

# 'Take me home ...', Denver displayed warmth in music



PACIFIC GROVE, Calif. (AP) — With such 1970s hits as "Rocky Mountain High," "Sunshine on My Shoulders" and "Take Me Home, Country Roads," John Denver was a wholesome, wire-rimmed hippie who turned out sunny music for cynical times.

In the end, he died in a setting straight out of his music, soaring over the mountains, sea and sky before his experimental plane crashed Sunday in picturesque Monterey Bay, Calif. He was 53.

"Who I am is in my songs," Denver said in a 1986 interview. "I love it when people get that."

Peter, Paul and Mary made a hit of Denver's "Leaving on a Jet Plane" in 1969, and on Monday, member Mary Travers mourned him as man who offered an alternative to angry rock and helped bind the wounds of tumultuous times.

"I think he brought a sense of optimism, a sort of naiveté we were thrilled to have after Vietnam, after Watergate, after the rising tide of cynicism of the 1970s," Travers said. "He was talking about how beautiful it was in the mountains, saying, 'There is another side to it all.'"

### "Dedicated Champion"

Denver's single-engine Y-shaped plane crashed during the afternoon in the choppy waters just offshore. His identity was confirmed Monday with fingerprints sent from Colorado.

National Transportation Safety Board spokesman George Peterson said Denver just bought the plane and ran three practice touch-and-go landings at the Monterey Peninsula Airport. He then told the tower he would be flying for about an hour.

"The aircraft was about 500 feet in the air and about 100 yards off the coast itself when the engine quit, and it went straight down into the water," Sheriff Norman Hicks said. "It just sort of dove head first, straight down into the water."

Denver had two drunken-driving arrests in Colorado and was awaiting trial on one of those charges in January. Hicks said toxicology reports are done routinely in accidental deaths, and results are expected in 10 to 14 days.

Jerry Weintraub, the singer's friend and longtime manager, said Denver had a passion for flying. Denver's father was an Air Force test pilot and taught his son to fly a Learjet, Weintraub said.

President Clinton saluted Denver as a "dedicated champion of the environment."

"His soaring music evoked the grandeur of our landscape and the simple warmth of human love," Clinton said while in South America.

Denver was born Henry John Deuschendorf Jr. in Roswell, N.M., where his father was stationed. He took his stage name from the Colorado capital, where he eventually made his home.

### Country Boy Crossover

Denver scored with songs like "Take Me Home, Country Roads," which has become West Virginia's unofficial state anthem, "Sunshine on My Shoulders," "Thank God I'm a Country Boy" in 1977 and "Annie's Song," which was written for his first wife and is a standard at many weddings. Denver wrote many of his hits; even when they were by other songwriters, he made them his own.

Fourteen of his albums went gold, and eight were ranked as platinum, with more than a million copies sold. "John Denver's Greatest Hits" in 1973 is still one of the biggest-selling albums in the history of RCA Records, with worldwide sales of more than 10 million copies. In 1975, he received the Country Music Association's top award, angering many country-and-western purists.

He is survived by children Zachary and AnnaKate from his first marriage; his second wife, Cassandra Delaney; their daughter, Jesse Belle; a brother; and his mother.

AARON STECKELBERG/DN

# 'Most Wanted' withers

BY GERRY BELTZ  
Film Critic

### Movie Review

### The Facts

**Title:** "Most Wanted"  
**Stars:** Keenan Ivory Wayans, Jon Voight, Paul Sorvino, Jill Hennessy  
**Director:** David Hogan  
**Rating:** R (language, violence)  
**Grade:** D  
**Five Words:** Waste money. See this film.

OK, who wasn't watching the front yard and let the mutt from across the street crap on our lawn?

Whoops, sorry. I mistook "Most Wanted" for crap. An apology is in order here.

Sorry, crap. Wouldn't want to offend your good name.

Fine, I know we live in an ecological society where we can recycle everything from aluminum cans to ZZ Top videos, but do we continually have to recycle movie plots without doing anything interesting with them?

Yes, true. There are exceptions to every rule. The "innocent-man-chasing-truth-while-being-chased" plot was already rehashed 10 years before Moses, and movies such as "The Fugitive" have shown the ability to breathe new life into a dying genre.

This is not the case here. James Dunn (Keenan Ivory Wayans) is a former military hero, now on death row. But when one of those ultra-secret government squads gives him a choice of joining them or

getting fried, Dunn opts for life, and his first assignment is to use a revolutionary ice-bullet (snicker) to take out a threat to our government.

The target: an unscrupulous millionaire (Robert Culp) who's been active in the black market.

Who ends up getting shot? The First Lady, and by someone other than Dunn.

Dunn gets framed for the whole thing, naturally, and the man who recruited him for the job (Jon Voight, "Anaconda") now goes about tightening the noose around Dunn's neck with all the power of the military and

other nifty secret groups behind him.

What does Dunn have in his favor? Military skills, one lone doctor (Jill Hennessy) with amateur video footage of the real shooter and a dry sense of humor.

Oh yeah. Most importantly, he's the hero.

Also, there's the usual allotment of police officers who couldn't find a duck in a barrel of pickles, plus the one government official (Paul Sorvino) who begins to solve the real puzzle behind the hoopla.

Director David Hogan ("Barb Wire") continues to count on star power and loud stunts to cover up the fact that the movie he is directing just isn't worth it. Although Wayans does bring off a funny line here and there, he still comes off with the emotional depth of artichoke dip.

If anything, Voight is the best part of this film. His over-zealous general chewing out of a library security guard is borderline hysterical, but the performance is too over-the-top to remain funny for long.

In short, "Most Wanted" has done for action films what E. coli has done for burgers.



**Busta Rhymes**  
"When Disaster Strikes"  
Elektra Records  
Grade: B

**Rampage**  
"Scouts Honor ... By Way of Blood"  
Elektra Records  
Grade: B+

### Music

With a genre that lately has been dominated by rehashed beats and rhymes, it's refreshing to see something new break through. Enter rappers Busta Rhymes and Rampage, first cousins from East Flatbush, Brooklyn, trying to overcome the trend.

Busta is definitely a bigger name on the music scene than Rampage, as Busta first broke out earlier in the decade as a member of the legendary Leaders of the New School. He also contributed vocals to the A Tribe Called Quest classic "Scenario" and is known for his debut solo album "The Coming."

Busta might be the most charismatic rapper on the scene, and his attitude attracts most everyone in hip-hop today. The album's thank-yous read like a directory of the hip-hop who's who, and on the first single,

Please see **BUSTA** on 10