweight. And, as a longtime Manhattan resident, the closest she'd come to a "holer" was hailing a cab.

But none of that was about to stop the unsinkable Ms. Oslin. "I would listen to the radio every now and then," the singer-songwriter recalls in her throaty Texas drawl. "And I'd say to myself, 'Look, there's nothin' on there that you can't compete with—you may not be better, but you can damn well compete.'"

Could she ever. During the past year Ms. Oslin's RCA debut album, "80's Ladies," has sold more than 800,000 copies. She won a Grammy for her emotional performance of the title track, defeating such reigning country royalty as Reba McEntire and Roseanne Cash. She's just released a new album, "This Woman," which hits No. 5 on the Billboard country chart next week. And Monday night she could win five awards—the most of any performer—from the Country Music Association, during a nationally telecast show (CBS, 9 p.m. EDT) on which she'll sing.

Ms. Oslin seems to regard her odyssey from struggling entertainer to Nashville's sweetheart with the same wry humor so evident in her songs. In person, with her shaggy auburn hair swept off her face and only a smidge of stomach pooching out over her form-fitting jeans, the 46-year-old looks much prettier, and much younger, than in her videos. She chuckles at the compliment. Pounds have melted off, she says, during the months of one-night stands. And, she observes, "On television you look like a wart hog from space."

Strange words from a woman who once made her living doing TV commercials ("I was usually a Middle Western housewife wearing a plaid shirt"). But, we're getting ahead of our story.

For a late bloomer, Kay Toinette Oslin got off to a pretty fast start. At 24 the Arkansas-born, Houston-bred performer was on Broadway in the chorus of "Hello, Dolly!" Roles soon followed in "Promises, Promises" and a revival of "West Side Story." Oslin should have been happy—the pragmatically minded daughter of a working widow, she'd entered show biz with the goal of "not necessarily being a star but earning my living." But she wasn't.

The reality of Broadway—the same performance six days a week, the behind-the-scenes politics—wasn't what they'd prepared her for in the drama department of Lon Morris Junior College back home in

Texas. Ms. Oslin gravitated into backup singing and jingles "very half-heartedly and with as much success." Next came acting in commercials. "I could do just enough to keep my head above water and not have to be a waitress," Ms. Oslin recalls, "but I was sort of forlorn and sort of lost for a couple of years."

She found her way again in the ladies room of a cafe in Due West, S.C. (she was passing through town as the vocalist



with an electronic band). Neatly printed on the wall was: "I ain't never gonna love nobody but Cornell Crawford." The line stuck with her—"so funny and dear, and who's Cornell anyway?" When she got back to New York, it inspired her to dredge up those childhood piano lessons and write her first song. Others soon followed. "To my amazement, what came out was country," she says.

"I had never been much of a country fan except as a kid," she explains. "There was a period when I hated it, all these middle-aged guys—who of course were my age at this point—singing about drinking whiskey and cheating on their wives."

Though Ms. Oslin's songs were country, they were country influenced by rock and pop and soul and show tunes, with lyrics unmistakably written by a mature woman who'd seen enough to look at herself, and life, with a sense of humor.

As she approached the big 4-0, Ms. Oslin got a deal with Elektra Records. But the company was absorbed by Warner Bros., and the new regime didn't know what to do with her. To their ears "80's Ladies," a bit tersweet chronicle of the lives of three girlhood friends from the '50s that later became a No. 1 country hit, sounded "too women's lib," Oslin was out.

She boosted her ego—and her bank balance—by selling some of her compositions: "Round the Clock Lovin'" was a hit for Gail Davies, the Judds recorded "Old Pictures." But taking stock of her life at her 25th high school reunion, with just a dog, a cat and a rented Manhattan apartment to her name, she wondered, "Am I going to be one of those crazy old bag ladies who thinks she's in show business?"

Determined to give it one more shot, Ms. Oslin called her stockbroker aunt in Austin to see whether she knew of any investors willing to take a \$7,000 flier on her career. Her aunt wrote a check.

Ms. Oslin rented a Nashville club and invited everybody who was anybody to her showcase. "Everybody applauded wildly, nobody was interested." The word that filtered back to her was that even people who thought she was 10 years younger than she was still thought she was too old.

With her last \$1,500, Ms. Oslin made a demo tape. This time somebody bit—Harold Shedd, producer of the popular country-rock band Alabama. He got her in the door at RCA (and later did a noteworthy job as producer on her two albums).

For once, Ms. Oslin was in the right place at the right time. RCA-Nashville hadn't signed a female artist for years, and so spent more than usual promoting her. Given Oslin's acting skill, the money was particularly well-invested in her videos, mini movies really; the touching one for "80's Ladies" plays like "The Big Chill" in four minutes.

Earlier this year Ms. Oslin's career took off so fast that she "felt like an actress playing the part of a country singer." A long hot summer of touring as an opening act helped reality sink in. But at least Ms. Oslin and her "dawg," Vinnie (he's in charge of bus security), now have a nice, if sparsely furnished, spread here to come home to, with a spanking-new Jeep in the garage.

"More than likely, if this had happened in my 20s I would be a has-been at this point," Ms. Oslin reflects. "And it would be an awful time for your career to be over simply because people had tired of you."

"This way, at this shaky age, I'm like the new queen in town."

Ostin, Strait concert heart-warming

Starwood Amphitheatre closed its 1988 concert season with a country kick Saturday night.

Approximately 8,000 fans braved the sippy fall temperatures to see two of the finest musicians of the contemporary Nashville scene, K. T. Ostin and George Strait. They were rewarded with nearly four hours of music.

And both acts performed at peak capacity.

Ostin was a marvel. The 48-year-old, Gold-selling "overnight sensation" is the most-nominated artist for tonight's coveted Country Music Association awards. Her performance told you all you need to know about why that's so.

Vocally, she tosses aside the "script" of her hit records, reinventing each song each time it's sung.

Her eccentric turns of phrase, jazzy experiments with melody and lilt-like toying with notes kept the crowd in rapt attention as she alternately whispered and wailed her songs of everyday women.

Ostin's extensive New York stage training is evident in every move she makes, from her pacing to the hand gestures she uses to turn each set of lyrics into a mini theatrical production.

After an outstandingly inventive treatment of her hit *I'll Always Come Back*, the new Music City resident said, "I'll dedicate that to Nashville, because that's the one place I always seem to come back to."

Her ballad *Two Hearts* was transformed, diva-like, into a tiny opera of loneliness.

Money and Hold Me, from Ostin's new LP *This Woman*, were cascading sonic showcases for her crackerjack

band. I've had to work on my vocal stamina.

The audience responded from the very first piano notes that introduced the ballad, a hump-to-thrust southern barndance. Strait's first drew wild applause for the consummation performer as she sang the finale.

She left fans laughing with her rollicking novelty number *Corral*. The crowd and drew shouts of approval for her tender ballad *Man on Snow at the Creek* and *Younger Men*.

Her songs are painted with various emotional colors, from crowing exultation to aching despair. The secret of her appeal lies in her ability to convey this full palette of feeling.

Ostin's natural warmth and wit communicate across the footlights with brilliant clarity. She is one of the most compelling, charismatic and dramatic performers in American popular song today.

As is her custom, she closed her set with *Do Ya*, saying, "I'm gonna be real honest with you. I finally got my life started about two years ago. I'm finally doing what I've always wanted to do."

Then she thanked them for being given the chance.

"Now that I've told you how I feel about you — my babies, my darlings — the big question is, 'Do you love me?'"

They did.

Strait now has a solid seven years worth of No. 1 hits from which to draw. He also has one of country music's finest groups of road musicians, the flawless *Ace in the Hole* Band.

But when your ballads are such gorgeous melodies as *You're Something Special to Me*, *Baby Blue*, *Nobody in His Right Mind*, *Famous Last Words of a Fool*, *You Look So Good in Love*, *Marina Del Ray*, *The Chair*, *Amarillo By Morning* and *The Cowboy Rides Away* you won't find any complaints about the slowies. Indeed, many couples were dancing romantically on the pavement behind Starwood's pavillion when Strait was crooning.

As for the uptempo tunes, how can you go wrong with red-hot picking on western swing standards like *Take Me Back to Tulsa* and *Cherokee Maiden* or country classics like *Lovesick Blues* and *Folsom Prison Blues*?

And just to vary the program, Strait struts his stuff as a first-rate honky-tonk moaner with the likes of *Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind*, *All My Ex's Live in Texas* and his remake of Faron Young's *If You Ain't Lovin' You Ain't Livin'*.

He doesn't talk much to his devotees, offering them only shy smiles now and then, but they love him "strong and silent," for both his entrance and exit were met with standing ovations.

Opening for both stars was newcomer Linda Davis, who displayed impressive lung power on the heartache oldies *I Wish I Felt This Way at Home*, *Break My Mind* and *Desperado*, as well as on her debut single tune *All the Good Ones Are Taken*. ■

And as if that wasn't enough he drew upon the abilities of reigning CMA Instrumentalist of the Year Johnny Gimble for fiddle support and of top-notch songwriter Dean Dillon for vocal harmonies Saturday night.

The star's concert technique is a simple one — a mournful barroom lament followed by a lively dance tune — slow-fast, slow-fast throughout the night.

88-10-05
P. 1/2
88/10/01

Country

K. T. cleans up

Oslin's awards honor an '80s lady with a future

By Jack Hurst

K. T. Oslin, Nashville's zany, self-proclaimed "diva," took two of country music's top awards this week and gave national TV watchers a sample of the cool that has made her a country sensation.

"All year, I've been asked by the media, 'Have you found any trouble being accepted by the country music community?'" recalled the 46-year-old Oslin, a longtime New York actress, in an acceptance speech.

Holding up the 1988 Country Music Association trophy for female vocalist of the year, she smiled broadly and said:

"No, baby."

A great singer-songwriter with a genius for shooting from the lip, Oslin didn't capture the CMA titles for female vocalist and song of the year (for her generation-galvanizing "'80s Ladies") on her talent for repartee alone.

The awards reflect a lot of hard work.

This year, she has spent a lot of time opening shows for such acts as Alabama and George Strait, whose nomadic itineraries are often followed by female hordes. To ingratiate herself with those women, Oslin has made some smart decisions, such as the sort of band she would take on the road with her.

She says she decided on an all-male band that would "look good" to women, adding that her sidemen were picked not only for their "playing expertise" but also for their "cuteness."

"Honey," she goes on to drawl, "I'm on that [touring] bus a lot of the time. I ain't gonna be lookin' at no ugly boys."

Possibly because "'80s Ladies" made her an unofficial spokesperson for a lot of American women, she says she's often asked why she employs no female musicians or backup singers. She minces no words in answering, this time in all seriousness.



K.T. Oslin accepting her female vocalist award. "Country music has opened its gates extremely wide just to let me in."

"Because," she says, "it would distract from me. Women are very distracting. I hate to say it, but we're designed to be looked at. We're like the brightly colored birds; your eye is drawn to them. Even if they're not very attractive women, you look at them."

Thus, when Oslin is onstage, there is just one female with whom the Strait and Alabama female fanatics can possibly feel any sort of rivalry, and Oslin says they apparently don't.

"They don't feel threatened by me. I'm cute enough to be a contender, but not cute enough that you feel like say-

10/16/88

88-10-06

P. 2/2

ing to your husband, 'Damn, what're you lookin' at her for?' I'm not a warthog, but I'm not so gorgeous and perfect that it's intimidating."

So far—"knock on wood"—Oslin says she hasn't failed to evoke a standing ovation on one of her many show-opening dates. Meanwhile, she has parlayed a year of entertaining those big crowds into sudden and huge Nashville prominence. At Monday night's nationally televised CMA ceremonies, she was the evening's sole five-time nominee.

But the Arkansas-born and Texas-reared New Yorker, who labored for many years on the Broadway stage and in TV commercials, doesn't take her success for granted. Before the awards festivities, she even predicted a modest harvest for herself.

"Country music has opened its gates extremely wide just to let me in," she says, referring to her heavily pop-influenced sound. "I'm dumbfounded that they have done it as well as they have."

"But I don't think they're going to give me awards for it. I think those are going to go to artists that you can, without any reservation, say are 'country.' I'm a little bit of a dark horse, a little left of center,

and I'm not sure that you should reward that.

"I would love to win something for my songwriting, because I do think I write good music."

Oslin's songwriting so far has filled two RCA albums, and her voice is exceptionally expressive. And her stage persona—flamboyant, unpredictable, humorous and individualistic—outdoes the way the Judds assaulted the national spotlight a few years ago.

In a concert with Strait in Nashville recently, Oslin—the best-trained actress yet to become a country star—drew attention to herself in a variety of catchy ways:

- Clad in red miniskirt suit, black blouse, red gloves and black high heels, her red hair blazing in the spotlight, she did a scorching, growling, riveting rendition of "Round The Clock Lovin'"—and concluded it by placing an elbow atop the piano, chin in hand, and flashing a satisfied "take that, folks" smile.

- To begin her hit "Do Ya," she retrieved the red gloves, which she had laid aside, and put on one of them but held the other, hypnotically switching it from hand to hand until she had finished.

- She ultimately grabbed another in her string of standing ovations by taking a cue from

by some people: 'Oh, she really wants to be an actress, and she's doing this so she can get a movie role.'

"For a while, I was starting to feel that way [like an actress playing a singer]. I mean, I had a hit record, and all of a sudden every question was, 'Do you think you want to do movies?' I wasn't a bad actress, but I'm really a better singer-songwriter."

So now she's settling, not terribly comfortably, into the velvet grind of country stardom. It's a gypsy existence spent mostly on highways and in hotels, and almost never in optimum proportions for healthy sleeping and eating.

Home now, on the few oc-

"Do Ya" and saying: "I've finally got my life together, thanks to you wonderful people and to the radio stations who have played my records, and I love you for it." As appreciative cheers rolled over the stage, she slowly turned her sincere grin into a wry and knowing one and added: "Now that I've told you how much I love you, the big question of the evening, my dears, my babies, is: Do ... you ... love ... meeee?"

With everybody in the crowd competing to scream the loudest affirmation, she did a mock-prim mini-curtsy, picked up the various flowers offered to her during the performance and saun-

tered off waving.

Many of those techniques obviously derive from her extensive background in the New York theater community. But that link can be overdone, she thinks.

To a question on whether she still feels (as she said she did last January) like an actress playing a country singer, she says no.

"I feel very, very comfortable with the singing," she explains. "I use acting within my singing when I'm performing, but I feel that, because I write and sing, I'm a bona fide singer-songwriter. A legitimate thing."

"I realized after I said that that it could be misinterpreted

casions she gets there, is not only New York, where she maintains her old, pre-stardom apartment, but also Nashville, where she has made a big downpayment on the first house she has ever owned.

She made such a big downpayment, in fact, that her accountant told her she has only \$4,000 remaining with which to buy furniture.

"And \$4,000, when you don't even have a broom, doesn't go very far," she wails.

"I have a bed, a kitchen table and chairs, and that's all, so I just sort of sit in the same little space. The house is carpeted upstairs and has hardwood floors downstairs, and it's so empty that when my dog barks at the door, it gives you brain damage it's so loud.

"That's kind of bugging me. I'd like to get some money and, like, do it. Of course, I'm never home long enough to pick out furniture even if I had the money."

Instead, she's out there where, she says, she dozes in her bus bunk until arriving at the next hotel in the next show town around 6:30 a.m., when she must rouse herself to check in and then hit the hotel bed and try to grab a few more hours of

dozing—in which she tends to dream "every whacko dream in the world."

On the road, she also eats poorly because there are few decent eating places that can be found in a hurry. For a while, "eating badly" and drinking too many soft drinks caused a stomach problem she feared was an ulcer.

As a show-opener rather than a headliner, she isn't yet making what she terms "the megabucks," so the hotels at which she stays often boast restaurants that "stink."

"And other than that, you're on the highway, which means truckstops, and they're some serious funk," she says. "I get indigestion every time I eat anything there."

So—to answer the question—no, she no longer feels like an actress playing a country singer. She feels like a country singer. She feels even more like one in light of the one movie script she says she so far has been offered.

Laughing in the unsinkable Oslin style, she says the script was for "a movie about fishing."

"Fishing?" she roars, half-serious.

"Yeah, 'you get your guitar, and you sing in the boat.' Oh great, I'm gonna love that. *Mc?* The *diva?* Come onnnnn."

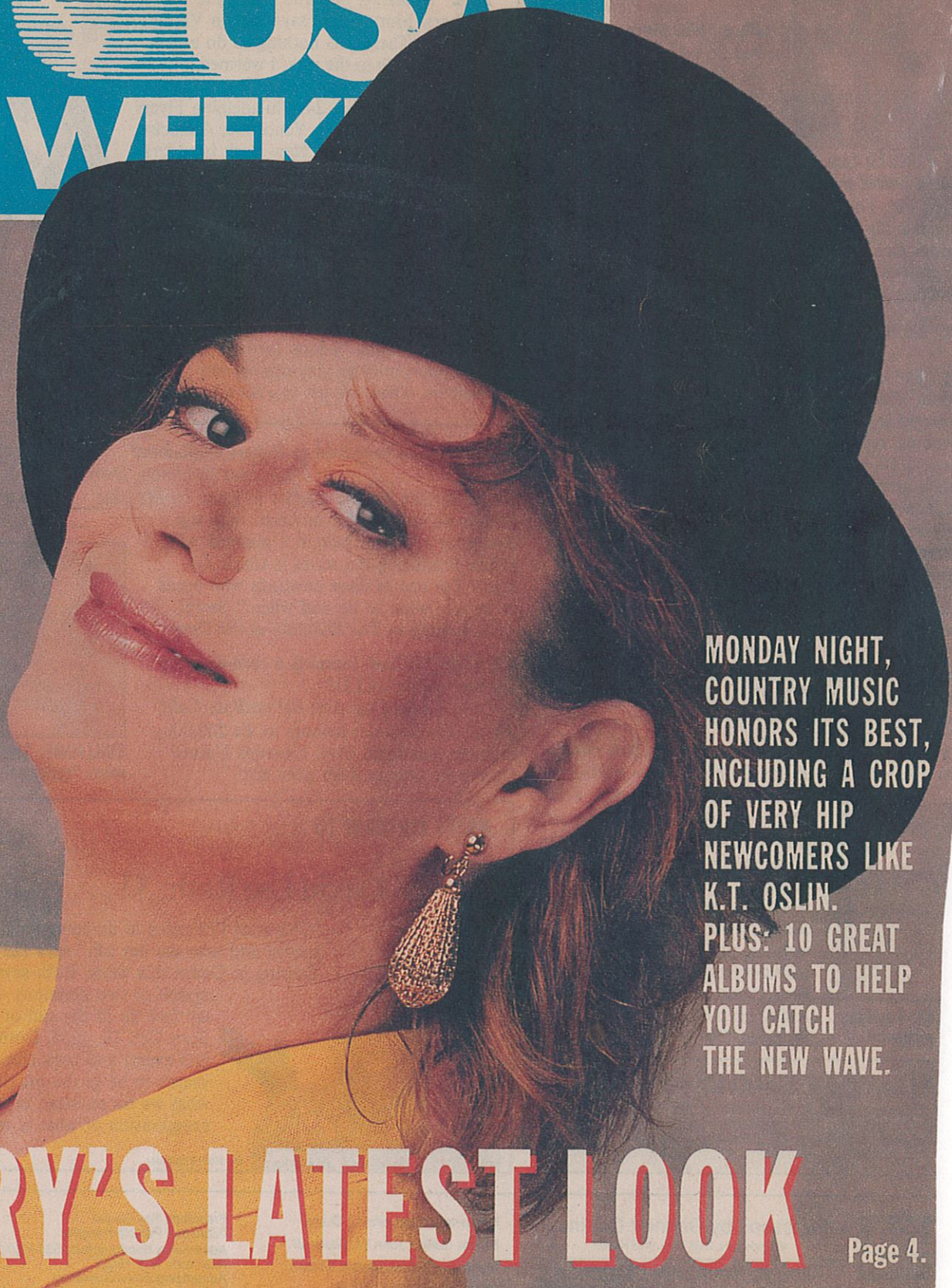
OCTOBER 7-9, 1988

USA WEEK

SPECIAL
Home-design
experts' tips
by today.

hockey's
family.

Bailey's
temptious
cake.



MONDAY NIGHT,
COUNTRY MUSIC
HONORS ITS BEST,
INCLUDING A CROP
OF VERY HIP
NEWCOMERS LIKE
K.T. OSLIN.
PLUS: 10 GREAT
ALBUMS TO HELP
YOU CATCH
THE NEW WAVE.

COUNTRY'S LATEST LOOK

Playing with country's image

A new generation of singers, showcased on Monday's televised awards, is turning country music upside down.

BY MARY ELLIN BARRETT

It's breakfast time in Nashville, but you won't find country singer K.T. Oslin in the kitchen making biscuits.

She's looking more Broadway than Butcher Hollow in her turquoise stretch pants and oversize jacket, Styrofoam coffee cup in one hand, cinnamon rolls in the other, as she sashays into an office at RCA Records.

Lunchtime in Music City finds singer Rosanne Cash at the Slice of Life vegetarian eatery, chatting about Jung and short-story writing. "I'm really interested in dream life," she says between bites of avocado.

Supper time comes, and a bunch of music types decide to meet downtown. For beer and barbecue? Nope, this is a pasta and fizzy-water crowd.

It's just another day in Nouvelle Nashville, where you're as likely to find bean sprouts on the menu as black-eyed peas — and even more likely to see minis and padded shoulders than calico and sequins.

Forget those old ditties about drunks and cowboys, two-timin' guys and sufferin' gals. Forget those L'il Abner and Daisy Mae stereotypes. Today's country music scene offers a full palette of musical styles and musician lifestyles. Sounds range from Buck Owens to the Beatles. Fashions mix hillbilly and haute couture.

Sure. New Traditionalists like Randy Travis and Dwight Yoakam sing about bar stools and broken hearts. And yep, Reba McEntire still uses expressions like "That trips my trigger."

But country music also has embraced savvy, sophisticated K.T. Oslin. A woman who gets talked about for wearing leather miniskirts on stage. Who knows her way around the New York City subway. Who sings about watching guys in jogging shorts.

Once spurned by the Nashville establishment for her songs about self-assured women and younger men, Oslin now is the belle of Music Row. She's the darling of country radio, and gets standing ovations at fairs.

She's up for five Country Music Association Awards this Monday (9 p.m. EDT/PDT on CBS). That's more

than any other performer this year, and singer-songwriter Oslin's a first-time nominee.

Country's most coveted honors have come a long way since they first were telecast in 1968. Dale Evans and Roy Rogers hosted in Western regalia; winners included rhinestone-studded Porter Wagoner and sharecropper's son Johnny Cash.

The plans for this year's show include possible appearances by country's avant garde artists k.d. lang (yes, she spells it with no capital letters) and Lyle Lovett. Nominees include hip country-rock duo Foster and Lloyd and Johnny Cash's daughter Rosanne, who used to be ridiculed for her punk stylishness.

Oslin is a 46-year-old former actress who worked the fringes of show business in Manhattan as a chorus girl and jingle singer. She made a living at it for 20 years.

"There was a stereotypical country female singer, and K.T. Oslin broke the mold," says her producer Joe Galante, senior vice president of RCA Records in Nashville. "People are saying, 'I like this because this is more like us.'"

Kay Toinette Oslin agrees her uptown sound and image are right for the times. "Country music changes because the country is changing. Country people are not as remote and removed as they used to be," says the singer, born in Crossett, Ark., and raised in Houston. "So what if you live in a holler," she twangs theatrically. "You have a satellite dish sitting in your yard. You've got a video store. You've got it all. You know what's out there."

Billboard editor and writer Edward Morris wonders if the genre of country music will vanish along with the traditions that inspired it. "Its whole source has been eroded. It's like a hothouse format."

Folks in Music City don't think so. They say country music stands for more than the rural life. It's about life, period, whether lived in a high-rise or a hollow. "I don't think rural or urban has that much to do with it," singer Whitley says. "Everyone falls in love, everyone gets their heart broken."

Indeed, the same themes of daily living permeate the music of urban, bluesy Oslin and traditional Travis. As Oslin puts it, "Country music tells stories, it's adult, it has great potential for high drama and theater."

And it will keep evolving with the times. "One day I'll be the old world. People will say, 'Darn it she looks like an old hippie from the '60s. For God's sake why doesn't she get a rocket pack like the rest of us.'"

88-10-08

USA WEEKEND
10/7/88
P.2/82

— USA WEEKEND
10/7/88

10 records to get in the groove

If you want to hear country's new sound, here are albums you shouldn't miss.

K.T. OSLIN

80's Ladies, This Woman (RCA)

Manhattan meets Music City in this sophisticated lady's sound, a mix of country, blues and Broadway sass-and-brass.

K.D. LANG

Angel With a Lariat, Shadowland (Sire)

Lang can belt like a blues singer, twang like a country songbird. *Shadowland*, her lushly produced homage to idol Patsy Cline, was recorded with Cline's producer Owen Bradley.

LYLE LOVETT

Lyle Lovett, Pontiac (MCA/Curb)

The sound may be folk or Texas swing, but Lovett's lyrics betray a sly wit and poet's soul.

FOSTER AND LLOYD

Foster and Lloyd (RCA)

Hip country pop flavored with Byrds, Beatles and other sounds of the '60s.

ROSANNE CASH

King's Record Shop, Rhythm & Romance (CBS)

Poignant, autobiographical songs about life and marriage, delivered in a soulful soprano.

NANCI GRIFFITH

Little Love Affairs (MCA)

Griffith has a haunting little girl's voice, but these wise songs about romance weren't written by a waif.

The Tennessean 10/14/88

Oslin leads women to SESAC wins

ROBERT K. OERMANN
and THOMAS GOLDSMITH
Staff Writers

The '80's Lady," K.T. Oslin, was named Songwriter of the Year at last night's SESAC awards banquet and her female composing cohorts provided a strong supporting chorus.

The new Country Music Association Female Vocalist of the Year got the licensing agency's recognition for her hits *I'll Always Come Back* and *Do Ya* at black-tie ceremonies at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. As SESAC Chief Executive Officer Vincent Caudilora pointed out, Oslin's trademark hit *80's Ladies* represents an historic first in country music.

"It seemed fitting that it was the first song recognized as CMA Song of the Year to be written by a woman," Caudilora said.

Nashville Now host Ralph Emery, who later received a surprise as SESAC presented him with its Ambassador of Country Music award, brought Oslin to the stage to receive her honors. Before the lavish awards banquet, she reflected on the role of SESAC, the smallest of the three performing rights organizations, in her meteoric career.

"What I started thinking about today was that seven or eight years ago they gave me an award as SESAC's most promising writer," Oslin said. "That kind of thing can be the kiss of death, but I feel like I lived up to it. "I feel queenly and I feel great."

If Oslin was the queen of SESAC, she had an impressive court. Nashvillian Susan Longacre was honored for her co-composition of the Shooters' hit *Tell It To Your Teddy Bear* and for the Michael Martin Murphey-recorded *River of Time*.

And Georgia's Edith Collins, mother of PolyGram Records rocker Joanna Dean, won an award for co-writing the Dean album cut *Once Is Enough*.

"I was working on this song and we were tossing lines back and forth," Dean recalled. "She looked at me and said, 'Joanna, you're writing above your audience.'"

Nashvillian Mieke Appel won a SESAC National Performance Activi-



Newly-crowned Country Female Vocalist of the Year K.T. Oslin, center, receives congratulations for a Songwriter of the Year honor at the SESAC banquet from the performance rights organization's Vincent Caudilora and Dianne Petty.

Peyton Hoge

ty award for writing the Billy Joe Royal tune *Let It Rain*, as well as for two cuts on Dean's debut rock LP.

SESAC stalwart Frank Dycus was honored for writing the touching Dean Dillon single *The New Never Wore Off of My Sweet Baby*.

Jimmy Hart, known in wrestling circles as the "Mouth of the South," and co-writer John J. Maguire won awards for six different theme songs they composed for television wrestling shows. Both Hart and Maguire are former members of the Memphis rock 'n' roll band the Gentrys.

Nashville singer Karen Taylor-

Good and songwriter Kent McDonald won SESAC's International Award for *Come In Planet Earth (Are You Listening)*.

"That song has been the focus of the whole world peace campaign," said Dianne Petty, SESAC's vice president of affiliate relations.

The international theme extended to the hotel's elegantly decorated ballroom, which was dotted with flags of a dozen nations as well as screens lit by glittering motifs of foreign lands. Food for the evening was also international; guests thronged to buffets laden with Italian, Portugese, American

and French foods.

A complete list of last night's SESAC award winners follows:

Songwriter of the Year: K.T. Oslin. Ambassador of Country Music: Ralph Emery.

International Award: Planet Earth Project/*Come In Planet Earth (Are You Listening?)* Kent McDonald; Bit-Kar Music/Giraffe Tracks Music; performer Karen Taylor-Good.

Classical Award: Jerry Sapieyevski. National Television Performance Activity: Jimmy R. Hart/John J. McGuire; Piledriver Music.

National Performance Activity: Show Business Bill O'Connell; O'Connell Music; performer Dave Valentin. *The Ancient and the Infant* Ron Cooley; Dots and Lines Ink; performer Ron Cooley; *I Miss the Money* Mieke Appel; Mieke Appel Music; performer Joanna Dean; *Burnin' Rubber* Mieke Appel; Mieke Appel Music; performer Joanna Dean.

Once Is Enough E.R. Collins; E.R. Collins Publishing; performer Joanna Dean. *Do Ya* K.T. Oslin; Wooden Won-

der Music; performer K.T. Oslin; *I'll Always Come Back* K.T. Oslin; Wooden Wonder Music; performer K.T. Oslin; *Tell It To Your Teddy Bear* Susan Longacre; Songs On Hold; performer The Shooters.

The New Never Wore Off My Sweet Baby Frank Dycus; Fast Ball Music/Musicor Music; performer Dean Dillon. *Let It Rain* Mieke Appel; Mieke Appel Music; performer Billy Joe Royal. *River of Time* Susan Longacre; Long Acre Music/WBM Music; performer Michael Martin Murphey. ■

K.T. Oslin's a Late Bloomer

By DENNIS HUNT

There are not only good country songs on K.T. Oslin's albums. But there's also a good song in her life story.

"The Ballad of the Late Bloomer" would be a natural title—an upbeat tune about a middle-aged New York woman who managed to break into country music and become a star.

You could play up the pathos—the fact people thought she was too old and that her RCA album last year was her last chance to make good. Some tear-jerking, pedal-



SCOTT ROBINSON

K.T. Oslin: In middle age, country music stardom.

FACES

steel guitar lines would heighten the drama. The only problem is: You might have trouble finding people who would believe the story.

Even Kay Toinette Oslin finds it hard to believe sometimes.

"What am I doing here in this fancy restaurant eating soft-shell crab and talking about my life to the media?" Oslin asked, during a recent interview.

"People my age [46] aren't starting careers in show business. At this age, they're winding up careers and looking for the nearest rocking chair to retire into. What's happening to me doesn't make a bit of sense."

The remarks weren't all that funny, but Oslin cracked up anyway. That's her style. At several points during the afternoon interview, she uncorked one of those long, loud, hearty laughs, telegraphing that she's a good-natured, fun-loving woman who doesn't take herself too seriously, one who laughs just for the fun of it.

But her career is no laughing matter.

A phenomenon is the best way to describe it. Though she's only recorded two albums—last year's "80's Ladies" and her current "This Woman," she's one of country's newest and brightest stars.

While she's had more experience singing Broadway musicals than

country music, there's no trace of that stately, polished, theatrical style in her vocals.

"I sing from the heart," Oslin explained. "It's emotion that counts now. My throat never felt comfortable with that Broadway singing. It always felt phony to me. I used to have a wide range and I could hit those high notes. Now I didn't have the range I used to, but my voice has more character and feeling."

Calling her a country singer, however, is like calling Madonna an R&B singer. The dark-haired singer has carved a career in country music by singing and writing material that is only loosely related to what most people describe as country. She is one of several contemporary artists who are expanding country's limits—artists like k.d. Lang, Lyle Lovett and Steve Earle.

"You can call what I do country because of the simplicity and the

story songs and some of the country instrumentation," she explained. "To me, my music is some blend of pop and Southern-blues-and-rock and a little bit of country. There's some R&B in there too. It's a mishmash of stuff. I'm surprised people like it. They should be asking: What is this stuff? I ask that myself all the time."

She let loose with another lengthy laugh.

Oslin's audience includes middle-aged women, who relate to songs like "80s Ladies," "This Woman" and "Round the Clock Lovin'"—penetrating, vivid tales of women in turmoil. A lot of Oslin's fans no doubt think the material is largely autobiographical.

"Not really," Oslin said. "But I do write from a personal point of view. I see what my friends are going through . . . how they react to relationships. I learn from watching people and try to put it in terms that music fans would find interesting."

An underlying theme of some of the songs on her "This Woman" album appears to be loneliness.

"Maybe," said the songwriter who indicated she wishes she had more time to spend with her Nashville-based beau. "I go in and out of loneliness myself. America is becoming a haven for lonely people. There's a lot of people alone out there. I'm not the only one who feels that. I'm certainly not the only one who writes about it."

Laughing again, she added: "Maybe I'm a spokeswoman for all the lonely, unhappy women. I hope not. I don't want to be a symbol of depression. I'd rather be a symbol of fun."

Oslin collapsed in a fit of laughter after making this admission: "I was never that wild about country music. I used to hate it. I didn't want to listen to that stuff, let alone sing it." In fact, she's still not wild about it.

"I don't listen to any kind of pop music," she added. "I don't even listen to the radio much. I'd rather spend my time doing other things."

A drama student during her junior college years in Texas, the Arkansas native focused on musical comedy and became somewhat of a local star in Houston in the mid-'60s.

After a year in the "Hello, Dolly!" touring company as a chorus singer and understudy, she moved to New York in 1967 to work in the Broadway production. She's lived there ever since—mostly on Manhattan's Upper West Side—though now, she also has a home in Nashville.

"When you get into big-time theater, the business part of it is very ugly," she said. "That Broadway singing didn't suit me anyway. So I left the theater scene in a huff."

With the number of big Broadway-style musicals on the decline at the time, Oslin spent the '70s as a marginal jingle singer and an actress in commercials. "Some people make a fortune in that business, but I wasn't one of them," she said. "I was one of the fringe folks."

The turn to country music was largely accidental.

As near as she can figure, she got inspired to write country music in 1978 when she read a bit of graffiti on the wall of a South Carolina cafe—"I ain't never gonna love nobody but Cornell Crawford."

"I was writing songs—country songs for some weird reason—even though I didn't want to be a songwriter," she insisted. "I thought I had as much chance of becoming a songwriter as I did of becoming a shepherd in Manhattan. Me, a songwriter? What a laugh."

Oslin polished her composing skills and got a singles deal on Elektra Records in the early '80s. But the country singles flopped, and she lost her record contract. Oslin was devastated, describing 1983 as her "year of pain."

Rallying her courage for a final try at Nashville, Oslin borrowed money in January of 1986 to stage a showcase in the country music center. RCA's Joe Galante, who also signed the Judds, attended the showcase and later signed Oslin.

Recalling that showcase, Oslin said, starting with a chuckle that mushroomed into roaring laughter: "I can't believe I went after a record contract that way. I'm such a coward. Organizing something like that is so unlike me. But my back was against the wall. It was blooming late or nothing. Ol' K.T. got lucky and bloomed late." □