

Three groups dominate b

The big winners at SPBGMA's Bluegrass Music Awards at Nashville's Opryland Hotel were The Country Gentlemen with five figures, including Band of the Year (Overall); Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver, who won four awards, including Album of the Year for *Once And For Always*; and The Lewis Family with top honors in five categories, including Little Roy's now traditional title as Entertainer of the Year.

SPBGMA chief Chuck Stearman reported that more than 5,000 people attended the three-day convention, which included the International Bluegrass Band Championships. Kansas City's Drifters took home \$5,000 by edging out Chase City, Va.'s Appalachian Express.

The Kentucky Ramblers, who finished sixth, recently recorded their first album for Turquoise Records, the new label founded by long-time June Appal director Pat Martin. Blue Grass Boy Glen Duncan added his fiddle to the sessions by the hot young band, which mixes the classics with original, traditionally styled material.

The Country Gentlemen delighted the throng with their new lineup — Charlie Waller, Bill Yates, Norman Wright and James Bailey. As so often happens with the Gents, banjo-man Bailey is a returning alumnus, having played with the group in 1974 and 1976-79.

In addition to The Country Gentlemen, Len Holsclaw of the Lendel Agency now represents Eddie Adcock and Talk Of The Town and SPBGMA's top songwriter, Randall Hylton.

Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver have completed a new gospel effort for Sugar Hill Records.

The Lost & Found were westward bound in February, performing in Austin, San Diego and Denver.

The C.W. Brock Family of Cut & Shoot, Texas, made their first winter tour of New England during late February and early March.

Carl Queen of Atteram Records broke ground on a \$500,000 24-track studio/pressing plant complex in Blue Ridge, Ga., in early December. Queen said the Blue Ridge Recording and Record Processing Co. will employ 47 people in the economically hard-pressed community by 1988.

Charlie Derrington of Gibson's mandolin production department reported January 18 that repair work on Bill Monroe's F-5 was about 75 percent completed. He's certain the shattered instrument will again be playable, but warned that the tone probably will be altered.

Look for a late spring release for The Lonesome River Band's second album, their initial platter for the Rebel label. Their debut, *I Guess Heartaches Are In Style This Year*, spent December at the top of the hit parade for the weekly syndicated *Bluegrass Country* radio show.

Another Country



Art Menius

Mandolinist Sam Bush of New Grass Revival, veteran bassman Roy Junior Huskey and Nashville Bluegrass Band fiddler Stuart Duncan helped John Prine wax his newest album, *Oh Boy!*, during December. Prine said he had intended to use the acoustic stars only on three cuts, but the session went so well they recorded the entire album, slated for release last month.

"Stuart's fiddle floats in and out of everything," Prine said. "It's more acoustic country than anything I've done before." The record includes an new rendering of Prine's classic "Paradise."

Maryland's Patent Pending has gained a lot of attention as one of the young bands intersecting innovation into traditional bluegrass. "Barabbas," a tune written by mandolinist Eldred Hill for their second album, captured the top spot last year on WAMU-FM's Bluegrass Top 40 Listeners' Poll conducted in the D.C. area.

Patent Pending's new release on Flying Fish, *Troubles & Trials*, shows them in an even better light, blending traditional soul with fresh arrangements and new songs from Hill and the redoubtable Mike Henderson.

Also new on Flying Fish's folk-oriented Greenhays Recordings subsidiary is *Evo's Autoharp* by Evo Bluestein, who has previously recorded on the Swallow label. Mike Seeger, Kenny Hall and The Bluestein Family help out on the set of old-time tunes.

Horse Sense, the Colorado duo which champions traditional cowboy music on banjo and fiddle, has released their second album on the Kicking Mule label, *Fences, Barbed Wire, And Walls*. In addition to their fine renderings of bunkhouse and trail drive classics, the record contains two examples of cowboy poetry.

Asheville, N.C.'s Green Grass Cloggers have long distinguished themselves from other dance troupes by presenting clogging as a musical form. Since music is a vital part of their performances, it makes sense that Rounder is releasing this spring a live album of one of their concerts. *Green Grass Cloggers Through The Years* includes picking and singing not only by the cloggers, but by old-timers Ralph Blizzard and Benton Flippen, and new-timers

Bluegrass music awards



The Country Gentlemen

Phil & Gaye Johnson, Bruce Molsky, Suzanne Sundson, formerly of the Hot Mud Family. The Virginia Squires, who have gained quite a following as perhaps the top contemporary bluegrass band in bluegrass, present their more serious side on their third album, a Rebel release. *I'm Working My Way* features all gospel material, ranging from a capella quartets to tempo bluegrass workouts. As always with the Squires, most of the material is fresh, generally from the pens of Sonny Ludlam and Mike Henderson.

After flirting with country ballads on *Mourning And Memories*, their well-received 1985 boxing, album number three finds the Squires moving closer to the mainstream of today's bluegrass scene with a touch of class.

Phil Rosenthal, lead singer and guitarist for the Seldom Scene, has formed his own record company to release *Turkey In The Straw*, an album of bluegrass songs for children, including a couple of Rosenthal originals. The Scene, by the way, should be returning to the studio soon. The International Bluegrass Music Association, the industry's trade association, is conducting its initial regular elections this month through the mail.

Orrin Star, the New England flatpick guitarist who spent last month on a West Coast tour, has completed a new album and a new instructional book, *Hot Licks For Bluegrass Guitar*, for Berkley Publications.

Rounder Records artists Norman and Nancy Blake have discontinued their long-standing association with outstanding old-time fiddler James Bryan, who has two albums of his own on Rounder.

Del McCoury, meanwhile, has let go two wonderfully talented Dixie Pals, fiddler Jon Glik and bass man Mike Garriss.

Rodney Kerby has joined The Family Band on banjo. The group's performances at last fall's World Series of Bluegrass were aired on Alabama Public Television's *Bluegrass Block* during February.

Si Kahn, John McCutcheon and sign language artist Susan Freundlich have embarked upon a second "Signs of the Times" tour, mixing music, signing and social commentary. The tour commenced in Madison, Wisc., on March 2 and runs through this month.

It's almost time to say "see you at the festivals" again. The annual event in Gettysburg, Penna., at the beginning of next month will signal the onset of another season for America's best family musical entertainment. Meanwhile, send your news for this column to me at Rt. 1, Box 710, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

Art Menius is a consultant to The Linear Group and a contributing editor and columnist for *Carolina Bluegrass Review*. He has served as a staff historian for the North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources.