SX Exhibit 245 DP

BACK TRACKING

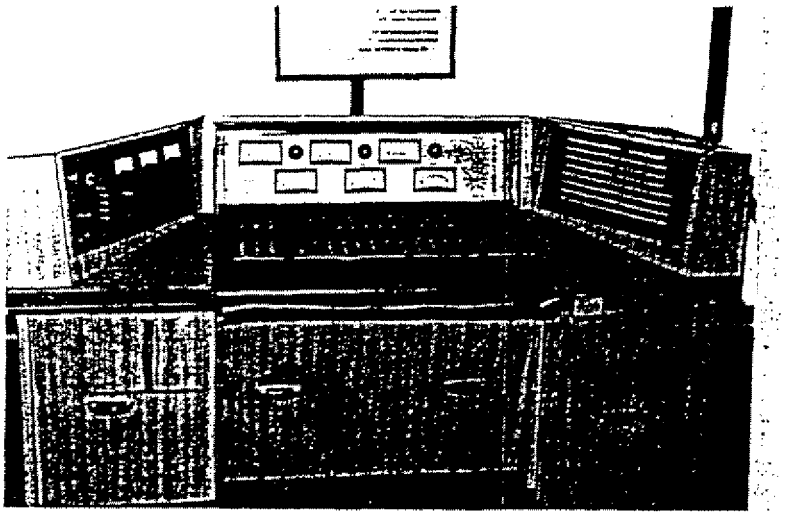
Patsy Cline's 1961 "Crazy" Session

With "Crazy," Owen Bradley had perfected the sophisticated crossover style later dubbed "The Nashville Sound." But the night it went on tape, Patsy Cline had yet to find a satisfactory way to deliver the vocal.

By Steve Morley

Patsy Cline with Selby Coffeen, who worked as the engineer on "Crazy" and numerous other Cline recordings. Coffeen is displaying one of the "lucky slippers" he wore whenever he was mixing.
Photo courtesy of Charlie Dick.

"Crazy"
Recorded by Patsy Cline
Written by Willie Nelson
Produced by Owen Bradley
Recorded: August 21, 1961, at Bradley Studio
Musicians Present: Harold Bradley, Floyd Cramer, Buddy Harman, Walter Haynes, Randy Hughes, Grady Martin, Bob Moore and The Jordanaires (Hoyt Hawkins, Neal Matthews, Gordon Stoker, Ray Walker)



If Knobs Could Talk:
The Bradley Studio board, designed and built for Decca by a New York firm, Audiotax Associates, was used from 1958 until around 1972. Such hits as Patsy Cline's "Crazy" and "I Fall To Pieces" and Marty Robbins' "El Paso" were mixed on this board.
Photo: Rick Malkin/Country Music Foundation.

On the 21st, she was to cut a new song written by a transplanted Texan named Willie Nelson. In retrospect, it's clear that Nelson's nasal, choppily phrased demo proved a major stumbling block to Patsy's own interpretation.

Patsy Cline's career reached a turning point in 1960, when she signed with Decca Records. She had spent the previous six years under contract to William McCall's Four Star label, where she languished largely due to mediocre material. Once free of her Four Star contract, which required her to record songs from the label's publishing affiliate, it was almost as though a curse had been lifted.

Her first session as a Decca artist resulted in the hit single "I Fall To Pieces." In the past, she'd been reluctant to record ballads, because uptempo songs had always served her well onstage. However, Patsy's much-loved uptempo numbers had an unfortunate side effect — they tended to lock her vocal phrasing into predictable rhythmic patterns. Cline's producer Owen Bradley, who preferred to let a singer command a song rather than the other way around, hit upon an unobtrusive, floating style of arrangement which encouraged Patsy to really make a song *her* own. With "I Fall To Pieces," Patsy reached a new plateau, both with phrasing and emotional depth.

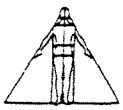
The musical obstacles in Cline's path had seemingly been lifted, but on a stormy June day in 1961, another obstacle presented itself. Patsy's brother had driven her to a sewing shop to purchase costume decorations and was returning Cline to her Madison home when they collided with another car in the pounding rain. Patsy, seriously injured, spent a month in Madison Hospital and another month convalescing at home before returning to the studio on August 17.

Hobbling in on crutches, a bandaged Patsy cut four tunes including the Bob Wills standby "San Antonio Rose" and Cole Porter's "True Love." On the 21st, she was to cut a new song written by a recently transplanted Texan named Willie Nelson. The song, a ballad titled "Crazy," had been offered to Cline as a consolation prize of sorts by her friend, singer Billy Walker. Walker played her a tape of Nelson's "Funny How Time Slips Away," which she asked to record. Walker declined, having decided to cut and release the song himself, but he surrendered "Crazy," which he thought would be well-suited to Patsy. Owen Bradley agreed, as did Patsy's manager Randy Hughes and her husband Charlie Dick. Patsy didn't.

While Owen Bradley recently affirmed that Patsy "loved the song," it has become clear in retrospect that she didn't warm up to Nelson's nasal, choppily phrased demo version, which proved a major stumbling block to Patsy's own interpretation.

"It was really a rough demo — wrong chords and everything," affirms Owen's brother Harold Bradley. Bradley also notes that the demo didn't flow well due to a rhythmic disagreement between the drums and the piano. While the drummer attempted a bluesy shuffle similar to the one which ultimately surfaced in Cline's version, the pianist fought it with stiff, straight 8th note arpeggios. Pedal steel dominated the song, rendering it little more than just another C&W ballad. The repeated bridge and verse — without the benefit of the half-step modulation in the shortened Owen Bradley arrangement — left the demo version seeming somewhat static as well.

Owen Bradley would succeed in ironing out the demo's



CHAMBUL CHIROPRACTIC CENTER

Applied Kinesiology, Nutrition and Electro-acupuncture for treatment of the whole person.

L. Chambul B.S., D.C., F.I.A.C.A.
Green Hills • 292-1400

·NASHVILLE·
MONITOR

Musicians Know
You Can Never Get Too Much Monitor...

Get Nashville Monitor At Home
12 Times A Year

To Subscribe
send name & address
with check or money order for $25 to
Nashville Monitor:
PO Box 121092 • Nashville, TN, 37212

weaknesses, creating a track of great subtlety and sophistication. Patsy, however, continued to struggle with the demo. Charlie Dick feels that Patsy had gotten too "locked into the demo. She was trying to do it like Willie was doing it, and it just didn't come off," he recalls. "Willie's demo didn't have too much soul."

The session for "Crazy" proved to be a particularly challenging one. According to session guitarist Harold Bradley, four hours were "spent just on that one track. Back then, that was unheard of," he says. "You had to get four songs cut or they'd put you in front of a firing squad. My brother (Owen) wasn't like that. If you got one song, and he was pleased, you did good."

The session proved to be a particularly challenging one. Four hours were "spent just on that one track," says Harold Bradley. "Back then, that was unheard of. You had to get four songs cut or they'd put you in front of a firing squad."

Bradley points out a significant aspect of that particular session which he feels partially accounts for the unusual amount of time spent.

"The sound on 'Crazy' pretty much defines what we call 'The Nashville Sound.' Owen was getting that arrangement to the nth degree."

Bradley's way of combining textures revolutionized the way music was recorded in Nashville in the early '60s, and "Crazy" is indeed a definitive example.

Bradley began by expecting his musicians to be innovative. Walter Haynes, who played pedal steel on the track, specifically remembers that "Owen didn't want any kind of typical steel sound on it, so he said to come up with something that didn't sound like steel."

Haynes put his 3-neck Bigsby through a Fender amp and a Bigsby foot volume and added tremolo. The vibe-like effect is ethereal, hanging over the song like little halos of sound.

Though it is virtually inaudible until the last waning chord, a similar texture is obtained by Owen Bradley on organ. Bradley had traded his piano bench sometime earlier for a seat in the control room, where he could oversee all aspects of his productions. On "Crazy," he made a rare exception, playing live as the track went to three-track tape.

His successor on piano, Floyd Cramer, kicked the tune off with his trademark grace note figure; his sparse, tasteful fills in the song's crescendoing bridge introduced a mildly bluesy element, as did Grady Martin's salty, Les Paul-esque lick at the bridge's tail end.

Owen Bradley's gift with textures is especially evident on the combined lines of Bob Moore on string bass and Harold Bradley on tic-tac. Harold explains why the combination was so effective.

"All the notes on an acoustic bass did not record evenly, and they would drop out," says Bradley. "(On tic-tac) I could play more interesting lines than the bass — something that moved a little more, but wasn't as boomy as string bass."

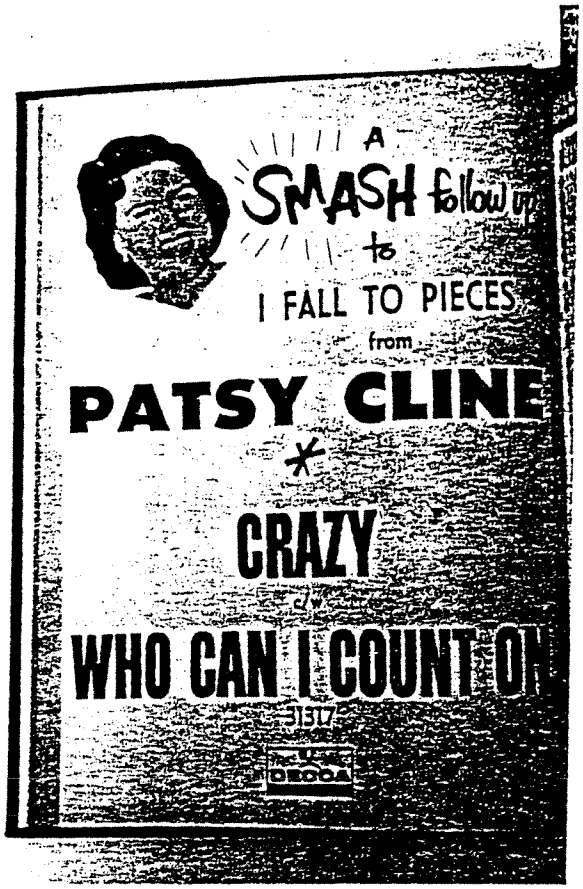
The "tic-tac" sound came about when Harold started muting strings to overcome an inherent intonation problem on the Danelectro 6-string bass.

"If you played open strings on the Danelectro, it would be out of tune and beat against the bass. So I muted it with my hand, which is where you got the click. That's why I muted it," he says, "because if you let it ring it was terrible. I didn't realize I was developing that technique for it!"

Bradley goes on to discuss his introduction to the instrument, explaining that it was typical for Owen to contract three guitarists for a session. This occasionally made it necessary for him to ask one of them to lay out.

"Well, we didn't like to lay out," Harold says, "because the next move is lay out the door! Hank Garland brought in a 6-string Danelectro tic-tac bass guitar. We decided that would be a neat instrument to use, and that way we'd all be working."

On "Crazy," Harold didn't have quite so much competition — while three guitarists played, only two were intended to go on tape. The third was Patsy's manager Randy Hughes, who would stand near her, playing rhythm. Both Harold Bradley and Charlie Dick



The October, 1961 *Billboard* ad celebrating the release of "Crazy." (Illustration © 1961, BPI Communications, Inc. Used with permission from *Billboard* magazine.) Photo: Rick Malkin/ CMF.

maintain that it made Patsy more comfortable.

"Randy would stand behind her and play guitar just for her benefit," says Dick. "He was not heard on the record."

On this particular session, not even her manager's cue guitar was enough to make her comfortable. Her uncertainty about how to deliver the song, combined with the lingering pain and fatigue from her auto accident, kept Patsy from getting a satisfactory performance on tape.

It is of historical interest to note that, until now, Patsy's difficulty with the track had been attributed mostly to pain from cracked ribs. Owen Bradley himself makes a statement to that effect in Ellis Nassour's biography of Cline. However, that theory has been re-evaluated for this article. Cline's ability to cut four tracks a mere four days earlier suggests that pain alone was not the obstacle. And, as Charlie Dick points out, "if she was hurting and couldn't get the notes, why would she spend three hours trying to do it?"

Owen Bradley now feels that, if rib pain was a factor, it was more likely that she "couldn't sustain the notes" rather than not being able to sing them. Harold agrees with the notion that Patsy's inability to make a stylistic breakthrough with the song was the biggest problem.

So, while the record stands revised, that does nothing to alter the fact that only the track to "Crazy" could be completed that night. For the first and only time in her career, Patsy Cline would have to overdub a vocal.

A look at the Bradley Studio logbooks reveals a Cline session scheduled three weeks later, on September 15. Because no Union record exists to indicate that any musicians were booked for that session, it is highly probable that Patsy did the vocal at that time.

It was just a matter of getting Patsy to approach the song differently and make it her own rather than following the phrasing of Willie's demo, claims Charlie Dick. And if health had been a consideration weeks before, it wasn't any longer; Patsy Cline the consummate professional had returned to form.

"Singing it was no problem when she went back in," says Dick.

The record, which topped the country charts and made the pop Top 10, was another plateau for Cline as well as for Owen Bradley, whose novel "Nashville Sound" had arrived as a force with which to be reckoned.

Billy Walker, who could have had the first shot at recording the song, realizes just how special Patsy's version turned out to be.

"If I'd have put it out, it might not have even *been* a hit," says Walker (who, incidentally, was scheduled to be on the plane that took Cline's life on March 5, 1963).

"There are certain times," Walker says, "when all the right elements come together on a song, and it's just a magical thing."

The magic in the grooves of "Crazy" still casts a powerful spell, indeed.

UPtown's
•SMOKE SHOP•

GIFTS OF DISTINCTION —
MORE THAN JUST A SMOKE SHOP

- Finest in premium cigars
- Finest in pipes and tobaccos
- Expert pipe repair
- Large selection of imported cigarettes
- Imported beers from around the world
- Large selection contemporary greeting cards
- Fresh gourmet coffees

* BIGGEST AND BEST *
HUMIDOR IN THE AREA

10% OFF
(With This Advertisement)

RIVERGATE MALL
1000 Two Mile Pkwy
(Center Court)
859-9301