

campus

# Mel Tillis' band fiddles, but Aggs don't catch fire

By AVA KING  
Special to The Battalion

Friday night was a night for toe tappin', hand clappin', and two-steppin' in the aisles at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Mel Tillis, the stutterin' boy, brought his show before a near sellout MSC Town Hall audience. For country music lovers it was an evening of quality entertainment.

Tillis' versatile backup band, The Statesiders, opened the show with a 15-minute set of traditional and progressive country music. They got the audience clapping with their opening number, "Stay a Little Longer." The highlights of their set included "The South's Gonna Do It Again," "Boogie Grass Band," and "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" featuring steel guitarist Paul Franklin.

I have never before seen a band enjoy itself so thoroughly on stage. The Statesiders must have come to College Station with the intention of leaving a good time. The antics of lead guitarist and of bass guitarist, Larry Lee, kept the audience laughing as they took turns stealing the spotlight.

When M-M-Mel made his stage entrance, the crowd rose to its feet,

Review

hopping and clapping in time to his opener, "I've Got the Horse." That was the first, and almost the last, appropriate response the audience gave.

Tillis swung through a string of his hits, including "Burning Memories," "There Ain't No California," which he refers to as the story of his life, "Send Me Down to Jackson," "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town," and "Stomp Them Snakes."

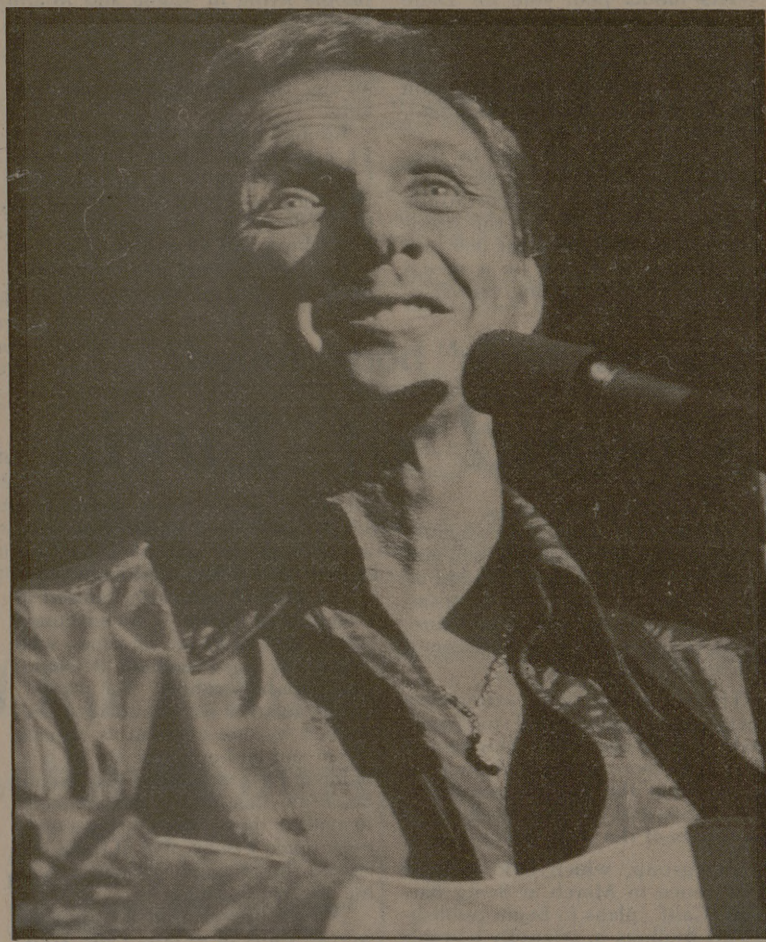
Backstage after the show he told the story of his recent single, "Coca Cola Cowboy" from the movie "Eve Which Way But Loose." The lead singer of the movie, Clint Eastwood, heard the song and made a \$1,000 bet with Tillis that it would be a hit.

"Well, I didn't think there was any way that song would go anywhere," Tillis said. "It turned out that he (Eastwood) was right and I was wrong, so I had to pay up."

"I don't try to guess on what's going to be a hit and what's not any more," Tillis said.

The entire show went well with tight harmonies and tight, well-rehearsed instrumentals. The band even threw in its token rock number, "Long Train Running," by the Doobie Brothers.

If there was a flaw in the show it was the audience. The approximately 6,000 Aggies who gathered for the event were listless and unresponsive. The general aura of apathy



M-m-m-mel Tillis

Country-western singer Mel Tillis performed for a crowd of 6,000 at Texas A&M Friday night. Town Hall sponsored the concert, held in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

that has hung over the campus since the football team's loss to Tech last week seemed to have spread to the confines of Jollie Rollie.

Mel Tillis and The Statesiders put on a good show and deserved an appropriate audience response. The audience refused to be fired up. It took a double-timed, four-fiddle version of "The Orange Blossom Special" to get the audience back on its feet and clapping. But they didn't stay there for long.

Tillis recited some advice given him by the King of Western Swing, Bob Wills: "If you want to stay in this business, hire you a fiddle player."

Tillis took the advice.

"I hired every fiddle player I could find. Got 'em on special at K-Mart," he joked. "You can get you one, too."

It seems Wills was right about the fiddlers. Tillis' four evoked the greatest audience response with "Orange Blossom Special," "Faded Love," and a tune by band member Ken Sears, "Thunder Road."

Tillis travels and records with the Statesiders, a 10-piece band of four fiddlers, three guitarists (lead, bass, and steel), a pianist, drummer and horn player.

Tillis explained many performers, in order to save money, will hire local musicians in the town where they are appearing to play backup. He thinks that it is cheating the public to perform without a full, practiced band because the music is less polished.

"I owe my fans. I am indebted to them for my success," he said.

"When I can't afford to hire a good band, that's when I quit."

## Cuban role in Caribbean worries U.S.

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — The United States is discovering the Caribbean once again — and finding Fidel Castro's footprints on beaches that had been off-limits to Cubans the last time America bothered to look.

The information coming to light marks the Caribbean as the latest arena for ideological, military and economic competition between the two superpowers.

It took the presence of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba to renew America's interest in the Caribbean — a strategic region generally ignored by the United States except in times of crisis.

Other crises that have at-

tracted U.S. attention to the region during the past two decades included the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the 1965 civil war in the Dominican Republic and the 1970 discovery of a Soviet submarine base in Cuba.

But there were signs of trouble in the Caribbean even before the United States accused the Soviet Union last month of secretly stationing a combat brigade in Cuba.

Last spring, a coup d'etat swung tiny Grenada's government toward the left. Jamaica, Guyana and St. Lucia also took turns to the left in recent years.

And the left-wing Sandinista guerrillas took power in

Nicaragua last summer, overthrowing the right-wing dictatorship of Gen. Anastasio Somoza.

Not surprisingly, Cuba, which virtually ignored its hemispheric neighbors since the 1967 defeat of Ernesto "Che" Guevara's Havana-backed guerrillas in Bolivia, is again playing an active role in the area.

Cuban advisers, mostly civilians, have been sent to such Caribbean countries as Guyana, Jamaica and Grenada. Some 200 to 250 Cubans are known to have arrived in Nicaragua after the revolution.

President Carter has called Cuban foreign intervention a "major threat."

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