Country star K.T. Oslin talks with business associate Alvin Hagaman at SESAC’s 29th annual awards presentation Thursday night aboard the General Jackson Showboat. Oslin was honored for her hit “New Way Home.”
By Jay Orr
Banner Entertainment Writer

Country Music Awards Week '93

Some 400 songwriters, publishers and other music industry professionals attended the event, hosted by SESAC president Vincent Candidor. SESAC executive vice president Dianne Petty served as master of ceremonies and awards presenter.

Since her hillbilly epiphany, Longacre has become a top country songwriter with such hits as "Time Passes By" for Kathy Mattea, "Is There Life Out There" for Reba McEntire and "Leave Him Out of This" for Steve Wariner to her credit.


W.B.M. Music — Longacre's publisher and Warner Chappell's SESAC-affiliated division — was named SESAC publisher of the year.

Longacre's music has pushed past conventional country music themes.

"I see beyond the barrooms and the jukeboxes and the dancing," she said.

"I see hard times. I see hard work, hard love, good love, dreams, disappointments, hopes, families, futures and pasts.

"I see life, and there's a whole lot of it out there. That's what I want to write about.

"The whole world is looking at us, right now, in country music. I feel like it's my job to look back at the world and write about it." Accepting the publisher's award, Warner Chappell chief Tim Wipperman made reference to the full moon that shone Thursday night as the big boat churned down the Cumberland River.

"I was looking at the bow at the harvest moon and it reminded me of what a publisher is," he said.

"We are just a reflection of the creativity of our songwriters.

Without them, we would be without light." Jerry Salley, another W.B.M. writer, received an award for "I Fell in the Water (That You Walked On)," recorded by John Anderson.

Salley described SESAC as "a real family," echoing sentiments expressed by other writers.

"Without Dianne Petty I don't know where I'd be today," he said.

"Country honoree Frank Dycus, whose I Don't Need Your Rockin' Chair won vocal event of the year at Wednesday night's Country Music Association awards, recalled the inspiration for his song.

New Way Home; K.T. Oslin; Mazdu Music; K.T. Oslin;

SESAC: Raw Breed wins the organization's first rap award

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"I actually was standing on the front porch thinking about retiring and turned around and saw a row of rocking chairs.

"I said, 'Hell, I don't need no rocking chairs,' and I thought, boy, what an idea for a song for George Jones."

Dycus summoned co-writers Billy Yates and Kerry Curtis Phillips.

"I said, 'Get over here. We're gonna write a hit for George Jones,' and we did it and we thank you."

Unlike other awards dinners held during country music week, SESAC's awards presentations recognize top songwriters and publishers in several different musical styles.

Past SESAC songwriter of the year K.T. Oslin received an honor for her adult contemporary hit "New Way Home."

"The happiest days of my whole life were in New York, sitting with a microphone and an old Wollensak tape recorder, my dog at my feet and my cat in the window," Oslin said as she accepted.

"I proceeded to just write and write and write. I had no idea what radio wanted, nor did I care — still don't."

Margaret Becker, Petra's Bob Hartman and the members of Bride received performance honors for their contemporary Christian rock recordings.

Contemporary jazz composer Bill O'Connell received an award for songs recorded by Charles Fambrough and Dave Valentii.

Nashville-based writers Ken Barken and Michael Black merited honors for their contributions to the new adult contemporary project by Richard Elliot.

SESAC executive Linda Lawrence presented the organization's first-ever rap award to a representative of the Bronx-based rap group Raw Breed for its single, "Rabbit Stew."

Marco Antonio Solis of Mexican group Los Bukis was honored for the song Viendo Bien. SESAC Latina chief William Velazquez made the presentation.

Gospel music composer Milton Biggham and publisher Arisav received awards for compositions on two chart-topping albums for the Mississippi Mass Choir.

Buck Owens-owned KNIX in Phoenix, Ariz., was honored as broadcaster of the year.

Pop vocalist Maria Christiansen provided the evening's entertainment. She performed three songs from her upcoming album on Atlantic Records.

Candidor began the dinner with a short description of SESAC's adoption of Broadcast Data Systems for use in tracking airplay in the company's Latin division.

If efficient, the computerized system of collecting royalties will be used within a year to track SESAC's country compositions, Candidor predicted.

Candidor welcomed new SESAC owners Freddie Gershon, Ira Smith and Stephen Swid to their first awards dinner as owners of the company.

Under the new ownership SESAC will be "stronger and better poised than ever before to take on new challenges and opportunities," Candidor said.

Following is a complete list of winners at the 29th annual SESAC...
CMA awards sail into the sunset for another year

If someone has to be last — and someone does — Betty Banner says thank goodness it’s SESAC — the kinder, gentler performance rights agency. As always, they sent us weary CMA-week-ers out with style, celebrating their 29th annual dinner and awards by rolling down the river on the General Jackson showboat.

More than 400 industry execs, songwriters, publishers and none-of-the-aboves boarded the big boat at Opryland loading dock for a leisurely cruise down the Cumberland — dubbed Moon River on this particular lunar-lit evening.

Let’s face it — by Thursday night everyone is plumb tuckered out. But cocktails and hors d’oeuvres served al fresco on the upper deck gave everyone a brisk wake-up call — not to mention a major case of the chill bumps for more than a few of the women.

Ship’s bells called everyone downstairs to search for their tabbies — white-wrapped chairs pulled up to white on black tables with tall, dramatic floral arrangements.

As the GJ pulled away from the dock, SESAC president Vincent Candilora mounted the silvery stage to welcome and introduce the new chairmen of the board Freddie Gershon, Ira Smith and Stephen Swid. He also took the opportunity to deny the rumor that the dinner’s location was chosen to entice SESAC songwriter — and tireless fisherman — Frank Dycus to attend. (Everyone knew it was really intended to keep everyone on hand until the end.)

A prime rib dinner was served by the perkiest wait staff Betty has ever experienced, answering the question of where Opryland performers go when the park closes for the season.

Unlike the other companies, SESAC awards writers and publishers in all categories of music — from soundtrack to Hispanic.

SESAC senior executive vice president Dianne Petty served as master of ceremonies, with able assistance from senior VP William Velez and regional director of the creative department Linda Lorenze. Dianne was regal in a floor-length black velvet sheath but Betty wonders if any thought has been given to providing award winners with a box to stand on so the statuesque brunette doesn’t have to lean over so far for the congratulatory kiss.

Each winner does get a moment to thank their mammas, daddies, significant others and muse. Always quotable K.T. Oslin had the room in stitches, and songwriter of the year Susan Longacre noted that it was sweeter — but harder — the second time around.

Some Betty spotted from her seat at Table 14 were Lindsay and Joe Sullivan, Doyle Brown, Judy Harris, Norma and Ed Morris, Bill

Betty:
K.T. Oslin has room in stitches with her remarks
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Isaacs, Norro Wilson, Cynthia Candilora, David Lawless, Merle Kilgore, Tracy and Clay Meyers, Jerry Smith, Jim Bessman (still going and going and going), Rebecca Palmer, Gloria and Randy Cox, Tim Wipperman, Susana and David Lee Ross, Johnny Wright, Rea Guyer, Prissy Gilliland and Merlin Littlefield, Kim Hose, Lori Hughes, Jo and Bob Meador, Brian and Marion Williams, Trina and John Blackstone, Mike Milom, Dale Franklin, Jerry Sally, Sam Swing, Milton Brigham, Gary Overstine, Sandy Lovejoy, Sherry Bond and Pat and Wayne Halper.
OCTOBER 15, 1993

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARING FOR THE CAUSE... Billy Ray Cyrus and K.T. Oslin recently hosted a press conference to announce the first Country Music CARES Concert to benefit Nashville CARES. Over 17 of country music's top stars will unite on World Aids Day, Wednesday, December 1, to raise funds for AIDS awareness and service.

The Nashville event will take place at the Grand Ole Opry House and will include Cyrus, Oslin, Pam Tillis, Rodney Crowell, Kathy Mattea, Tracy Lawrence, John Michael Montgomery, Marty Stuart, Emmylou Harris and others.

Tickets for the 7 PM event go on sale October 30.

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For information: Ronna Rubin, 615/269-5824

Photo credit: Kay Williams
COUNTRY music CARES

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PRODUCED BY PACE CONCERTS SOUTHEAST
Country Music Joins AIDS Fight

CMA week in Nashville saw many country music stars and executives wearing red ribbons signifying AIDS awareness. Country music will take an active role in the fight against AIDS when nearly 20 artists stage the first-ever country concert to benefit AIDS research.

"Country Music CARES" is the official theme for the concert set on World AIDS Day, Dec. 1, at the Grand Ole Opry House. Production and music accompaniment will be limited to facilitate the number of acts on the show.

K.T. Oslin and Billy Ray Cyrus held the press conference to publicize the event, and both say they have been touched personally by friends and fans with AIDS or HIV. Also included on the bill are: Tracy Lawrence, John Michael Montgomery, Pam Tillis, Rodney Crowell, Kathy Mattea, Sawyer Brown, Carlene Carter, Radney Foster, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Marty Stuart, Emmylou Harris, Desert Rose Band, Cleve Francis and Michelle Wright. More acts are expected to join.

BILLYBOARDS

AIDS Benefit Scheduled For Dec. 1

NASHVILLE—Billy Ray Cyrus, K.T. Oslin, and other country acts will star in an AIDS benefit concert Dec. 1 at the Grand Ole Opry House here. Called "Country Music CARES," the show will use all proceeds to benefit the World AIDS Foundation.

Tickets are priced at $10 and $15 and are available through PACE Productions. Tickets will be sold at the Opry House and full bands.

Also scheduled to perform are: Tracy Lawrence, Pam Tillis, Rodney Crowell, Kathy Mattea, Sawyer Brown, Carlene Carter, Radney Foster, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Marty Stuart, Emmylou Harris, Desert Rose Band, Cleve Francis and Michelle Wright. More acts are expected to join.

Tickets available at all Ticketmaster locations. Charge by phone 615/737-4849 or 1-800-333-AIDS. 

Produced by PACE CONCERTS SOUTHEAST
A Memorable Week For Country Music
Carpenter, Oslin State Their Cases; ‘Now’ And Then

A WEEK IN THE COUNTRY: Country Music Week seldom whisks through Nashville without leaving a thick cloud of strong impressions in its wake. From what we saw and what we’ve overheard or had forced on us, we deduce that most of the impressions are positive. A few of us gravitated about the extended length of the Country Music Assn. awards show, but there was nothing wrong with the occasionally slow-moving spectacle that a couple of hard-driving bluegrass numbers couldn’t have fixed. Certainly the sets were perfect, with their use of the Nashville skyline and various stylized indoor settings, none of which reeked of the rube trappings that afflicted award shows of yesteryear. We know the show can’t possibly accommodate all the artistes who want to be on it, but we particularly noted the absence this year of Randy Travis, Doug Stone, Ricky Van Shelton, and Travis Tritt.

It was an inspired bit of consciousness raising for the show’s producers to introduce Mary-Chapin Carpenter’s performance of “He Thinks He’ll Keep Her” with the tedious TV commercial that used that phrase as a tag line. Few songs in the country music canon have the compressed rage with which this one pulsates. It not only explodes against a suffocating husband and family but also against the whole social order, for which women remain cheap (and cheerful) labor. And if anyone needed visual aids to drive home the anger, one had to look no farther than Carpenter’s taunting, black-clad backup chorus (Patty Loveless, Kathy Mattea, Suzy Bogguss, and Trisha Yearwood). The CMA should package the segment and make it available to schools—and to know-nothings who still believe that country music is the soundtrack for the politically backward.

K.T. Oslin, another woman given to speaking her mind, spoke loud and clear at the SESAC awards banquet. Accepting a plaque for her song “New Way Home,” Oslin reminisced about her “happiest days,” which she said she spent in her New York apartment, just writing songs and singing them into her tape recorder. “I did not know what radio wanted,” Oslin purled caustically, “nor did I care. And I still don’t.” She urged songwriters to be true to their own muses, rather than heed the dictates of radio sages, “because, my darlings, they cannot do what you can do—or else they would be doing it.”

Oslin’s remarks could not have come at a more delicate moment, since she was soon followed to the stage by Sandy Lovejoy, who had been summoned there to accept SESAC’s broadcaster-of-the-year trophy for radio station KNIX Phoenix. Lovejoy, however, is something of a Dorothy Parker in her own right, and she handled the situation beautifully by observing that KNIX did play Oslin’s songs—“eventually”—and by making the case that KNIX might be a tad more sensitive than other stations, since it is owned and monitored by a fairly well-known singer and songwriter, Buck Owens.

Whether SESAC’s elegant and diplomatic VP, Dianne Petty, had to take to her couch after this lively interchange, we have yet to discover.