



Now here's the thing. Given the UK media's obsession with anniversaries from the serious to the frivolous, is it not strange that there appear to be virtually no major commemorations planned to mark the death 50 years ago this month of one of the most influential and successful singers of all time, **Jim Reeves**? He was an exceptional artist who broke through musical barriers to appeal to all types of easy listening fans including, of course, a large number of country music devotees and since his tragic early passing interest in his work only seems to have grown, helped by the release of dozens of posthumous tracks and overdubs. Yes, those past fifty years are certainly worth remembering.

Radio 2 produced an excellent documentary last year on Reeves but will not be repeating it or doing anything new although a spokesman said the station would "no doubt be celebrating his life and work in the future".

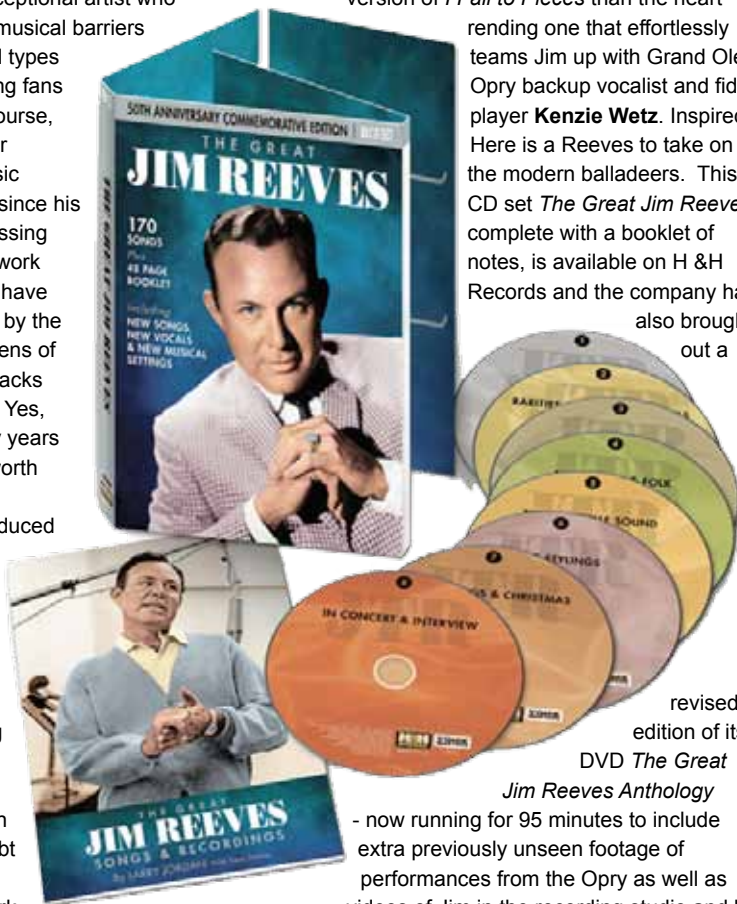
No other major radio set up appears to be planning anything special. In fact, when did you last hear a Jim Reeves track on radio?

Now a logical explanation might well be that this, after all, is music that's at least 50 years old and it has had its day. Not true! Just released is a totally stunning box set featuring 170 Reeves songs remastered and remixed including 92 with totally new backings and 62 sparkling overdubs of new songs. The overall impression is that Jim sounds as if he came out of the studio last week! The production is contemporary, technically impressive and hugely enjoyable. A pat on the back for the gent whose idea it was and who supervised the whole project, **Larry Jordan**. It really is quite extraordinary, and at times breathtaking, how he's brought Jim right up to date without losing the

unique Reeves appeal.

I suggest that many of the tracks would fit effortlessly into the playlists of several of our leading radio stations such as Magic and Smooth FM. The new version of *Distant Drums* could be a hit all over again if given half a chance and, apart from the original by **Patsy Cline**, I have never heard a better version of *I Fall to Pieces* than the heart

rending one that effortlessly teams Jim up with Grand Ole Opry backup vocalist and fiddle player **Kenzie Wetz**. Inspired! Here is a Reeves to take on the modern balladeers. This 8 CD set *The Great Jim Reeves*, complete with a booklet of notes, is available on H & H Records and the company has also brought out a



revised edition of its DVD *The Great Jim Reeves Anthology*

- now running for 95 minutes to include extra previously unseen footage of performances from the Opry as well as videos of Jim in the recording studio and live in concert.

As I finished writing the above, news reached me that H&H records, frustrated with the lack of media interest, will be putting on a major TV tribute programme on the actual anniversary. Titled *The Great Jim Reeves*, it is due to air later in the year on Sky and Freesat. H&H boss **Steve Brink** tells me "We hope to create a spiritual dimension to the programme as plainly the Reeves voice still has the power to stir people".

As a footnote, if you are one of those many Reeves admirers who prefer original recordings, there is a real treat in store this month with the release of a 3CD set from Bear Family *Jim Reeves The Complete Abbot Recordings Plus* featuring 76 rare tracks from his pre RCA days with comprehensive notes and production support by **David Bussey**.

The recent funeral of **Bob Powel** was understandably a sad occasion but it was good to meet up with friends and colleagues. Many an anecdote was exchanged in the pub afterwards and I have the feeling that Bob would have been delighted and just a little surprised at the way he was remembered with so much warmth and affection. I was sorry to hear that **Tom Baker** has decided not to proceed with his biography of Bob. I understand the reasons and do hope he might have a change of heart in the months ahead. The gathering included the underrated **Aubrey Lovejoy** who told me that he'll be doing a special **Charley Pride** tribute concert on August 3rd at the Lakeside Club, Frimley Green with his talented group **Tennessee Rain** and special guest **John Permenter**. All Charley's hits and more!

The rise and rise of the British duo **The Shires** continues. Six months ago, they were totally unknown and now they have a Nashville recording contact under their belt with their debut album out soon, key support from the BBC and this month they undertake a short countrywide tour. The Shires have a really cool contemporary style and sound and are a real boost to the scene. However **Stuart Cameron**, who runs the successful Hotdisc service that has helped many a new act over the years raises an interesting point. "What would have happened" he asks "if the CMA and the Beeb had put this kind of effort into British talent years ago? It's a tragedy that both didn't invest in homegrown country music over the past decades and really sell the genre. Whilst I applaud the efforts to support The Shires, it has come all too late for many of Britain's most talented singers". Discuss!

This month **Garth Brooks** returns to Europe for sell-out concerts in Dublin and reflecting the anticipation and excitement is local star **Jim Devine's** new single penned by **Pat Mclean** *Ireland's Turning Country* (Applause records). A happy, infectious toe tapper that has the feel good factor. As I've commented before, the Irish really know how to make good country music! Dare I suggest that Garth invites Jim to perform it as a warm up to the main show?