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If you like Kenny Chesney and Rascal Flatts, you'll hate Little Darlin' Records.

The renegade country label sprang came from the big dreams of the 1960s. Bodacious songs such as Stonewall Jackson's "Pint of No Return," Groovy Joe Poovey's "He's in a Hurry (To Get Home to My Wife)" and Johnny Paycheck's "(Pardon Me) I've Got Someone to Kill" were drenched in steel guitar, edgy vocals and pop-top bass.

Aubrey Mayhew, now 78, is the colorful producer of Little Darlin'. He's also known as one of the nation's biggest collectors of 1960s JFK memorabilia, with more than 300,000 Kennedy related items in his possession. He's so obsessive about Kennedy, he purchased the infamous Texas Book Depository at a 1970 auction.

Mayhew is overseeing the Little Darlin' reissues, which will roll out through 2005 and 2006 via Koch Records/Nashville.

Little Darlin's hard mid-1960s country is truly renegade, especially since it was recorded when Nashville was steeped in the lush strings and fancy arrangements of the countrypolitan movement.

There are nearly 5,000 unreleased sides of Little Darlin' material, including live tracks from bluesman Lightnin' Hopkins, gospel songs from Johnny Paycheck and material from an unlikely source, Clint Eastwood.

"Clint always said he was a singer," Mayhew recalled from Koch's Nashville office. "But he got trapped into doing an album by some slick guys in Philadelphia. This is when he was doing the 'Rawhide' thing."

In 1961, the singing cowboy got off to an inauspicious start when he cut the country-pop single "Unknown Girl" that was more Bobby Goldsboro than Clint Eastwood. "That put a bitter taste in his mouth," Mayhew said.

Eastwood decided to give music another try when an industry friend told Eastwood that Mayhew could be trusted. By 1970, Little Darlin' had morphed into Certron Records. And so Eastwood went to Nashville to cut the Certron single "Burning Bridges," featured in his movie "Kelly's Heroes" (which also co-starred roots singer Harry Dean Stanton) and "six or eight other things," according to Mayhew.

Today, Little Darlin' has a sympathetic ear in Nick Hunter, the general manager of Koch Records/Nashville and a regular face at Wrigley Field. They go way back; Mayhew first hired Hunter in 1967 as sales head at Little Darlin'.

The seeds of "Little Darlin'" go back even further; it started out as a New York-based "hip pocket operation," in Mayhew's words.

"Little Darlin' was a country phrase people used," said Mayhew, who hails from Gretna, Va. "Well, maybe I used it more than anybody."

Mayhew is a lifer in the record business.

In 1961, he was working at Pickwick Records, then a 99-cent budget line based in New York. Mayhew had heard about a down-on-his-luck Nashville singer named Donald Lytle. After a little investigating, Mayhew found Lytle sleeping under the Shelby Street Bridge in Nashville. He soon changed Lytle's name to the more renegade-sounding Johnny Paycheck. (The first Johnny Paycheck was a Des Moines boxer who was one of Joe Louis' tomato cans in his "Bum of the Month" fights.)

With Paycheck on board, Mayhew asked Pickwick to start a country label. "They didn't want to do it, but they allowed me to release a record 'The Girl They Talk About' with him, which got some action," Mayhew said. "Then we recorded 'A-11' in New York with George Jones' band. That took off and that's when I started building Paycheck."

After "A-11" hit, Mayhew quit Pickwick and set up his own office in New York, and then in 1966 moved to Nashville, where he formally launched Little Darlin'.

While at the label, Paycheck wrote "Apartment #9," which became a huge hit in December 1966 for Tammy Wynette. Mayhew and Paycheck also wrote "(Pardon Me) I've Got Someone to Kill."

"I didn't want to do what anybody else was doing, so we came up with the most extreme things we could," said Mayhew, who lives and works in the renovated Roxy movie theater in East Nashville. "Most of it came natural. Paycheck was a writer like Hank Williams. Williams was a songwriting icon, but he didn't write songs. Fred Rose Williams' publisher wrote songs. Williams had great ideas but he didn't know how to complete them. Fred would finish them up. That was like Paycheck. He was one of the best songwriters I ever met, but he was so loose and unsettled that he didn't have the patience to finish the songs."

Paycheck died in February 2003, after a long battle with emphysema. He was 64.

But during his heyday, Paycheck did his share of hell-raising.

Mayhew wrote "The Pint of No Return," which would become a signature song for Stonewall Jackson, after a night out with Paycheck. Early in his career, Paycheck was playing a nearly empty club in Secaucus, N.J. "Two girls were at a table and I went over and started talking to them," Mayhew said. "During his break, Paycheck came over. We all ended up going out after the show. Paycheck was driving. We had no idea where we were. We went down this long road and came to a pier on the seashore. It was 5 in the morning. There was a sign that said 'Point of No Return.'

"I looked at Paycheck, he looked at me. He was drunk. I wasn't. I said, 'Paycheck, you've just reached the pint of no return.' We took the girls home, went to the hotel and wrote the song. It had to be pretty important to turn down two pretty-looking women."

The ringer of the current Little Darlin' reissues is "The Little Darlin' Sound of Stonewall Jackson (The Mighty Stonewall Jackson Sings Modern Hits & Original Favorites)." Now 73, Stonewall Jackson -- his real name -- occasionally still appears at the Grand Ole Opry.

"He was with Columbia for years and put out over 60 albums," Mayhew said. "I revived Little Darlin' in 1979 after it laid dormant for 10 years. Nothing was happening with Stonewall, so I asked if he'd like to start recording again. He's pure country. I wanted to change him to the outlaw image, which was the thing going in country music at the time. I gave him a big black cowboy hat. We gave him different songs. And, boy, he resisted all of that."

Jackson was assigned to sing "Spirits of St. Louis," "Alcohol of Fame," Mayhew and Paycheck's "We're the Kind of People That Make the Jukebox Play" and Jackson's own "Listening to Johnny Paycheck."

Jackson, who has lived in the Nashville area since 1956, now lives on a 27-acre gentleman farm in Brentwood, Tenn., purchased from crooner Eddy Arnold. In a separate interview, Jackson recalled with a sigh, "Oh, the boy from New York Mayhew. I didn't like that hat they put on me. It looked like I had been out on the range for quite some time. But I didn't mind the songs much. I wrote 'Listening to Johnny Paycheck' because an attitude like 'Take That Job and Shove It' could get you in a lot of trouble in real life. You can get in trouble listening to Paycheck."

"'The Pint of No Return' goes along with country music. Hank Williams would have loved that song. My first No. 1 record was 'Life to Go' 1958 that talked about the honky tonk in town. There was a time at the Opry when they frowned about you singing anything about drinking."

And Jackson often frowned upon Mayhew's ideas. "He and I didn't get along mainly because of me trying to change his image," Mayhew said. "He's a good father and husband and a good singer, but no one would ever want Stonewall operating on him, let's put it that way."

On the recording of "Pint of No Return," Jackson's piercing vocals are framed by honky-tonk piano, blues harmonica and pedal steel, all performed by the Little Darlin' house band. It featured the late Junior Huskey on bass, Pete Wade on lead guitar, Jerry Whitehurst on piano (who went on to be pianist on "The Ralph Emery Show"), the late Nashville session whiz Kenny Butterly on drums and Lloyd Green on pedal steel. Green started with Stonewall Jackson.

"Hal Rugg pedal steel player for George Jones and Porter Wagoner also started with me," recalled Jackson before getting on his bus for a casino gig with Connie Smith in Mount Pleasant, Mich. "I'm the one who told him to put a bite in his playing. He played so smooth, he wasn't getting work. Listen to Hank Williams records. He has a bite to everything he does. You have to have that bite."

Mayhew added, "Most Nashville sidemen don't like to break the mold. They have a certain pride about them. I knew these guys very well. I wanted to do something different, and I didn't want resistance. When I saw a musician limit himself, I would push him to things he hadn't thought of doing."

Conversely, Little Darlin's upcoming reissues with Lightnin' Hopkins are modest field recordings that Mayhew made in 1968-69 with Hopkins when he was living in Houston. "I cut five albums on him," Mayhew said. "It's good stuff nobody has heard. It's just him and his guitar. There's a lot of conversation on it. I couldn't convince him I was from Nashville. He always thought I was from New York, so he wrote a song called 'The Man From New York.'

As fate would have it, the Man from New York was in Houston in November 1963 when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. At the time, Mayhew was working for the New York-based Diplomat Records.

"I was staying at the Shamrock Hotel in Houston, trying to buy some George Jones tapes from Pappy Daily the owner of Jones' Starday record label," he said. "The Kennedy assassination happened right there on television. I immediately called a friend in Houston, who brought over two tape recorders and all the tape he could carry.

"We recorded everything off the television for about 12 hours. I rushed the material back to New York, and we put out the first 'Kennedy Speeches' album. At that time, we had 300 Woolworth stores in our pocket. We got prime display. We sold about 3 million albums in four months."

This incident led Mayhew to his affinity for Kennedy memorabilia. His prize possession is the Texas Book Depository. "Why did I buy it?" he asks. "It was a premium item for my collection. I paid \$600,000 for it."

Mayhew removed the original window where Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly shot Kennedy. Mayhew claims the window is stored in Nashville, but some in Dallas argue that it is not the original window.

"There's a debate over everything in life," Mayhew said emphatically. "I don't lie! I don't cheat! I don't steal! I saw them take that window out."

In a somewhat ironic footnote, Mayhew began his Kennedy collection by purchasing hundreds of metal objects that were created with JFK's likeness. It made sense for a rebel country producer with an expansive sense of mettle.

And the Mayhew saga takes another ironic twist. After Paycheck left Mayhew, Koch's Hunter rediscovered the singer and signed him to Epic Records in 1970. Longtime colleagues Hunter and Mayhew still like to have a good time. The Little Darlin' liner notes promote an upcoming release by Bolivar Priff. But there's no such artist. It's a goof-off name for the legendary Nashville producer-songwriter "Cowboy" Jack Clement. And yet another example of that renegade Little Darlin' spirit.