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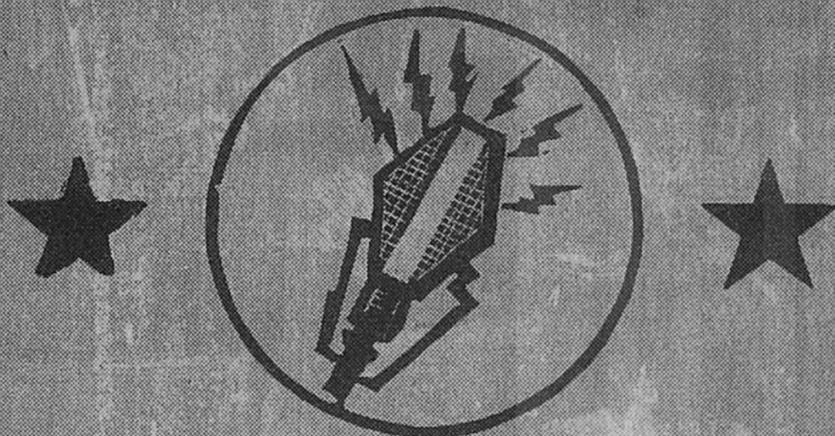
#166/255 NOVEMBER 2010



## COUNTRY MUSIC, U.S.A.

THIRD REVISED EDITION

"Considered the definitive history of American country music."—Los Angeles Times



BILL C. MALONE & JOCELYN R. NEAL



**JOHN THE REVEALATOR**

**SEVEN DEADLY SINS x 2**

**FREEFORM AMERICAN**

**ROOTS #135**

**ROOTS BIRTHS**

**& DEATHS**

## REVIEWS



(or not)

DAVID GREELY

DENNIS McGEE

RAUL MALO

WHITEY MORGAN  
& THE 78s

PINE LEAF BOYS

KYLE REDD

SOUTHERN  
CULTURE ON THE  
SKIDS

MAVIS STAPLES

CHIP TAYLOR &  
CARRIE RODRIGUEZ

VA: Louisiana Cajun  
+ Creole Music

CEDRIC WATSON  
ET BIJOU CREOLE

'NONE OF  
THE HITS,  
ALL OF  
THE TIME'



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JAC HOLZMAN**

## FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #135

REAL MUSIC PLAYED FOR REAL PEOPLE BY REAL DJs

DURING OCTOBER 2010

### #1 YVETTE LANDRY: SHOULD HAVE KNOWN

- (self) \*AA/\*BG\*CP/\*DG/\*FH/\*HP/\*OO/\*RW/  
2 Marti Brom: Not For Nothin' (Goofin'/Ripsaw) \*AG/\*DV/\*JP/\*JT/\*KC/\*LB/\*TB  
3 Caleb Klauer: Western Country (Quicksilver) \*BR/\*BS/\*TS/\*XE  
4 Eric Brace & Peter Cooper: Master Sessions (Red Beet) \*DS/\*GS/\*HT/\*MDT  
5 DB Rielly: Love Potions And Snake Oil (Shut Up & Play!) \*FS/\*MP  
6 Marty Stuart: Ghost Train (Sugar Hill) \*MN/\*WW  
7 Chris Hillman & Herb Pedersen: At Edward's Barn (Rouner) \*CL/\*MF/\*TR  
8 Whitey Morgan & The 78s (Bloodshot) \*JF/\*RV  
9 Halden Wofford & The Hi Beams: Sinners & Saints (self) \*DT  
10 The Honey Dewdrops: These Old Roots (self) \*CJ/\*KW  
11 Mavis Staples: You Are Not Alone (Anti-) \*EB/\*RC  
12= Lucky Tomblin Band: Honky Tonk Merry Go Round (Texas World)  
Elizabeth McQueen: The Laziest Girl In Town (Freedom) \*LMG  
13= Justin Townes Earle: Harlem River Blues (Bloodshot) \*EE/\*RMT  
Leyla Fences: Liars, Cheats & Fools (self) \*EW  
14 Peter Cooper: The Lloyd Green Album (Red Beet) \*TF  
15= Amber Digby & Justin Trevino: Keeping Up Appearances (Heart Of Texas)  
Dale Watson: Carryin' On (E1) \*ATC/\*KF  
16 Southern Culture On The Skids: The Kudzu Ranch (Kudzu) \*JM/\*ST  
17 Leroy Stagger: Little Victories (Rebeltone) \*GG  
18 The Chymical Vegas Wedding Of Joe Cassidy And The West End Sound (Avenue A) \*RE  
19= Ray Lamontagne: God Willin' And The Creek Don't Rise (RCA) \*GM  
Raul Malo: Sinners & Saints (Fantasy) \*JH  
20= Jimmy Bryson & The Weakerthans: The Falcon Lake Incident (Kelp) \*SR  
Old 97's: The Grand Theatre Volume 1 (New West) \*SG  
Shinyribs: Well After Awhile (Nine Mile) \*TFF  
21= The Fabulous Ginn Sisters: You Can't Take A Bad Girl Home (Lonesome Day)  
Max Stalling: Home To You (Blind Nello) \*MM  
22= Los Lobos: Tin Can Trust (Proper)  
Peter Rowan: Legacy (Compass) \*RJ  
23= Donna Beasley: Under The Rushes ( Bless Her Heart)  
TOM CORBETT: TONIGHT I RIDE (ROUNDHOLE)  
Bob Dylan: Whitmark Demos (Columbia/Legacy) \*R78  
Brennen Leigh: The Box (self) \*RM  
Boris McCutcheon & The Saltlicks: Wheel Of Life (Frog) \*JB  
Red Horse (Red House) \*HA  
Paul Thorn: Pimps And Preachers (Perpetual Obscurity) \*TPR  
24= Billy Eli: Hell Yeah (Errant) \*DA  
Lynne Hanson: Once The Sun Goes Down (self)  
Jerry Lee Lewis: Mean Old Man (Verve Forecast) \*RF  
David Maloney: One Day More (Pelican) \*JW  
Robert Plant: Band Of Joy (Decca) \*BK  
Chip Taylor & Carrie Rodriguez: The New Bye & Bye (Train Wreck)



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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/>

## TOWARDS A CODIFICATION OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

(WITH A SIDE ORDER OF FORBIDDEN WORDS)

Couple of months ago, I excluded a singer-songwriter from serious consideration because he committed one of 3CM's Seven Deadly Sins—the artwork included a picture of him walking down a railroad track (at least he wasn't carrying a guitar or guitar case, which would have made it even deadlier). As I should have anticipated, the obvious question I got asked was—what are the other six? Well, offhand, you got me there, hadn't thought that one through. So, I started to work on it and, as is my policy in such matters, consulted with the Freeform American Roots reporters, who tend to have very marked opinions on everything to do with music and its packaging.

However, it quickly emerged that there are two very different categories of Deadly Sins, those against all of us and those specifically against DJs. Let's start with the latter, because, while all the FARsters who responded had their own pet peeves (tortured animals, bare feet, Harley Davidsons, "your fucking cat," etc, etc), there were a few things that infuriated just about all of them.

Coming in at #1 was **No FCC Warning or Advisory**, which means someone at every station has to play the whole album all the way through to make absolutely sure it doesn't contain any of George Carlin's Seven Words—shit, piss, fuck, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker and tits—or find out the hard way when one of them goes out over the air and the station gets fined.

Tightly bunched were **No Track Numbering, No Track Lengths, Tiny Fonts, Unreadable Fonts** and **Shitty Color Contrasts**. It is, of course, perfectly possible to commit all five of these sins—and #1—simultaneously. Taking a track at random (actually not at random at all, this is my Song of the Year so far, from Chrissy Flatt's **New Mystery Girl**):

9. *Sally's Rumble* (3:15)

Now if we throw in a cuss word with no advisory, take out the track number and length, make the font smaller and change it into something artsy this is what we'd get if Chrissy was as big a chump as far too many artists or artwork designers:

*Sally's Rumble*

Afraid you'll have to use your imagination to take the next step, which is to change Chrissy's black on ivory artwork to, let's say, dark blue on black (I have a real life example in front of me, and I've seen worse). Whip out those reading glasses, see what good they do you. One DJ reported getting an album on which the track lengths were listed on the CD itself but not on the cover, which is almost unbelievably stupid.

OK, that gets us up to six Deadly Sins Against DJs. Next up, and, to be honest, something that really chaps my hide more than somewhat, is **No Website**, aggravated by having a fucking useless MySpace page instead.

Turning to more general Deadly Sins, I have about 20 pages of notes culled from FARster emails and the problem is to separate the merely venal bôtes noir from the actual deadly. And when I say deadly, I mean things that, on sight alone, would exclude an album from ever making it to the turntable—it doesn't get much deadlier than that for people who send out promos to radio or any other media.

While I was given dozens of specific, stomach turning examples, I have to thank Carolyn Delzoppo (*The Cowboy's Sweetheart*, BayFM, Byron Bay, NSW, Australia) for her very useful umbrella categories under which most of them could be filed:

**The Sin of Dork.** Includes a wide group of sins, including head and shoulders shots of the smiling artist, ugly shirts, wind blown locks, etc.

**The Sin of the Improbable.** Includes sins such as pics of the band 'playing' their instruments in unlikely places, like the middle of an open field. Where are you gonna plug in?

**The Sin of Cliché.** Apart from leaning on rustic fences etc, this would, of course, include, among countless others, walking down a railroad track.

The ones I came up with myself were:

**The Sin of Too Much Skin.** While there are some unreconstructed male DJs who would have no problem with, say, Rhonda Vincent stripping to her scanties, most FARsters, male and female, detest hypersexualized artwork and pouty poses.

**The Sin of Macho.** Wearing a wifebeater would mean automatic consignment to most all FAR trashcans, but any combination of cowboy hats and/or dark glasses and/or tank tops and/or tattoos would have the same effect.

**The Sin of Bible Thumping.** AKA The Sin of Too Much Information and The Sin of Spreading the Blame. We don't know where your talent, or lack thereof, comes from, more to the point, we don't want to know. Thanking God or Jesus just makes us think 'Christian Music.'

Riffing on George Carlin's Seven Words, we also kicked around Seven Forbidden Words in Songs, especially song titles. Front runners at the moment are: Dreams, Butterflies, Rainbows, Unicorns, Gypsy/Gypsies, Him and any SMS usage.

As you see, we're one Deadly Sin short. I like **The Sin of Equestrianism**. As Gary Cooper once said of a movie poster of him riding into the sunset, "One horse's ass in a picture is enough," but it's a bit specific. Anyway, before I order in the slabs of marble, your ideas, suggestions, criticisms, etc are welcome. **JC**



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*Third Annual*

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DENNIS MCGEE • HIMSELF  
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CREOLE MOON: LIVE FROM BLUE MOON SALOON  
DAVID GREELY • SUD DU SUD  
VA • LOUISIANA CAJUN + CREOLE MUSIC

(Valcour/Valcour/Valcour/Give & Go/Rounder)

Couple of months ago, I was commenting on the dearth of Cajun and Zydeco albums, and now I have more Louisiana music sitting on my desk than I've seen in over ten years. This, of course, is mostly due to hooking up with Joel Savoy's Valcour, which, as Tom Mahnke (*Fais Do Do*, KOOP, Austin, TX) observed, is the only Louisiana label that, paraphrasing somewhat, puts on its big girl panties and takes care of business. These three releases really span the gamut, from ultrahistoric to contemporary Cajun with a side order of a young Creole traditionalist.

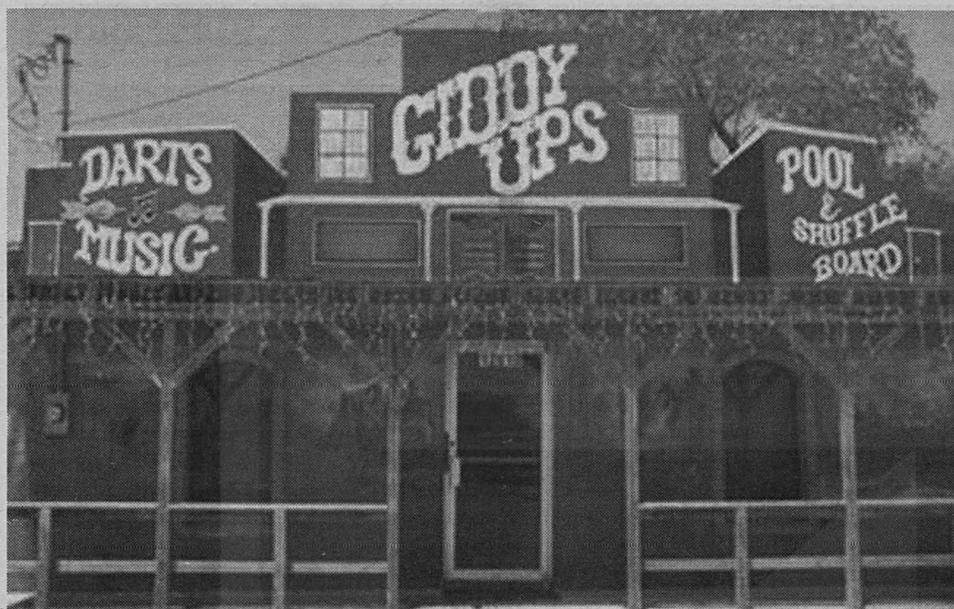
Once hugely influential, for his seven different fiddle tunings, mastery of every Cajun dance style and enormous repertoire, much of which predated the introduction of the accordion, Dennis McGee, Irish on his father's side, French/Seminole on his mother's, lived a long life, 1893-1989, but only officially recorded, on Vocalion, for five years, 1929-34, and, up to now, all that was available was **Complete Early Recordings 1929-1930** (Yazoo, 1994). While Valcour don't give the back story, this was recorded on a reel-to-reel in 1975 by Gerard Dole at McGee's Eunice home. At first glance, the 33 track listings look unlikely, but the longest is 2.37 minutes and most are much shorter as McGee demonstrates and comments on the fiddle parts of contra dances, mazurkas, gallops, polkas, waltzes, cotillions, reels and two-steps. One possible obstacle to full enjoyment of this amazing trip through Cajun history is that McGee doesn't just speak French, he speaks Cajun French, and he doesn't just speak Cajun French, he speaks it colloquially to another Cajun French speaker, but Savoy offers an English transcription, downloadable from the Valcour website.

The Pine Leaf Boys got off to an unusual start—the publicity generated by the University of Louisiana's decision to ban their impromptu shows on campus got them offers of real gigs, then, planning to self-release an analog album, they got picked up by Arhoolie, the youngest band the label's ever signed, which put out **La Musique** (2006), followed by **Blues De Musicien** (2007). Then they made a rather curious move to Lions Gate for **Hommage Au Passe** (2008), but being on Valcour is a no-brainer, accordionist and main vocalist Wilson Savoy is Joel's brother. Treading a very fine line between preserving Cajun French tradition while living in 2010—as Wilson says, "We are not too proud to sing a few songs in English"—the Boys draw on such legends as Dewey Balfa (fiddler Courtney Granger's great uncle), Doc Guidry, Ivy Dugas, Belton Richard, Adam Hebert, Rodney LeJeune and Happy Fats. Though the credits list several titles in English, the only ones actually in English are Lawrence Walker's *Allons Rock 'n Roll* and a Swamp Pop version of *Fool*, a minor 1977 country hit for very minor country star John Wesley Ryles. Counting Michael Doucet among their admirers, The Pine Leaf Boys seem poised to take over from BeauSoleil (which was founded long before any of these twentysomethings were born) as the primer Cajun band.

Another twentysomething, indeed a former Pine Leaf Boy, accordionist/fiddler Cedric Watson peeled off to focus on the music of his Creole heritage and while Cajun songwriters Dennis McGee, Peter Schwarz and Ulysse Poirrier are represented in an 11 song set recorded at what Yvette Landry tells me is now Lafayette's premier music venue, Creoles John Delafosse, Canray Fontenot, Clifton Chenier and Boozoo Chavis dominate the material, which also includes a Watson original and two arrangements of traditional material. Raised in Texas, now living in Lafayette, Watson, unlike so many other of his peers, seems immune to the hip-hop plague, indeed the most compelling tracks on the album, particularly the spine-tingling closer, *Jure*, are those on which he's joined by Senegalese master Morikeba Kouyate, who lives in New Orleans, on the kora, a traditional West African 20-string harp-lute.

McGee, Joel Savoy and Watson all show up on the first solo album by Mamou Playboys fiddler David Greely, McGee as composer of McGee's *A Minor Waltz* and *Cotillion/Chatangier*, Savoy and Watson, along with Gina Forsyth, Daniel Gale, Roscoe Theriot and Lauren Baker, swapping lead and second fiddle parts with Greely. Conspicuous by absence is Steve Riley or any other accordion player. Mentored by none other than Dewey Balfa, Greely is a true master of Cajun fiddle.

The 27 tracks of Rounder's compilation are a crash course in 60s Louisiana music. Recorded between 1964 by 1967 by Ralph Rinzler on field trips funded by the Newport Folk Foundation, it features seven tracks by the Balfa Brothers, three by Austin Pitre & The Evangeline Playboys, four by Eddie Naquin, five by Alphonse 'Bois-Sec' Ardoin & Canray Fontenot, two by Isom Fontenot, Aubrey Deville & Preston Manuel and six by Adam & Cyprian Landreneau. Rinzler was rather more proactive than Alan Lomax or Harry Oster as he used his recordings to leverage appearances, playing to great acclaim, at the Newport Folk Festival, which, in turn, led to other festival bookings. Contemporary Louisiana acts, such as the Pine Leaf Boys, who've travelled as far afield as Latvia and Abu Dhabi, owe a huge debt to Rinzler. **JC**



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+ The Beaumonts, 9pm

11th Darcie Deaville, 8pm

12th Too Good Dogs 8pm

13th Red Neck Boys, 8pm

18th Scooter Pearce, 7pm

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20th Mike with The Moonpies, 8pm

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27th Fond Kiser, 8pm

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## CHP TAYLOR & CARRIE RODRIGUEZ

### THE NEW BYE & BYE

(Train Wreck ☼☼☼☼)

Four new songs and “the best of the Train Wreck years 2002-2007”—that pretty much defines ‘what’s not to like?’ With their four albums, *Let’s Leave This Town* (2002), *The Trouble With Humans* (2003), *Red Dog Tracks* (2005) and *Live From The Ruhr Triennale* (2007), which averaged 13 tracks apiece, cherry-picked for the length of any one of them, it’s almost inevitable that some people’s favorites didn’t make the cut, personally I miss *We Come Up Shining*, but then, of course, I have all those albums. Also, I’d have cut *Him Who Saved Me*, one of the three tracks from the first album, relatively the weakest as Rodriguez hadn’t quite hit her stride as a singer, and used another track from the Ruhr album, live being where Chip & Carrie truly excelled. Such quibbling aside, long time fans of the special magic of this partnership get a handy compilation plus, of course, the four new songs, recorded in Austin last March, of which a reprise of the title track, a bleak portrait of a recession-damaged couple, closes the album. **JC**

## RAUL MALO • SINNERS & SAINTS

(Concord ☼☼)

Know how sometimes you just can’t come up with the exact word you’re looking for, the one with precisely the right nuance? Well, it’s kind of an occupational hazard in my line, but with this album I nailed it in one—bombastic. Everything about it is self-indulgent and over the top, from Malo’s overwrought originals and covers to his polished, waxed, buffed and varnished production. His florid version of Rodney Crowell’s *Til I Gain Control Again* is particularly painful. Maybe too many people have told him he has one the great voices of our time, and there’s no denying he does have a great voice, but his sensibilities are pure schmaltz. I’ve heard it suggested that, roping in Augie Meyers and his Vox Continental organ and the terrific accordionist Michael Guerra, both of whom play on what surely sounds like a tribute, however hamfisted, to The Sir Douglas Quintet, *San Antonio Baby*, Malo is trying to position himself as the new Doug Sahm, quite why I can’t imagine, but even if there’s anything at all to this, he just doesn’t have the roots, he doesn’t groove. There are some artists I just don’t get at all, but Malo is in a different category, people I really want to like, but somehow I just can’t manage to pull it off. Radney Foster’s another. Oh, and Marty Stuart. The best you can say for this album is that there are only nine tracks. **JC**

## WHITEY MORGAN & THE 78s

(Bloodshot ☼☼☼.5)

Getting off to an awkward start with a rather tentative version of John D Loudermilk’s *Bad News*, proving yet again that covering Johnny Cash is almost always a bad idea, Morgan and his Flint, Michigan-based honky-tonk quintet kick into gear with one of Morgan’s seven originals (credited to Eric David Allen, his real name), *Turn Up The Bottle*, and never let go. Positioning themselves with covers of Hank Cochran’s *Memories Cost A Lot*, Johnny Paycheck’s *Meanest Jukebox In Town* and Dale Watson’s *Where Do You Want It?* (about Billy Joe Shaver’s Incident in Lorena), they do a fine job on drinking songs, particularly *I Ain’t Drunk* (“I ain’t drunk/I’ve just been drinkin’/I started at five in the afternoon/About three days ago”) and adultery (*Cheaters Always Lose*), but where Morgan really comes into his own is writing about the Rustbelt. Though raised by a grandfather in Kentucky, where he acquired his country roots, Morgan’s family were auto plant line workers and he paints a bleak picture of what happened to their hopes and dreams on the stand-out *Buick City*, a harmonica-driven (no credit) song about the giant Flint auto plant that was closed long ago and the resulting reverse migration back South. *Hard Scratch Pride* is an excellent new take on the *Coal Miner’s Daughter/Detroit City* theme. Morgan is a totally unabashed throwback to the late 70s/early 80s, modelling his sound on Paycheck, Waylon Jennings et al, he even has the early Grateful Dead/Allman Brothers way too hairy look, which doesn’t work for Jamey Johnson either, but that’s OK, if you dug Waylon back when, you don’t have to look at Morgan to appreciate his style. **JC**

## KYLE REDD

(Tex Western ☼☼☼☼)

Dial up that name on YouTube and you’ll find clips of an amazing West Coast swing dancer. You won’t find as much about this Kyle Redd, who’s a singer-songwriter from Fort Worth, plus lead guitarist in five or six bands, I have no idea what kinds of music those bands play because Redd seems never to have come across a roots style he didn’t like and couldn’t master, be it honky tonk, classic country, swing, blues, rockabilly, bluegrass, folk or your basic singer-songwriter Americana. As he says, “ATTENTION: No two tracks are alike on this album.” I’m not too sure about his own thumbnail, “Think a cross between Lyle Lovett and Brian Setzer & The Stray Cats with a touch of Van Morrison thrown in for good luck,” but there’s no question that Redd, backed by excellent musicians, especially Tim Alexander on piano and organ, is a real Texas singer-songwriter discovery who’s offering a full palette of diverse sounds that almost shouldn’t work but does. **JC**

## MAVIS STAPLES • YOU ARE NOT ALONE

(Anti- ☼☼☼☼)

Have to admit, I was kind of torn about requesting a review copy of this, even though the FARsters seem to like it. Not that I doubt Mavis Staples for a moment, even having turned 70, she’s a heavyweight (in the nicest possible sense) in a world of lightweight, though, unfortunately, not as ephemeral as one might hope, singers, but the album was produced by Wilco’s Jeff Tweedy, which rather sounds like he fancies himself as another cross-genre Jack White. However, I will freely admit that Tweedy is surprisingly, indeed quite astonishingly, sympathetic, his production never getting in the way of the main attraction, the fabulous voice of Mavis Staples. Indeed, while he apparently wrote several songs for this project, only two of them were used, restraint of which few producers seem capable, and, assuming he had a hand in picking the material, Roebuck ‘Pops’ Staples’ *Don’t Knock, Downward Road* and *On My Way To Heaven* (in a medley with Professor Alex Bradford’s 1954 gospel hit *I’m Too Close To Heaven*), Randy Newman’s *Losing You*, Reverend Gary Davis’ *I Belong To The Band*, Allen Toussaint’s *Last Train*, John Fogerty’s *Wrote A Song For Everyone* and Little Milton’s 1965 #1 R&B hit *We’re Gonna Make It*, not to mention arranging two traditional hymns (a third was arranged by Staples), then he deserves a lot of credit. Maybe he could do an album with Dorothy Combs Morrison next, meantime we can savor a voice that combines passion and nuance, with phrasing so subtle and precise that it leaves one wondering how so many minimally talented singers can flourish in a world that contains Mavis Staples. **JC**

## VA • ...NEXT STOP VIETNAM THE WAR ON RECORD: 1961-2008

Bear Family (☼☼☼☼.5)

Historians and political pundits largely agree on one thing: reaction to the war in Vietnam polarized the United States of America and we are still dealing with the aftermath. Like everything else in contemporary society, our collective responses—both sincere and exploitive—made it onto recordings. Bear Family, usually content packaging 50s rockers and hillbillies, has crafted this powerful collection of protest and patriotic songs, answer records, audio clips and remembrance. Each disc encapsulates a different era of the armed conflict from *Where Is Vietnam* through *Hell No, We Won’t Go* and *It’s America*. Love It or Leave It to The Wall and beyond. Audio clips of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon etc establish a credible news vibe, but it’s the music that shapes the set’s narrative. Remarkably well-balanced, for every major star (Seeger, Cash, Haggard, Lennon, Donovan, Gaye, Campbell etc.) or war-themed anthem (ie *Eve Of Destruction*, *Ballad Of The Green Berets*, *I-Feel-Like-I’m Fixin’-To-Die Rag*), there are performances from relatively unknown doves and hawks throwing in their rhythmic two cents worth. Most revealing are songs from the soldiers themselves, whose often unvarnished reflections tap into everything from sentiment and duty to mockery and satire (one singer proclaimed that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara “blows dead goats”). This 14-disc, 315-track collection is bolstered by a 305 page hardbound book boasting a scholarly introduction, generous amounts of period pictures, song-by-song notes and a CD-Rom filled with song lyrics. Even at its mildest, the cumulative force of so much audio documentation (Lt Calley, Kent State, the Fall of Saigon, etc.) results in a form of unflinching nostalgia that provides valued triggers for discussion, re-evaluation and for some, redemption. Easily the most important project the German label has ever issued, this brilliantly culled and occasionally cathartic boxed set is also their best. **Ken Burke**

## SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS THE KUDZU RANCH

(Kudzu 3333)

You can’t but admire SCOTS. After 23 years on the road, most bands can’t stand the sight of each other, and 13 years after being dropped by a major label, most bands are one original member and a bunch of anonymous journeymen, but, like the kind of marriage that Christians preach (but don’t always practice), Rick Miller, Mary Huff and Dave Hartman have stuck together for better or worse, for richer or poorer, from selling a quarter of a million albums on Geffen to setting up their own studio and label (“sounds that grow on you”). It’s been three years since *Countrypolitan Favorites* and six since *Mojo Box*, the last album heavy on originals, but they’ve come back with an album that compares very favorably to their 2000 classic *Liquored Up & Lacquered Down*, possibly because they had total control. All the things one looks for, Miller’s hotrod/surf guitar, Huff’s bass lines, Hartman’s beat and the trio’s exceptional range of inspiration, along with trademark white trash trailer park humor (notably *My Neighbor Burns Trash*), seems more, well subtle isn’t a word one uses round SCOTS, how about nuanced? There are some covers, Neil Young’s *Are You Ready For The Country?* and an instro medley of Nirvana’s *Come As You Are* and *Lucifer Sam* by Syd Barrett (the original Pink Floyd singer and songwriter), but the best tracks are Miller’s originals, particularly those sung by Mary Huff, *It’s The Music That Makes Me*, which she cowrote, *Highlife* and *Bad Boys*. It’s not that SCOTS have made any big, obvious changes, but the little tweaks and twists, like the twin lead (“the mullet of guitar techniques”) on *Busy Road*, all add up to prove that they’re still developing after all these years. **JC**



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## JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Made a major error last month when I wondered, in the editorial, whether musicians are as thin-skinned as athletes. Wrong comparison, actors would have been better. Thing is, of course, that while athletes can be prima donnas and try valiantly to shift the blame, at the end of the game or event, they either won or lost (unless they're soccer players, in which case they tied). Any which way, there's a cast iron objective yardstick by which to measure their abilities, so they can't say, "Well, that's just one person's opinion."

☛ My favorite person in October was Dr James Akenson, ramrod of the **International Country Music Conference**, who emailed me two gems. The first was pretty good on its own: "Dr. Dietrich Schiller of Siegen University in Germany will be presenting 'Towards a Politics of Country Music: Country Music as Political Communication?'" Schiller states that there is 'still pressing need for social scientists to engage with this subject, I provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between CM and politics within a political science framework."

☛ Which reminds me, I thought of paying \$15,000 for a ticket to Rick Perry's pre-election day fundraiser. Then I found out **Pat Green** was playing and blew it off.

☛ However, ICMC is the gift that keeps on giving, and just gets better and better. The next email was: "We are pleased to announce that Ms **Jada Watson** of the University of Ottawa will present 'Lubbock? Or Leave It? Negotiating Identity and Place Through Song.' Watson states that 'Music from Lubbock, Texas provides an interesting case study for an inquiry into the significance of geographical and cultural spaces for country artists. Focusing on songs by Lubbockites Mac Davis, the Dixie Chicks (Natalie Maines), and Andy Eppler, this discussion will examine the ways in which artists address their relationship with their hometown through musical response."

☛ This one is so mindboggling that I hardly know where to begin, but let's start with who the fuck is Andy Eppler? I googled him and am absolutely none the wiser. Mac Davis did at least write "I thought happiness was Lubbock, Texas in my rear view mirror" and Natalie Maines was one of four cowriters of *Lubbock or Leave It* (I've always wondered why it takes four people to write a piece of shit, but then maybe it's a piece of shit because four people wrote it), but I can find no rationale for Eppler and, of course, even less for no mention of Terry Allen, Butch Hancock or Jo Carol Pierce who, you know, wrote actual songs about Lubbock. Indeed, Pierce has an entire album, **Bad Girls Upset By The Truth**, of songs set in Lubbock. Just a guess, but maybe Watson doesn't know shit from shinola.

☛ I thought about contacting Watson, try to steer her towards the path of righteousness, but came up empty on a search. However, I did stumble across a piece in a **Society For Music Analysis** (who knew?) newsletter from 2007, which contained yet another academic gem: "Dr. Elizabeth Eva Leach (Royal Holloway, University of London) and Jada Watson (University of Ottawa) added a third, visual, dimension. Watson's detailed analysis of the Dixie Chicks' *Not Ready To Make Nice* video showed a way in which the artists themselves might be able to use the combination of lyrics, music and image to answer criticisms and find new ways of establishing their own identities. Leach's reading of the Spice Girls' *Viva Forever* video, on the other hand, concentrated on how identification processes might be raised and interpreted by the listeners. She, however, also questioned the viability of analytically constructed meaning in the light of often unrelated audience responses." Anybody know what this means in standard English? Jeez, the smartest thing I did in my life was abandon my MA.

☛ When a petition was posted on the Internet in 2007, the Preamble was "It is absolutely amazing and dismaying that the late, great **Gram Parsons** has not been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. As much as Hank himself, he influenced the form of music he loved most. He hated the term 'country rock believing it's either country or it's not. GP was pure country, and influenced everyone in the field after his tragic death. It's unimaginable that he not be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame." What is rather more amazing and dismaying is that when the organizer recently emailed people who'd signed the petition to let them he was closing it, over three years it had only garnered 3410 signatures, not exactly going viral.

☛ Don't know how I missed this, but *The Journal Of Country Music* ceased printing back in 2007, "Now the spirit and tradition of the magazine have been transferred to our Web site." Well, sort of. Only one article, on The Statler Brothers, has been posted so far this year.

☛ My esteemed colleague **William Michael Smith**, of the *Houston Press*, reporting on Houston's honky tonk boom, talked to musicians and fans at Blanco's, "The consensus was that honky-tonk is suddenly hot again in Houston because the most talented musicians in town these days play in country bands. Furthermore, what separates the top honky-tonk bands from the top indie bands is musicianship. 'I go see indie bands and the first thing that pops in my mind is that most of these guys haven't mastered their instruments,' said one local bandleader. 'There's some good young pop bands in town, and I'm sure they work hard and deserve the following they have, but almost none of those people could play in a country band around here, where you've got to be ready to do two or three sets a night. I think the last time we played Blanco's we did 50 songs—about 40 originals and 10 covers—between 8 and midnight. I doubt there's a single indie band in town that can do that, but there are half a dozen country bands that can do it six nights a week if they have to."

☛ An interesting observation, but the really good bit was a reader response from one Chris Ryan, quoted verbatim: "Hahaha Jesus christ this is the stupidest thing I have ever read. You are all fucking fake fucking idiots. Isn't the point of 'indie', which you obviously know nothing about, about making honest music using the skills you have, instead of sitting around practicing and 'mastering' your instrument. Jesus christ I couldn't even get past the first 3 paragraphs of this shit." To which Smith replied, "thanks Chris. If you're saying indie music is mediocre on purpose, I'll have to take your word for it."

☛ However, Smith later reported that a long streak of good honky tonk at Blanco's finally ended with New Orleans' **Kim Carson**. "By local standards, Carson's show was tinny, timid and tepid. An example? Up beside the version of *Lonesome, On'ry & Mean* we saw Jubal Lee Young and band rip through the night before at Under the Volcano, Carson's had all the muscle and soul of the Osmonds on life support."

☛ Thinking of bad nights, Minneapolis reader Hal Davis sent me word that **Lady Antebellum** is reliving its "worst gig ever." They once performed at a gas station-restaurant at dawn during opening day of Wisconsin's deer hunting season and a Milwaukee country station invited them to reprise this by playing a free concert outside a suburban gas station. The obvious question is how can they tell which was their worst gig ever?

☛ Rather misleadingly, **Chip Taylor** titled his last solo album **Yonkers, NY**, where he claims to have been born and grown up, but Bob Gottlieb knows better. Reviewing **Let's Leave This Town** for *All-Music Guide*, he opens with, "This new release by this

legendary Texas songwriter..." Rather oddly, three of the Chip & Carrie albums are in Taylor's AMG discography, but **The Trouble With Humans** is in Rodriguez's. I used to send in corrections whenever I saw mistakes on *All-Music Guide* but I gave up because it doesn't do any good.

☛ Sure sign that a band, in this instance **Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real**, is stretching its resume to breaking point is when a press release boasts about opening for Creedence Clearwater Revisited, the band formed by CCR's bassplayer and drummer when they finally realized that their careers were going nowhere after they quit CCR. Guys, this is the kind of gig where you pocket the money and hope nobody notices. Nelson's blues outfit reminds me, for obvious reasons, of a friend mentioning San Marcos' **Texas Renegade**, "for a band with such a dreadful name, they're actually pretty good."

☛ In the new edition of **Country Music USA**, Bill Malone, pointedly remarking that, following Natalie Maines' comments about George W Bush, despite attempted boycotts, The Dixie Chicks' Top Of The World was the highest grossing country tour up to that time, observes, "The broader public interpreted the entire incident as confirmation of country's conservative politics and—far worse—an underlying lack of tolerance for free speech among much of the country audience. Whatever progress country music had made in erasing these negative stereotypes was lost."

☛ Malone & Neal are at their sharpest in their obituary of alternative country; "The moment that marked the movement's real dissolution was the appearance of **Miranda Lambert** on the cover of *No Depression...* In a surprising editorial, *No Depression's* co-founder Grant Alden claimed that in the years since the magazine's founding, mainstream country had opened its doors to the alternative scene... Referring to the tensions between the Nashville establishment and alt.country, Alden wrote, "That battle is largely over and, fundamentally, we won." Noting that "most of the performers who had been associated with the movement had long before dropped 'country' from their own descriptions of their musical genres... and less than a year after Lambert's photo appeared on its cover, *No Depression* announced that it was folding its print publication," the authors would seem to disagree with Alden.

☛ I imagine Jocelyn Neal, rather than Malone put in the plug for country music blogs, whence, apparently, columns and review have largely migrated. I checked out the three named ones and they're crap, promotional vehicles for Taylor Swift, Miranda Lambert, Lady Antebellum et al. It is noted that most bloggers "lack journalistic experience." I'll say.

☛ **Raul Tejeiro** (*Top Country Hits*, Cabildo-Mas, Montevideo, Uruguay) has a beef with "artists who try to sing in another language and they only show terrible pronunciation. Spanish is a loving tongue, they say, but some have turned it into some kind of torture. Take, for instance, Willie Nelson's *They All Went to Mexico*, which he recorded with Santana. My mother tongue is Spanish and I went through hell until I discovered Willie was singing (or trying to) "tengo que obedecer my corazón" (I have to follow my heart). Not happy enough with one effort, Willie did it again with *Volver, Volver*. The list of English-speaking artists 'trying' to sing in Spanish, specially when they sing a Mexican-tinged tune—the dreadful *He Drinks Tequila* by Kershaw & Morgan is the bottom of the barrel—is endless, but so far, only Raul Malo, Sisters Morales, Rick Trevino and the late Freddy Fender have passed the test. George Strait sounds so funny singing *El Rey*. Did he really mean to cut a serious version of the song or was he auditioning for the role of Puss In Boots for **Shrek V**?"

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\*\*\* Piss on this noise

? I don't get it

% Fraction of what you pay for

## JUST MOVE ON

Following up on a Canadian artist who kept popping up in the September FAR reports—she ended up at #7—as I do when a new-to-me name makes a strong showing, I ran into a brick wall, and not just the usual MySpace idiocy. When you go to the Contact page on Lynne Hanson's website, you can holler at her North American booker, her Europe (outside UK) booker, her UK booker, her Canadian publicist or her UK publicist, none of whom do me a blind bit of good. She's on Facebook, but has blocked messaging, which I didn't even know you could do.

Oh yes, the website does say "To contact Lynne Hanson directly email info [AT] lynnehanson [DOT] com," which didn't work for me, or for Calvin Powers (*Taproot Radio*, WCOM, Carrboro, NC). When I asked the DJs who reported her if there really was an actual person called Lynne Hanson, Calvin replied, "I had similar trouble. I'd been trying to contact Lynne to interview her for my podcast and had no luck using all the same methods you did. So I decided to Just Move On and interviewed Yvette Landry instead. She's great. Very accessible. Very warm and friendly."

And there you have it. The moral of this story is so blindingly obvious that I'm almost embarrassed to elaborate on it. By making herself hard to find, Hanson handed Powers' audience to accessible Yvette Landry. It's not much of a stretch to imagine that other artists have similarly benefited from her impenetrable defense system.

Now, for all I know, Hanson is World Famous In Canada, mobbed by adoring fans and hounded by the paparazze wherever she goes, and thus has good reason for throwing up firewalls between herself and the outside world. However, what is rather more likely is that she simply has a defective business model.

When *Music City* opened up shop in the the olden days, when email and websites were practically nonexistent and everything was done by telephone (I can't tell you what a pain in the ass the monthly events listings were), I discovered the curious phenomenon of unlisted numbers. Apparently, it was a point of something or other for Austin musicians—I can't speak for anywhere else—to have unlisted numbers, a few even changed those on a regular basis (possibly so their girlfriends couldn't call them at home). Very often, when I was privileged to be given a phone number, it was with the strict proviso that I didn't give it out to anyone else.

I never really understood this. I mean, how many Austin musicians, particularly Austin musicians in the *Music City/Music City Texas* ambit, would have their phones ringing off the wall if their number was in the book? I understand it even less with email, Hell, even I know how to filter junk mail, which means it's a very low level computer skill, and anyway, how long does it take to Delete shit you can't be bothered to read, or even open? Less time than it takes to Erase phone messages you can't be bothered to answer.

It's not that I don't think musicians have no right to privacy, au contraire, but the fact is that they're also a business, selling whatever talent they possess, be it playing an instrument, singing, writing songs, or any combination of the three. Which, or so you'd think, would mean that potential customers or people wanting to give the product some free publicity should be able to reach them without jumping through hoops. Guess I could have taken the indirect path to Hanson and contacted one of her minions, but piss on that. I want to talk to the engineer, not the oily rag. **JC**

## BILL C MALONE & JOCELYN R NEAL Country Music USA

(University of Texas Press, paper \*\*\*\*\*)

For the first time ever, I have a book as a cover story, but not just any old book—for those of us who got into country music the hard way, ie didn't grow up with the right parents or even on the right continent, it was, and still is, *the* book, in Chet Flippo's words, "the Bible of country music history and scholarship." Though he's written several others, Malone's career has been dominated and defined for over 40 years by his University of Texas doctoral thesis. *A History Of Commercial Country Music In The United States, 1920-1964*, which he started researching in 1961, when, as he puts it, "resource material was extremely limited," and completed in 1965, took on a life of its own, to which UT Press has been very faithful, publishing the 1st (1968), 1st revised (1985), 2nd (2002) and now 3rd editions.

In each of these, Malone did not merely correct errors but, over the years, came to change earlier points of view, "some of my original statements were flatly wrong." However, while he may have amended many significant positions, frankly I'm not about to take him up on his invitation to "compare the various editions to find out where differences exist." What I find far more interesting is how he views a landscape that has changed beyond recognition over the last 40 years (almost 50 if you count from when he began his research).

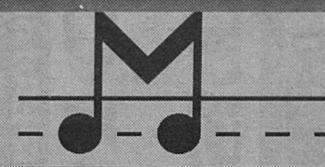
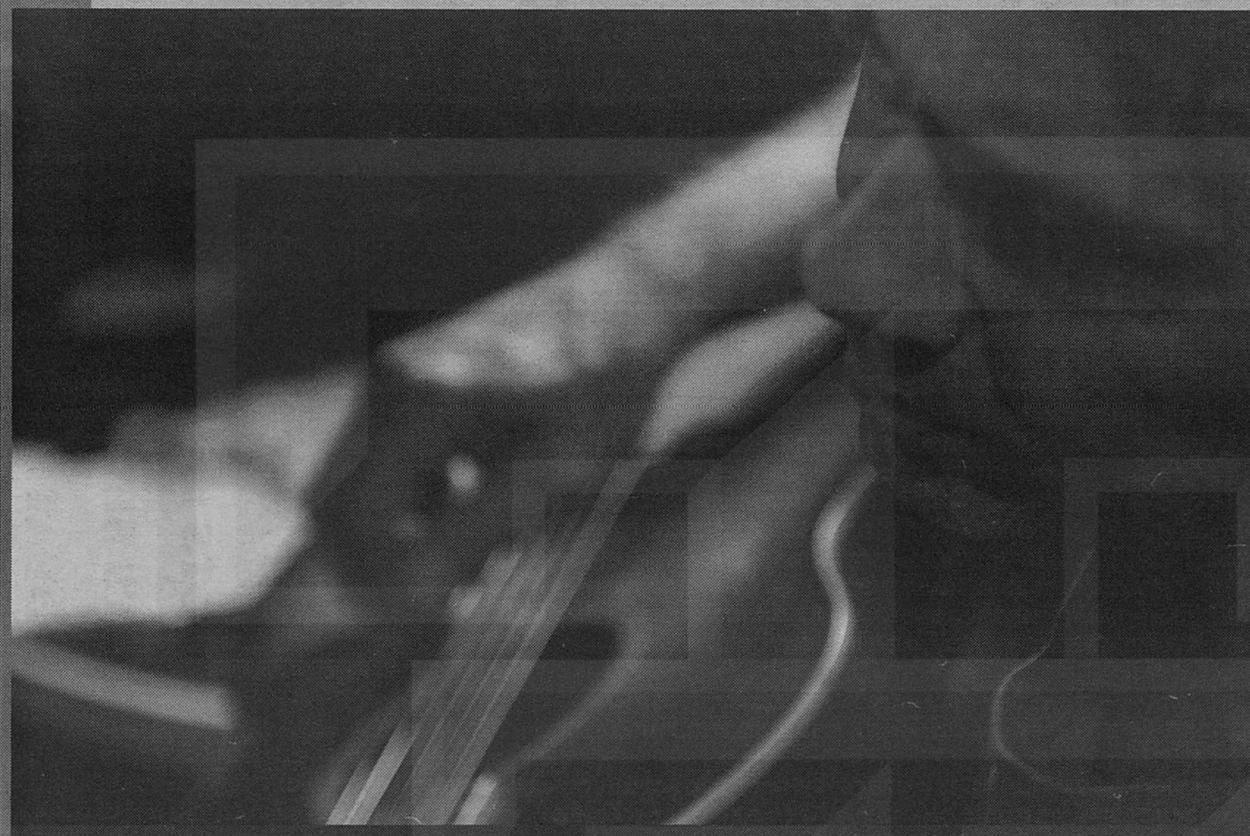
In the 2nd edition, Malone followed the Country Music Association's practice of "recognizing as 'country' any artist or form of music marketed as such by the recording companies," something I couldn't bring myself to do, but this time, he openly acknowledges the conflict between historian, striving for objectivity, and hard-core country fan struggling "to be fair to those styles I do not like," explicitly acknowledging that the music has changed radically since 1968, when there weren't any styles he didn't like, or at least not so much he'd never get over it. This is why he shares the billing for the first time, bringing in a University of North Carolina professor whose main qualification appears to be that, unlike Malone, she's willing to listen to Top 40 Country.

For those familiar with any of the earlier editions, the main attraction of the latest is, of course, the added chapter, *A New Century*, though it's unclear how much Neal contributed to it. For instance, the joint failure to even mention Taylor Swift's main deficiency, that she can't sing worth a shit, mirrors Malone's solo elision of Faith Hill's vocal shortcomings in 2002. Indeed, the Nashville portion of the program follows much the same pattern as the 2nd edition, stressing the hits, awards and album sales of contemporary stars when, by contrast, Malone waxes lyrical about Don Walser's actual talent as a country singer. I may be wrong, but I can't help feeling that Neal came up with "edgy honky tonker" as a description of Toby Keith, it just doesn't sound like Malone. However, if they're polite, or anyway noncommittal, about utterly loathsome artists and acts, such as Rascal Flatts or Lady Antebellum, Malone & Neal are considerably more incisive in dealing with broader topics, such as The Dixie Chicks' incident and the fate of alternative country..

When it comes to encyclopedic knowledge of the history of country music, and the ability to present that knowledge in a form that's not just readable but gripping, there's no one to touch Malone. However, he, and presumably Neal, have one major blind spot. Commenting, at some length, that, outside Nashville, "voluntary affiliation with the genre is on the wane," neither of them seems to know much about the many artists and bands that proudly call themselves 'country' in the sense that Malone should surely approve. There are passing references to Iris DeMent, pretty much MIA since 1996, Wayne Hancock and the fictional character known as Dale Watson, but otherwise their ignorance of the indie scene seems almost complete. One of the most fatuous sentences I've read in a long time demonstrates how out of touch they are: "the South By Southwest festival... remains one of the premier opportunities for new roots and alternative acts to gain exposure." One wishes that Malone had, as a counterweight to Neal's Top 40 expertise, taken on another coauthor who could have filled him in on the likes of Martí Brom and Amber Digby, The Cornell Hurd Band and The Starline Rhythm Boys, Arty Hill and James Hand.

For longtime admirers of Malone's epic work, which, for better or worse, singlehandedly created the very iffy phenomenon of country music scholarship, the most significant two lines can be found on the second page of the preface and the last page of *The New Century*. In the former, Malone says, "I also expended too much energy defending country music as an art form." Some 500 pages later, he concludes, "Through all these changes, country music has staved off threats both of obsolescence and of assimilation, The crux of its definition comes not from musical styles or trappings, but rather from the fans and the meaning and identity that they ascribe to the music." This may sound as if Malone has thrown in his hand, but I take comfort from another observation, also in the preface, that "the remarkable growth of interest in old-time string band music indicates the existence of a large audience... grateful to find something palpable rather than plastic." There you have Malone's problem, his subject matter, palpable in 1968, is now almost entirely plastic. **JC**

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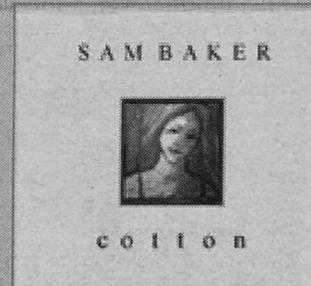
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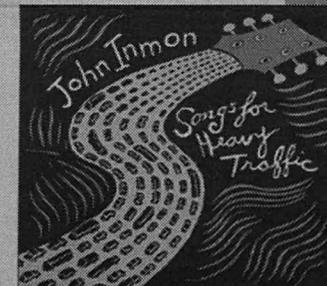
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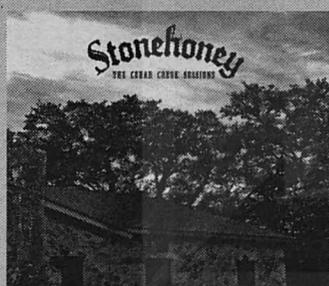
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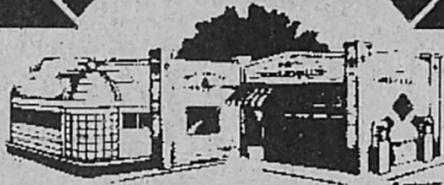
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Hugh Moffatt • 1948 Fort Worth, TX  
John Lilly • 1954 Chicago, IL  
Rod Picott • 1964 Dover, NH  
Champ Hood † 2001
- 4th Delbert McClinton • 1940 Lubbock, TX  
Alan Munde • 1946 Norman, OK
- 5th Etta Moten • 1901 San Antonio, TX  
Roy Rogers • 1911 Cincinnati, OH  
Ike Turner • 1931 Clarksdale, MS  
Gram Parsons • 1946 Winterhaven FL  
Johnny Horton † 1960  
Link Wray † 2005
- 6th Stonewall Jackson • 1932 Tabor City, NC  
Doug Sahm • 1941 San Antonio, TX  
Guy Clark • 1941 Monahans, TX  
Tary Owens • 1942 Toledo, OH  
Hank Thompson † 2007
- 7th AP Carter † 1960
- 8th Ivory Joe Hunter † 1974
- 9th James Talley • 1944 Tulsa, OK
- 11th Sippie Wallace • 1898 Houston, TX  
Mose Allison • 1927 Tippecanoe, MS  
LaVern Baker • 1929 Chicago, IL  
Hank Garland • 1930 Cowpens, NC  
Chris Smither • 1944 Miami, FL  
Dave Alvin • 1955 Los Angeles, CA  
Michael Weston King • 1961 Belper, UK  
Chip Dolan • 1961 Newton, NJ
- 12th Bukka White • 1906 Houston, MS  
Booker T Jones • 1944 Memphis, TN  
Neil Young • 1945 Toronto, Canada  
James Intveld • 1959 Los Angeles, CA  
Lord Buckley † 1960
- 13th Sonny Fisher • 1931 Chandler, TX  
Ray Wylie Hubbard • 1946 Hugo, OK  
Ruthie (Logsdon) • 1960 New London, CT
- 14th Noel Boggs • 1917 Oklahoma City, OK  
Joe Gracey • 1951 Fort Worth, TX  
Tex Edwards • 1954 Dallas, TX
- 15th Clyde McPhatter • 1933 Durham, NC  
Wes Reeves • 1933 La Mesa, TX
- 16th Jesse Stone • 1901 Atchison, KS  
Earl Bollick • 1919 Hickory, NC  
Shirley Bergeron • 1933 Church Point, LA  
WC Clark • 1939 Austin, TX  
Albert Collins † 1993
- 17th Terry Noland • 1938 Abilene, TX  
Gene Clark • 1944 Tipton, MO  
Ruby Jane • 1994 Dallas, TX
- 18th Hank Ballard • 1936 Detroit, MI  
Leeann Atherton • 1955 Birmingham, AL  
Doug Sahm † 1999

- 19th Katy Moffatt • 1950 Fort Worth, TX  
Eric Hisaw • 1971 Las Cruces, NM
- 20th Eck Robertson • 1886 Amarillo, TX  
Duane Allman • 1946 Nashville, TN
- 21st Lloyd Glenn • 1909 San Antonio, TX  
Jean Shepard • 1933 Paul's Valley, OK  
Little Joe Carson • 1936 Holliday, TX  
Dr John • 1941 New Orleans, LA  
Cecil Brower † 1965
- 22nd Hoagy Carmichael • 1899 Bloomington, IN  
Charles Mann • 1945 Welsh, LA
- 23rd Tyree Glenn • 1919 Corsicana, TX  
Spade Cooley † 1969  
Big Joe Turner † 1985  
Roy Acuff † 1992
- 24th Scott Joplin • 1868 Bowie Co, TX  
Tommy Allsup • 1931 Tulsa, OK  
Zoe Muth • 1979 Seattle, WA
- 26th Curley Mays • 1938 Maxie, LA  
Bob Livingston • 1948 San Antonio, TX
- 27th Werly Fairburn • 1924 Folsom, LA  
Charline Arthur † 1987
- 28th Cecil Brower • 1914 Bellevue, TX  
Bruce Channel • 1940 Jacksonville, TX  
Libbi Bosworth • 1964 Galveston, TX  
Wanna Coffman † 1991
- 29th Merle Travis • 1917 Rosewood, KY  
Joe Falcon † 1965  
Ray Smith † 1979
- 30th Fred 'Papa' Calhoun • 1904 Chico, TX  
Jim Patton • 1950 Alton, IL  
Jeannie Kendall • 1954 St Louis, MO  
Guy Forsyth • 1968 Denver, CO

**Threadgill's World HQ**

**301 W Riverside**

**5th, James McMurtry**

**+ Jonny Burke**

**6th, The Coveters**

**7th, Gram Parson's Birthday Hoot**

**20th, Dale Watson**

**24th, The Greencards**

**27th, Junior Brown**

**Old #1**

**6416 North Lamar**

**7th, Cristy & The Plowboys, 11am**

**10th, McKay Brothers & special guests**

**14th, Rod Moag & Texas Grass, 11am**

**21st, Aircargo, 11am**

**28th, Doule Eagle String Band, 11am**

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