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ALYCE GYNN
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#131/220 DECEMBER 2007



**JOHN THE REVEALATOR
FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #100
(+ Vote for The Best of the Best)
ROOTS BIRTHS & DEATHS
REVIEWS**

***** (or not)

SARA ARTHUR • RONNIE COSTLEY
GRAM PARSONS • PREACHER JACK

VA: Oh Santa!

VA: Swamp Gold Country Volume 2

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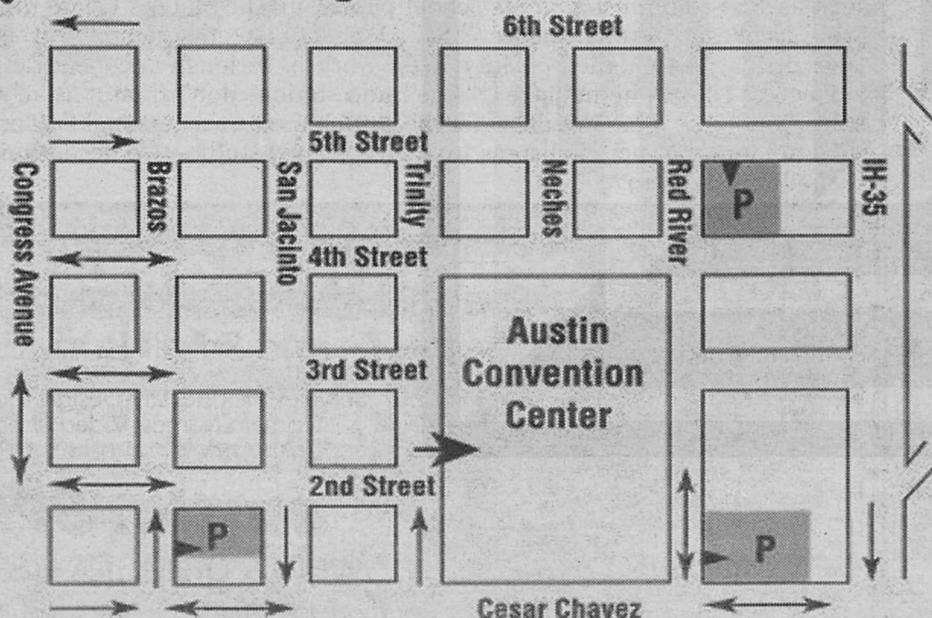
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#1 LEVON HELM: DIRT FARMER

- (Vanguard) *3RC/*AN/*BF/*BW/*CK/*DG/*GC/*GV/*MM/*NA/*RMT/*TM
2 Jesse Dayton & Brennen Leigh: Holdin' Our Own
(Stag) *CP/*DY/*KC/*LB/*MT/*RC/*TH
3 Gram Parsons: Archive Vol 1 (Amoeba) *GM/*JM/*RS/*RV/*WR
4 Dwight Yoakam: Dwight Sings Buck (New West) *PTT/*RT/*RW
5 Steve Earle: Washington Square Serenade (New West) *CS/*JE/*N&T
6 John Lilly: Haunted Honky Tonk (self) *KF/*MP/*SH
7 Robin & Linda Williams: Radio Songs (Red House) *AA/*AOK/*JA/*MF
8 Starline Rhythm Boys: Red's Place (Cow Island) *BL/*RH
9 Yarn (self) *DS/*KB
10 John Fogerty: Revival (Fantasy) *JD/*MN
11 Robert Plant & Alison Krauss: Raising Sand (Rounder) *DR
12 VA: Goin' Home: A Tribute to Fats Domino
(Tipitina's Foundation) *BK/*JP/*SC
13 The Sadies: New Seasons (Yep Roc) *JS/*MJ
14 Hacienda Brothers: Music For Ranch & Town (self) *PP/*RA
15 Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings: 100 Days 100 Nights (Daptone) *TW
16= John Sebastian & David Grisman: Satisfied (Acoustic Disc) *DJ/*RJ
VA: I'm Not There (Columbia/Sony) *B&C/*MDT
17= Sam Baker: Pretty World (self) *HT
Ryan Bingham: Mescalito (Lost Highway) *HH
18 Chip Taylor & Carrie Rodriguez: Live at Ruhr Triennele
(Train Wreck) *R&H
19= Corb Lund: Horse Soldier! Horse Soldier! (Stony Plain) *AB/*BS
VA: Always Lift Him Up; A Tribute To Blind Alfred Reed (Proper) *CL
20 Dion: Son Of Skip James (SPV) *MA
21= Mary Gauthier: Between Daylight & Dusk (Lost Highway)
Joe Henry: Civilians (Anti) *HG
22 Roger Wallace: It's About Time (Natchez Street) *BP
23= Mary Cutrufello: 35 (self) *GS
T Tex Edwards & Out On Parole:
Pardon Me, I've Got Someone To Kill (Saustex) *ST
24 Blue Rodeo: Small Miracles (TeleSoul)
25= Going South Band: Home In My Heart (California Swampland) *JH
Merle Haggard: The Bluegrass Sessions (MCM)
The Mother Truckers: Broke, Not Broken (Funzalo) *GG
Toni Price: Talk Memphis (Antone's) *DT
26= Peter Case: Let Us Now Praise Sleepy John (Yep Roc)
Kane Welch Kaplin (Compass)
27= Pieta Brown: Remember The Sun (One Little Indian)
Red Stick Ramblers: Made In The Shade (Sugar Hill)
Billy Joe Shaver: Everybody's Brother (Compadre) *TR
Justin Trevino: Take One As Needed For Pain (Heart Of Texas)



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WHERE MUSIC STILL MATTERS

*XX = DJ's ALBUM OF THE MONTH

Freeform American Roots is compiled from reports provided by 140 freeform DJs.
More information can be found at <http://tcmradio.com/far/>

THE BEST OF THE BEST: YOU GET TO CHOOSE TOO

When I launched Freeform American Roots in September 1999, as an alternative for DJs who felt marginalized—more accurately, were marginalized—by *The Gavin Report's* Americana chart, then the only one even pretending to cover the field, I started with 18 reporters. This month, some of the 13 of those pioneers who are still on the air may very well have sent in 100 reports, though I'm not about to plough through back issues or archived files to make sure none of them ever took a month off. This means that FAR is not only the oldest of the current roots/Americana charts, it's also survived considerably longer than any of its predecessors.

Over the years, I have, of course, added many more DJs to the roster, peaking out a couple three years ago at 150, currently down to 136. Most of those no longer reporting either lost or gave up their shows, but a few I had to expel for reporting Pat Green or Kevin Fowler albums. OK, not really, occasionally Green and Fowler would show up, almost always in reports from Italy for some reason, but they never came anywhere close to cracking the chart. The only real cardinal sin was consistently not reporting.

100 of just about anything is a milestone, and I'm going to mark this one with a special chart, The Best Of The Best, the pick of the first 100 FAR charts. This will run this in the March issue, partly because that gives the FARsters plenty of time to chew on it, but mainly because I'll have plenty of space to fill that month. At the same time, though, I'm offering all y'all a chance to participate. The limitation is that, as with the DJs, you can only choose ten from among the 200+ albums that made the top three for at least one month during FAR's lifetime. I could show you numbers to verify this, but take my word for it, in most every chart, the top three were well clear of the pack. It is, of course, quite possible that many sleepers will be unfairly disqualified, but you have to draw the line somewhere or wind up with a list that includes every album claiming to be roots or Americana that's been released since September 1999. However, as, again, with the DJs, I am allowing a #11 write-in if there's an album missing from the main list that you absolutely have to recognize.

To be honest, I'm not entirely sure what I'll do with your picks, integrate them with those of the FAR reporters or, which I think could be interesting and revealing, run them parallel to see quite how much disk jockeys and listeners differ in their estimates. Anyway, if you want to play, email me at john@3rdcoastmusic.com and I'll send you the list of candidates and voting guidelines. The deadline with be sometime early to mid-February.

JC

COLLEGE RADIO STATION MANAGERS

Over the years, I've heard a good deal of bitching from college station DJs, a favorite quote, though I can't remember who said it (let me know if you want the credit) being, "College stations have all the disadvantages of noncommercial radio without any of the advantages of commercial radio—and vice versa." I wouldn't go so far as to say that college station managers are universally reviled (though I've never heard anyone with a good word to say about college station program directors), but I thought their reputation for pompous self-importance was limited to those who had to put up with it. However, *The Onion* is on to them. In its 'Back-To-School' issue, college radio station managers are listed, alongside such as 'Sex columnists for the school paper,' in *The Hater's Guide* to people to avoid at college: "No one, not Secret Service agents, Green Berets, or Werner Herzog, takes themselves and their position in the world as seriously as college radio station managers. Those who manage college radio stations don't treat it as an activity, a hobby, or even a job. They consider the station their own personal fiefdom, even if it's a fiefdom that no one listens to, with a crappy studio, two decent mics, and a soundboard from 1979."

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New from
LITTLE PINK
Gladly Would We Anchor

“Virginia’s Mary Battiata sings like an angel, resembling, variously, Linda Thompson, Margo Timmins or Roseanne Cash, yet she’s clearly wrestling with some devils on this, the follow-up to Little Pink’s 2001’s debut *Cul-de-sac Cowgirl*. The album opens innocuously enough, with the gently rolling gospel folk of ‘Like A Wheel,’ but within a couple of songs it turns edgy and lined with shadows. The New Orleans-flavored, swampy ‘Charm Offensive’ warns of a heartbreaker who’s cold as ice, while in the Calexico-like noir of ‘Extinction,’ [her] world weariness is palpable ... Ultimately, though, Gladly Would We Anchor isn’t a downer, because by peering into the darkness, Battiata is wielding the illuminating rays of hope.” —Harp

“Part twang, part folk, part pop, Battiata is not the most accessible of songwriters, but she’s all the more rewarding for that.” —3rd Coast Music

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RONNIE COSTLEY DANCIN' TO JOHNNY

(Spinout ****)

Kinda wish I could put this review on Pause, give you time to sample a track or two and then ask you, from where do you think the singer and guitar player/coproducer come? The answer, for both Costley and 'Kaiser' George Miller, is Scotland and if you'd guessed that you'd have to be clairvoyant. When and where Costley, who now lives in SW Ireland, and Kaiser George, who moved to The States and fronted Rochester, NY, rock & roll band The Hi-Risers before signing on with Los Straitjackets (which tells you everything you need to know about his guitar playing right there) made this album is not revealed, though I assume in Glasgow as it features pianist Andy Alston of Del Amitri, but spiritually it was made in Memphis. About 45 years ago. Costley's stated inspirations are George Jones, Johnny Cash and Sun Records (one of his 13 originals is *Mr Phillips [Make Me A Star]*), and while he doesn't try to imitate Jones, Cash, or any of the Sun artists, in fact, with his rich, smooth balladeer voice, is more reminiscent of Frankie Laine, he still sounds like someone Phillips would have signed, while Kaiser George rolls out a marvellous synthesis of all the Sun guitar players, with an emphasis on Luther Perkins. **JC**

PREACHER JACK PICTURES FROM LIFE'S OTHER SIDE

(Cow Island ****)

Got completely sidetracked by the album title, which I initially assumed was a Hank Williams reference, as John Lincoln Coughlin, aka Preacher Jack, has five Hank songs on this album, but then I thought shouldn't it be *A Picture From Life's Other Side*? And I was off and running. Allmusic was a little ambiguous, listing eight Hank compilations with the singular title, but four others with the plural, so I went to BMI and, sure enough, the song Williams registered was *A Picture From Life's Other Side*. Which means either that Coughlin and/or his label fell into the same linguistic trap as those four compilers, or it was a deliberate play on the original title, or it was a rather unlikely reference to The Blue Sky Boys, who actually did have a song called *Pictures From Life's Other Side*. Or, of course, none of the above. This, of course, really has nothing to do with Coughlin's album, which doesn't even include the song, under any variant title, but just goes to show what kind of trouble you can get into with an Internet connection.

Pianist Preacher Jack has been a living encyclopedia of boogie woogie, honky tonk and rockabilly for some 50 years, most spent playing in and around Boston, though it wasn't until 1980 that, sponsored by George Thorogood, who had a certain amount of influence with the label at the time, he put out the first of three Rounder albums. In 1997, Solo Art released **Non-Stop Boogie**, nine solo instrumentals, including a 33 minute version of the title track, and I assume the 24 remastered tracks on this release are the vocal numbers from the same 1982 and 1996 sessions. The first batch, eight tracks recorded by the legendary Dick Burwen, are covers of Fats Domino (*I'm In Love Again*), Roy Brown (*Good Rockin' Tonight*), Kris Kristofferson (*Me And Bobby McGhee*), Elvis (*Don't Be Cruel* and *I'm Counting On You*), Hank (*You Win Again*), The Carter Family (*Will The Circle Be Unbroken*) plus one original, *After Hours*. The second, recorded on Hank Williams' birthday, starts with a string of Hank, *I Could Never Be Ashamed Of You*, *When You're Tired Of Breaking Other Hearts* and *Mind Your Own Business*, then it's back to Fats with *Blueberry Hill*, Charlie Rich's *I'll Make It All Up To You*, Hank again, or, rather, Luke The Drifter, *Too Many Parties And Too Many Pals*, Mahalia Jackson's *In The Upper Room* and Thomas Dorsey's *I'm Going To Live The Life I Sing About In My Song*, which perspicacious **3CM** readers will know from fellow Bostonite Sarah Borges' version.

Preacher Jack cites his influences as Meade Lux Lewis, Pete Johnson, his mentor Albert Ammons, Liberace and, of course, Jerry Lee Lewis, whose style comes strongly to the fore on the honky tonk and country numbers, which can be a mixed blessing, *Me And Bobby McGhee*, for instance, is pretty much a carbon copy, but for the most part his fire and passion put his own indelible stamp even on familiar material, And I have to admit that I have a soft spot for people like Coughlin, just for simply keeping the faith. **JC**

GRAM PARSONS • ARCHIVE VOL 1

(Amoeba/Fontana double CD ****)

You'd think there was nothing left, however (s)crappy, to release under Parsons' name, but Amoeba's Dave Pinz found board tapes, recorded by Owsley Stanley, of the original Flying Burrito Brothers opening two nights for The Grateful Dead at San Francisco's Avalon Ballroom in 1969 in the Dead's archives. As far away as London, the Avalon was notorious for horrible sound, though it wasn't until much later that we learned that the Burritos were equally notorious as a ragged live act that never rehearsed, so it's something of a miracle that these two CDs capture the band in a very narrow window of shit-togetherness, and, remastered, probably sounding better than actually being there back when. There's a fair amount of overlap, both night's versions of *Hot Burrito #1* and *#2*, *Lucille*, *Undo The Right*, *Sweet Mental Revenge*, *She Once Lived Here Long Black Limousine*, *We've Got To Get Ourselves Together* and *Sin City* made the cut, but, apart from *Dark End Of The Street*, *Take Me To Heart*, *Close Up The Honky Tonks*, *Dark End Of The Street* and *Train Song*, long familiar from **Gilded Palace Of Sin** or **Close Up The Honky Tonks**, there's new, albeit cover, material. One suspects, shit one *knows*, that the band would not have passed a drug test, but the fact is that there was only one Gram Parsons and one real Flying Burrito Brothers (sorry, Rick), and here they are, large as life and twice as natural. **JC**

SARA ARTHUR • TALK OF THE TOWN

(self ****)

Fronting Richmond, VA, showband Johnny Hott's Piedmont Souprize, Sara Arthur sings traditional country, including a fair amount from local heroine Patsy Cline, swing, jazz and pop. Her solo album has some traces of all these, plus a dash of 40s French cabaret, but the curious thing about it is that she's sort of a surrogate for Stephen McCarthy, who produced, wrote or cowrote eight of the 12 songs, two with Arthur, and, at various times, plays bass, pedal steel, baritone guitar, ukelele, drums, electric guitar and sings harmony vocals. This is somewhat unexpected given his background, guitarist in The Long Ryders and Gutterball (whose ex-Silos bassman Bob Rupe mastered the album), plus a twilight stint with The Jayhawks. McCarthy has obviously changed musical gears quite radically—try connecting the dots between Gram Parsons and Sara Arthur covering Lerner & Loewe's *I Could Have Danced All Night* and see where it gets you. Still, however he got from there to here, McCarthy and Arthur, plus her guitarist husband, Charles 'King' Arthur, who plays with Slaid Cleaves, have come up with a sultry, melodic album that blends a number of traditions without aping any of them. Torch music, as Nanci Griffith, for one, learned the hard way, is far more demanding than it sounds, brutally exposing vocal weaknesses, but Arthur handles it with style, grace and some superlative backing. **JC**

VA • OH SANTA! NEW & USED HOLIDAY CLASSICS

(Yep Roc ****)

Kicking off a Xmas album with Los Straitjackets' *Holiday Twist* pretty much serves notice that this one is going to be a bit different from, say, **A Diamond Rio Christmas** (which may be wonderful, but I can't bring myself to play it). The subtitle is somewhat misleading as, apart from Th'Legendary Shack Shakers' take on the traditional *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, the other eleven tracks are originals. Reflecting the label's varied roster, the sonic mix ranges from Los Straitjackets retro surf, Jake Brennan & The Confidence Men's blue-eyed soul (*Santa Gave To You What You Gave To Me*). Revered Horton Heat's psychobilly (*Santa On the Roof*), Marah's roots rock (the rather snide *New York Is A Christmas Kind Of Town*), Chatham County Line's progressive bluegrass (*Oh Santa!*) and rather more dour lo-fi indie rock than I really care for from Apples In Stereo (*Holiday Mood*). The Moaners (*Something Funny In Santa's Lap*), American Princes (*This Business Of Christmas*), Cities (*So Cold This Christmas*) and Minus 5 (*Your Christmas Whiskey*). The clear standout though is Jason Ringenberg & Kristi Rose's off the wall duet, *Lovely Christmas*, with its contrasting tempos and attitudes. To be honest, I'm not sure what audience this collection is targeting, if, indeed there is any audience for such an eclectic brew, but it sure is different. **JC**

VA • SWAMP GOLD COUNTRY VOLUME 2

(Jin ****)

Rather oddly, this second volume is more successful than the first in depicting a particular Louisiana take on country music. With a few exceptions, such as Tommy Warren's *Offshore Blues* and Jim Oliver's *I Love My Saturday Night*, the 20 tracks of Volume 1 could have come from just about any local country music scene, not bad, but not swampy enough to position themselves unequivocally. Of course, a problem for Jin is that their really swampy country singles, such as Tommy McLain's magnificent version of *Sweet Dreams*, had already appeared on their primal **Swamp Gold** series. This second batch of 20 tracks, spanning over 40 years, from Johnny Webb's 1959 *Blue Yesterday* to the great Belton Richard's bilingual version of Don Gibson's *I Can't Stop Loving You*, from a 2003 CD, still occasionally goes generic—Norman Wade's two tracks, for instance, were cut at Marty Robbins' Nashville studio, so what do you expect?—but even then, Moe-D's *Old Fool In The Mirror*, with great vocals by Terry Beard, and John Bult's wonderfully twisted *Julie's 16th Birthday* sure hit the spot. For something more distinctively regional though, there's Moe D's opening *It Ain't Gonna Rain No More* and *How Long Will This Hurtin' Last*, Jimmy C Newman's equally accordion accented *You're So Easy To Love*, Dunice Theriot's *Cheatin's A Sin* with its gorgeous piano triplets, Debbie Folsie's *Her Side Of Offshore Blues* and the great Johnnie Allen's bilingual *I Wonder Where You Are Tonight*. **JC**



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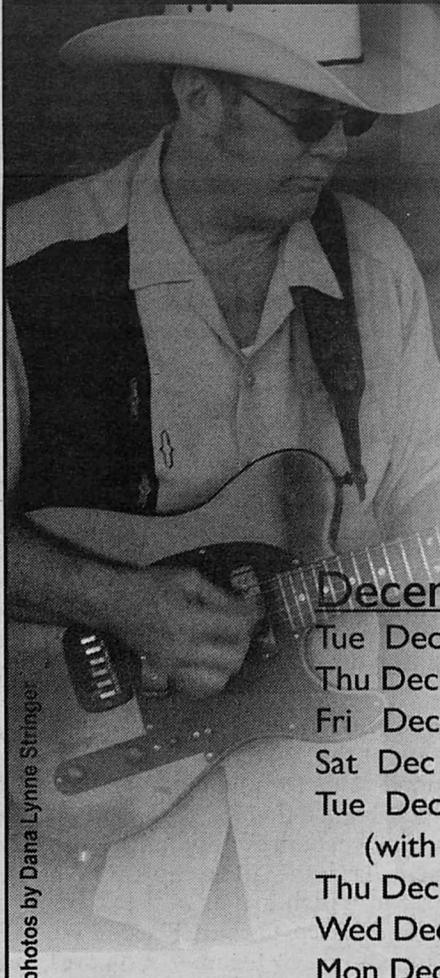
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JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Error of fact: in last month's Michael Hurwitz cover story, I referred to **Laramie** as Wyoming's state capital, but alert Minnesota reader JC Shepherd, formerly of Fort Collins, CO, was the first to point out that while Laramie is home to the University of Wyoming, the state capital is actually **Cheyenne**. "Adding to the confusion, Cheyenne is in Laramie County, which doesn't include the town of Laramie, the Laramie River or the Laramie Range..." At one point in my youth, I actually memorized the US state capitals, God knows why, but I guess it got overwritten.

◆ Last month I mentioned "Ohio subscriber **Hal Davis**," an early supporter of Troy Campbell, forgetting that he moved to Minneapolis almost a year ago. Hal notes, "The live music scene here is phenomenal. A lot of genre melding. I went to a bluegrass festival within walking distance of my new home here, and realized belatedly that this is an urban music environment. These bluegrassers, with names like Free Range Pickin', have been heavily influenced by the Gypsy Jazz-loving combos that play hereabouts. A far cry from the hardcore holdouts in Dayton. One band, called Memphis & The Meantimes, specializes in 'yaller Sun Records' era songs, and they do a fine job. My new bride is not fond of—or thinks she is not fond of—Texas and Real Country music, but I'll win her over yet."

◆ Seems I owe **Joe Stampley** something of an apology for saying, in last month's **Jeff Griffith** review, "I wish he'd been big enough to resist lumbering Griffith with so many homegrown clunkers." This was a fairly obvious assumption, but, according to a rather pissed off Stampley, it was Griffith who picked them. Why is another matter. Perhaps he was deferring to his better-known producer, I mean, Don Walser was overawed by working with Ray Benson, if you can believe that. More worryingly, he may actually have thought the Stampley stable songs were any good. Stampley was also a bit annoyed about being called "the definitive Countryopolitan has-been," boasting that Moe & Joe reunions with Moe Bandy were drawing thousands of people, which only goes to show that nostalgia ain't what it used to be. Guess I ought to say something nice about Stampley, but I just can't bring myself to do it.

◆ And I guess I ought to feel bad about telling a pretty ugly story about **Porter Wagoner** while he was on his death bed, but fuck it, he shouldn't have dumped a 16-year old Janis Martin in a strange town in the middle of the night just because the crowd like her better than him. We didn't get the legendary *Porter Wagoner Show* where I come from, but Abilene subscriber **Joe Specht** was a faithful viewer. "When it comes to the 'girl' singer on Porter's show, for me at least, 'Pretty Miss' **Norma Jean** still has to rank at the top. Even though she and Wagoner never recorded together (except on a couple of 'live' albums), their duets on the air had a special quality, something on which, at the time, you couldn't exactly put your finger. Of course we learned later about their intimate personal relationship."

◆ Joe also passed on a bit of trivia culled from Steve Eng's **A Satisfied Mind: The Country Music Life Of Porter Wagoner** (Rutledge Hill Press, 1992). Seems the cover photo for Wagoner's 1967 LP **The Cold Hard Facts Of Life** was taken in the spartan bachelor quarters where he lived after separating from his wife, Joe adding, "One has to wonder if he and Pretty Miss Norma Jean might not have shared that couch on occasion." This may not mean much if you've never seen that cover, a stony-faced Porter standing in the door holding a suitcase, his 'wife' on the couch with another man, but it's been variously described as "brilliantly twisted" and, by *Allmusic's* Dan Cooper, as "a near-consensus choice as the hillbilly graphics howler of all time." This, of course, is utter nonsense, the title of

hillbilly graphics howler of all time belongs eternally to The Louvin Brothers' **Satan Is Real**, but, splitting the difference, **The Cold Hard Facts Of Life** artwork certainly is a classic of its kind.



◆ One surprise to me, and Joe when I passed it on to him, was finding **Hank Thompson** quoted as saying, "I had no idea that *The Wild Side of Life* would become a hit record, I really wasn't that excited about the song. It actually came out as the B side of the record. We recorded it because it had been popular by Jimmie Heap & The Melody Masters in Taylor, TX. After the A side made a little splash, the disc jockeys turned it over and it became a smash hit." Joe added that Thompson's A side was *Crying In The Deep Blue Sea* (remember that one?) and that the flipside of Jimmy Heap's original version on Imperial was *When They Operated On Papa They Opened Mama's Male!*

◆ I met **Hank Thompson** once, in early 1991, when I went down to San Antonio with Don Walser & The Pure Texas Band, who were opening for him at **The Blue Bonnet Palace**. Unfortunately my memories of the occasion have boiled down to recalling my fascinated horror at Thompson's hopelessly unrealistic jet black rug and still getting a frisson of revulsion when recalling the venue, far and away the bleakest and nastiest joint I've ever seen. I mean, we're talking negative ambience here, the place was a cross between an aircraft hanger and a concrete bunker without any of the charm of either. On the plus side, I did score a *The Older The Fiddle, The Sweeter The Tune* T-shirt for Gene Elders' 40th birthday.

◆ Come to think, I also met **Porter Wagoner** once, backstage at the Grand Old Opry, That would have been around 1986 when I was still playing in the majors, writing for *Time Out In London*, but the encounter left no impression that's survived the years.

◆ Specht also sent me an essay, 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Elvis,' by William McKeen from the August 2007 issue of *American History*, which contained this fascinating nugget: "During his Vegas period, **Elvis** ended up after-hours singing gospel music through the night with **James Brown**, who said Elvis was the only man he knew, white or black, who knew more gospel songs than he did."

◆ "Not complaining," but **Miss Leslie** has had some brutally direct experience with her Juke Joints in the difficulties touched on in last month's review of Kathleen Hudson's **Women In Texas Music** (UT Press). Mentioning a San Antonio area dancehall that "wouldn't even listen to Amber [Digby]'s CD" because their crowd "doesn't like girl singers," she observes "The

girl thing is an obstacle—one that I continually work around, but still an obstacle. A well-known honky tonk I play at recently said that they wouldn't allow more than one 'girl singer' a month. There's a perception that 'girl singers' equate to a small crowd. The problem is that it's not a girl singer thing. I've only been around for three years. Amber has been actually out there with a regular band trying to promote herself much less than that. We're relatively new—but we are labeled 'girl singers' along with women who don't have professional bands and have the musicality of a karaoke singer."

◆ It didn't fit into the cover story, but I thought **Jesse Taylor** fans would be interested in this footnote from Alyce Guynn: "At the time of his passing, we had completed the **Deal Me In** book and had several other projects either in process or the idea stage. We had actually begun our second book, **The Other Side**, where I would interpret his colored drawings with my poetry, (whereas in **Deal Me In**, Jesse had interpreted my poems with his black and white drawings) and I had completed nearly half of the poems which Jesse had seen and given his approval. Unfortunately, I have not been able to move forward with this book very swiftly since I don't have Jesse any more. I am still plugging away, however. The other project was Jesse's memoirs. He had asked me to help him put together his stories into a memoir, and I have many hours of notes and interviews toward that end. That book, too, has not moved forward, for various reasons."

◆ Can't remember if I ever told the story about **Jesse Taylor** and **Joe Ely's** shortlived career as roofers, but it came back to me while thinking about his memoirs. Jesse's version was that at the height of a Lubbock summer, he and Joe decided to beat the heat by starting work at first light and they'd made great progress at removing a roof when their boss arrived and asked them what they were doing. They explained their strategy and he told them, "You stupid little shits, that's the wrong house."

◆ Following up on the September feature, 'None Of The Above,' about the pitiful choices offered to its members for the **Americana Music Association's** 2007 Awards, if you missed the outcome, **Patty Griffin** took both Artist and Album (**Children Running Through**), **The Avett Brothers** got both Duo Group and New/Emerging, Instrumentalist went to **Buddy Miller** and Song to **Darrell Scott's Hank Williams' Ghost**. I have nothing against Patty Griffin, in fact I think she's outstanding in her field. Trouble is, that field is by no means Americana. I've heard rumors that the AMA is close to flat broke because too many members aren't renewing. I wonder why? Could it possibly be that they're just not interested in belonging to the AAAMA?

◆ This year's **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, December 14th-24th at the Austin Convention Center will have some added value for music lovers on top of the always fine performance lineup. **Texamaricana**, with the South Austin Museum of Popular Culture, are debuting the **Austin Artists Autograph Bar**, a five booth extravaganza at which artists will personalize copies of their CDs and DVDs. Barbara K says, "We will have a posting on our site [www.texamaricana.org], but probably not until very early December. This bazaar opportunity arose not quite a month ago and we are flapping our wings as fast as we can to get it off the ground."

◆ Reader **Arnold Boecklin** sent me this wonderful throwaway line from a *New York Times* obituary of **Mel Tolkin**, lead writer of Sid Caesar's *Your Show Oj Shows* and *Caesar's Hour*: "In World War II, Mr Tolkin served his country by playing the glockenspiel in the Canadian Army."



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5th, Cowboy Johnson, 6pm	20th, George Ensle, 7pm
6th, Liz Morphis, 7pm	21st, Freight Train Troubadours, 10pm
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WHAT PART OF 'TOUGH LOVE' DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND?

Deana Carter, whose *The Chain* I panned last month mainly because I've been getting complaints about the rarity of 'Piss On This Noise' reviews, hasn't called, but a rather ticked off Joe Stampley did and I got a slew of infuriated emails from the Blue Line Riders' bassplayer, The burden of his song was that my focus on the talents of Renée Giron insults the other BLRs and bands don't need career counselling, so I should cease and desist from dispensing it..

Here's the thing, Rob, when writing about an album, music writers, in theory at least, simply don't and shouldn't give a shit about the emotional wellbeing of those involved in making it. The purpose of a review is to help readers decide whether the music is worth the asking price. Weighed against one's duty to those readers, fragile egos are, or should be, of no concern whatsoever. If a positive review makes the act feel warm and fuzzy, that's a purely incidental side effect, and if a negative or qualified review hurts anyone's feelings, well, maybe they should consider the advantages of making a bulletproof album, or possibly a career change.

Having been gone 20 years, I can't speak for Britain today, but in my time self-esteem hadn't been invented yet, in fact a prime function of family, teachers, colleagues and friends was to keep you posted on what a fuckup you were. As a result, and I know this will sound hopeless quaint and oldfashioned, respect was something you had to earn, and sustain, which, in 70s/80s British music criticism, meant that writers were merciless on shortcomings while musicians, producers and labels had to suck it up or sound like whiners, and nobody likes a whiner.

Putting out an album is a claim to be taken seriously by people who don't know or care that you're Good Guys, only that you're a Bad Band. Obviously no one, except maybe Kim Foley, ever sets out to make bad, or even mediocre, albums, but, even before the advent of self-released CDs, they outnumbered good ones by a hefty margin, so odds are that any given album should get a bit of a spanking, except that most American music writers and magazines eschew intellectual rigor. As Wolfgang Doebeling of German *Rolling Stone* famously remarked, "My criticism of *No Depression* is that there is no criticism." A consequence of not holding musicians to the highest standards is that they take it pretty hard when they're given a touch up. They're just not used to it.

As to career counselling, bands that don't need any are few and far between—just because you're undeniably talented doesn't mean there's no room for improvement and you never make any errors of judgement. I have to admit that, after 30 years in this business, seeing bands make the same egregious and obvious mistakes over and over does tend to bring out the Dutch Uncle in me, however, that's somewhat beside the point, which is that my 'counselling' is primarily a literary device. When, for instance, I say, "Let's hope they don't continue to underutilize their main asset," this can indeed be taken as advice to the band, and damned good, not to mention disinterested, advice at that, but more importantly, it tells anyone who reads the review that there isn't nearly enough Renée Giron this time round, which is the fact of the matter.

For what's it worth, Rob, I give you a hard time because I care.

JC

ALYCE GYNN & MARVIN DYKHUIS DEAL ME IN

(Mother Of Mercy/Dawgtrax *****)

Superficially, this is Plan B for the album Alyce Guynn and Jesse Taylor discussed when they were working on their 2005 book of the same title, a collection of Guynn's poetry illustrated by Taylor's drawings. However, its actual genesis and evolution is rather more complex. Guynn has been putting on poetry/music performances, alternating a song, a couple of poems, a song, and so forth, for more than ten years, most of them with Dykhuis, only a few, not long before his death, with Taylor.

"I wanted to do a recording of the poetry from *Deal Me In*, and asked Jesse if he'd like to be a part of that, imagining the same format as the live performances. He did, but had a different idea: "Think Steve Allen." He wanted me to get some of my favorite jazz tunes to him, and, based on that, intended to write original tracks to play behind me as I read. As you know, I was a few years ahead of Jesse, and he seemed intrigued with the idea that I came in on the tail end of the Beat generation, was a part of that scene in college, and all my interest in jazz. He heard the album with a jazz flavor. Jesse's exquisite jazz sound is exemplified on a couple of Terry Clarke's albums—once, I was so lost listening Jesse's playing on *Pillow Talk* (*Lucky* [Appaloosa, 1999]) on the car stereo that I backed into the tree in Jovita's parking lot. So, making this record was something we discussed, planned, got very excited about, but we ran out of time. Jesse used to say to me, "We're racing against time, you know."

I had always had Marvin in mind as producer for the record. After Jesse passed, I asked Marvin if he'd like to do the music, as well. He said yes. It turned out to be a big yes, because he has done it all. I mean, all. I could go on and on about how I couldn't have done this without him, how talented, supportive and patient he has been. When he put music to *Crow's Flight* I just sailed right over the moon. A few weeks ago, when I couldn't sleep one night, I picked up an old journal and found an entry from January 2004 where I'd been daydreaming about doing a CD with Marvin. I'd actually forgotten about this daydream when I came to Marvin in 2007 with the project. So, I guess that although this record was generated by collaboration between Jesse and me, Marvin's imprint on it really dates back longer than that.

Needless to say, this has been an emotional experience for me, dredging up a lot of grief over Jesse, but it has also been a very satisfying collaboration with Marvin, who, while he is not Jesse, is such a huge talent, has such breadth and depth. I have loved his voice for years (I think he's not only one of the best guitar players, but also one of the best singers around). The creative process with Marvin has had a natural flow—almost effortless. Throughout the years he has become very familiar with my poetry, as I have with his music. He has shown such insight and sensitivity in interpreting my work. Not unlike Jesse. We have stayed close to Jesse's concept. This is a different record than it would have been with Jesse, but I really believe it is equally as wonderful."

As John Trudell & Jesse Ed Davis (AKA *Graffiti Man*) and Roxy Gordon & Wes McGhee (*Smaller Circles*) have demonstrated, the combination of poetry and music works best, indeed only works, when the arranger of the music is as talented as the writer, and Guynn has been blessed with not one but two great collaborating players. Jesse Taylor's abilities as an acoustic accompanist, most notably with Butch Hancock, have been overshadowed by his legendary electric guitar work, while Dykhuis, though he fronted bands in his native Wisconsin, has spent his years in Austin as a musicians' musician sideman and record producer, prized as much for his value added empathetic harmony singing as for his sensitive and intricate guitar playing.

Moving in Austin's music rather than poetry circles, Guynn's philosophy in performance is to emphasize the musical portion of the program at least as much as the poetical, and while the emphasis is, of course, on her words, this is as much Dykhuis' album as hers. He opens it with the 'author unknown' *Game Of Love* and closes with Kimmie Rhodes' *Just To Be Near You*, and about the midpoint reinterprets Guynn's *Crow's Flight*. Inbetween, he plays some absolutely stellar jazzy guitar behind 20 of Guynn's poems, some melded in thematic groups, others standing alone.

In an early incarnation, as the designated sucker running a London borough public library's poetry readings, I discovered that some good poets could not put across wonderful words, while some bad ones could mesmerize with absolute doggerel. Guynn strikes a happy medium, her subtle, low key readings bringing added dimensions to poetry that is already satisfying on the printed page. It is, of course, hard not to speculate how this album would have sounded if Jesse Taylor had lived to work on it, but Dykhuis is far more than a pinch-hitter. He and Guynn are a formidable combination.

JC

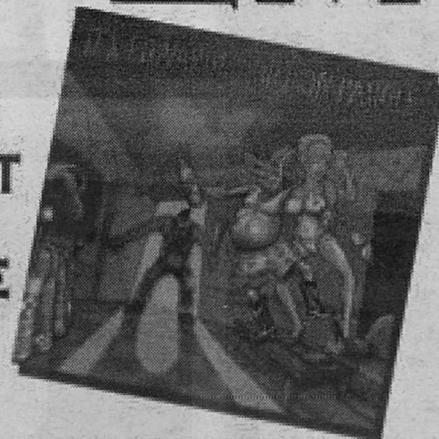
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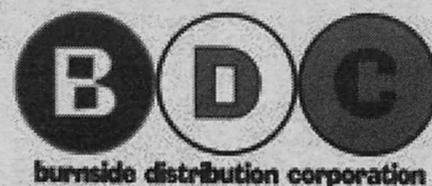
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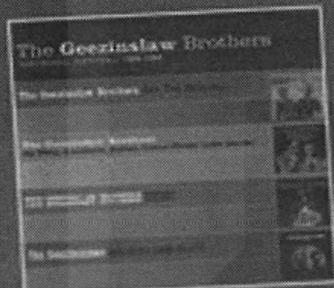


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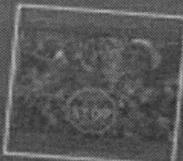


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