

In a town where two major-label producers, Jimmy Bowen of MCA and Jim Ed Norman of Warner Brothers, are responsible for almost 60 percent of the country-music output, David Malloy stands out as a gutsy and successful independent Nashville producer. He's manned the boards for Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton, Eddie Rabbitt, Rosanne Cash and Rodney Crowell, J.D. Souther and Tanya Tucker, and he's said to have logged in over 25 number-one records.

By his own perception, Malloy stands between pop and traditional country. "I'm not an MTV producer and I'm not really a hard-country producer," he says. Malloy won't settle for recycling the "same old steel licks." Country music coming out of Nashville, in his estimation, has been slow to accept the tide of technical quality and the young sounds flooding through pop/rock. Malloy wants a pop/rock-quality sound and state-of-the-art technology for his country productions, and he believes digital is the way to achieve this.

To demonstrate his drive for young-sounding country music, Malloy interrupts the conversation to have his studio engineer play a demo they're assembling for 25-year-old Alabama-born Anthony Crawford. Crawford is recently

current fact of life in Music City—the limited sales of country records. More Nashville producers are using digital, the public is growing to like it, and the competition is picking up on it. But ironically, country can't support the high cost, for the sales just aren't there. The big budgets available to pop/rock productions aren't generally accessible to a country producer.

It was the fulfillment of a four-year dream, then, when Malloy recently went to Los Angeles to produce Dolly Parton's *Real Love*, digital all the way. Producing an established hitmaker like Parton not only offered a large budget. Malloy was convinced he could make Parton sound like she never had before. "Traditional country puts the vocal way out front," he says, "and everything else is to the wayside." On *Real Love*, Malloy put instrumentation upfront with Parton's vocal via a JVC PCM-3324.

In putting together an artist's presentation, Malloy sees himself as having several advantages. He doesn't play an instrument ("only the guitar—poorly") and therefore doesn't approach recording from the perspective of any one instrument. "In my mind I can play any instrument," he says. To translate the creative process to paper or to an instrument, Malloy employs excellent technicians like session guitarist Billy Walker. Malloy sings into a tape recorder when he writes music, or just vocalizes in the studio, and his musicians immediately reproduce what he sings.

Malloy looks for a hit from the beginning. "A record's pretty much got to sound like a hit from the basic track," he maintains. "Nowadays, you really have to write a record more *per se* than a song."

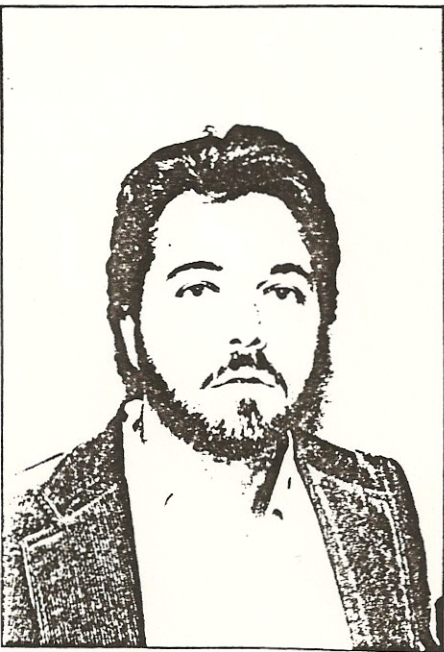
Malloy is a music brat. He grew up learning the business from his producer-father Jim Malloy, first in California until David was 13 and then in Nashville. Three years ago, he and fellow producer-songwriter Even Stevens built Emerald Sound Studio on Nashville's Music Row. Malloy spent time in L.A. accumulating experience with a number of studios, and worked at Caribou and Muscle Shoals. Back in Nashville, he worked on studio design with engineer Pete Granet. As they inquired into studio architects, Jack Edwards' name kept coming up. Emerald Sound is the result of their collaboration.

The purpose in building Emerald was to offer a studio that could record anything from jazz to hard rock to bluegrass. Malloy sees Nashville becoming a center for all styles of popular music, and Emerald serves that need.

David Malloy's New Country Rhythms

PRODUCING

by Lynn and Bob Gillen



off the road after touring with Neil Young, for whom he sang backup and played guitar and mandolin. "This is country music's new sensation," says Malloy as he introduces Crawford. Malloy believes an artist with an instantly recognizable voice is hit material, and Crawford has just that kind of voice.

The chances of Malloy putting Anthony Crawford on the charts are very good. In the 10 years he produced Eddie Rabbitt, Malloy lined his walls with awards. Working in the conventional analog recording format with Rabbitt, Malloy consistently turned out a quality product. Although the two have since gone their separate ways, Malloy and Rabbitt continue to share one critical resource: the Garage, a 24-track studio built behind their offices on Music Row.

Malloy's efforts to bring digital quality to country music continually confront a