The following is a catalog of a tape-recorded interview with 46 year-old Avery Dunn at the home of Kevin Dyess at 740-B Clear Brook Drive in Oxford, Mississippi. Mr. Dunn is a gospel musician and also a DJ at Bullseye 95.5, a gospel music radio station:

Introductory comments

Avery was born and raised in Oxford.

The only music Avery had early in his life was learning to play the drums in high school band (he is presently the drummer in his gospel group).

Avery's brother was also musical; he also has musical relatives who live up north in Chicago.

He relates that gospel music has spread to other parts of the country, but it all started here in Mississippi.

Avery learned that he had musical talent by just going around beating on things.

The musical events that he enjoys attending are mostly to hear other gospel performers in the area.

He became involved in gospel music when he was about ten years old with a man named Buford Johnson back in the early 1970s.

Avery says that the people up north love to hear Mississippi musicians because this type of music (gospel) has its roots here.

Avery also sings, as a lead and a backup.

Avery plays the piano by ear.
Avery describes that making music is a natural process .... it is a gift.

[elapsed time: 10 minutes]

Avery relates that there are various styles of gospel music. There is traditional gospel music, but there is also contemporary gospel which is a style that has been influenced by other styles such as Rhythm and Blues.

He says that traditional gospel music is much like the blues; it relates much to the stories of various people’s lives; but whereas the blues is somewhat sad (as the name implies), gospel music is intended to be very uplifting – it’s all about giving praise to God.

He tells that even funerals incorporate music of a celebratory nature – funerals are intended as a celebration of “going home” for the deceased.

On giving advice to someone that might aspire to becoming a gospel musician Avery says that it’s necessary to be “real” in expressing the essence of the music – he says that making music is very serious in nature.

Avery’s group gets together to practice at irregular intervals (due to everyone’s regular work schedules); they have an established repertoire of songs from which they choose to rehearse and perform.

Avery says that he performs on a weekly basis.

[elapsed time: 20 minutes]

The Lafayette County District Gospel Association is a group of churches in the area who get together every fifth Sunday to perform in Oxford.

The Christian Crusaders is the name of Avery’s gospel group here in Oxford.

Avery says that white gospel musicians (as compared to black gospel musicians) were formerly more laid back, but nowadays these musicians are performing in a more upbeat style.

The type of songs that gospel musicians perform are songs that you can relate to – these are songs about real life experiences that one might have.

Avery’s group, The Christian Crusaders, has one recording, made in 1991, which is still available today.

Avery says that there are plenty of recordings available from several groups in the Oxford area who he features regularly on his radio station.
He says that he and his group was influenced by some of the following groups:
The Pilgrim Jubilees
The Williams Brothers
The Jackson Southern Aires
The Mighty Clouds of Joy
He says that these groups are still actively performing today.

One of Avery’s favorite gospel songs is “Another Blessing.”

[elapsed time: 30 minutes]

Avery enjoys listening also to blues and R&B.

He says he has played in some non-gospel groups such as The Perrys (R&B), The Checkmates (R&B), and Soul (Soul).

Avery incorporates mainly traditional gospel music on his radio shows, although he does program some contemporary gospel as well.

He says that there are certainly people in this area who are professional gospel musicians. One of the better known groups in this area is The Spiritual QC’s from Tupelo.

There are gospel workshops (or conventions) in Mississippi, as well as Alabama, in which new talent can attend. These are places where performers are graded on their performance skill. These events often attract big name people in the gospel music world and perhaps new talent can be awarded performing contracts.

Avery says that like the blues, gospel music is popular in other parts of the world. It is not only known in the south.

Avery got involved being a radio DJ when he was visiting a station with a friend. He says he was left alone to watch over the station for a few minutes when the friend left the premises. Avery said this was just the opportunity he was hoping he might get. From then on, he has been involved with radio.

[elapsed time: 40 minutes]

The gospel radio broadcast is very much a ministry in its own right. Lots of people who are unable to get out of their homes to go to church on Sunday (or who might be in nursing homes) tune in to 95.5 on Sundays to hear Avery’s program.

The black worship services are very much spirit-moved events .... there is no set time limit (like in the white worship services) on worshiping for these people.

[elapsed time: 45 minutes]
[at this point, time was taken to flip to the other side of the tape]

Avery says that a typical day at the radio station is busy .... especially when the telephone starts ringing for musical request time.

Avery states that being a musician is a very spiritual experience and it's all about giving praise to God.

Avery has also composed some of his own music. He explains that inspiration for composing often comes at the oddest times and he has to take advantage of the creative process when it arises.

[elapsed time: 50 minutes]