

3rd COAST MUSIC



RAY BONNEVILLE

#176/265 SEPTEMBER 2011



JOHN THE REVEALATOR FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #144 ROOTS BIRTHS & DEATHS REVIEWS

✿ ✿ ✿ ✿ ✿ (or not)

SLAID CLEAVES • NICK 13

MICHAEL O'CONNOR • MARKY QUAYLE

DAVID SERBY • AMANDA SHIRES

CONNIE SMITH • MARK VIATOR & SUSAN MAXEY

GILLIAN WELCH

ANDY WILKINSON & ANDY HEDGES

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FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #145

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DURING AUGUST 2011

#1 ARTY HILL: ANOTHER LOST HIGHWAY

(self) *DG/*FH/*HH/*JF/*JM/*MB/*RH/*SH/*WW

- 2 T Jarrod Bonta: White Lines (Music Room)
*CP/*HA/*LB/*MP/*MT
- 3 Connie Smith: Long Line Of Heartaches (Sugar Hill)
*BF/*JT/*KW/*RF/*RMT/*TB
- 4 Gillian Welch: The Harrow & The Harvest (Acony)
*AG/*BG/*ES/*NA
- 5 Michael O'Connor: Devil Stole The Moon (Bare Knuckle)
*BB/*CF/*RA/*SC/*TA
- 6 Slaid Cleaves: Sorrow & Smoke; Live At The Horseshoe Lounge
(Music Road) *GF/*JH/*TF
- 7 Eric Hisaw: Ghost Stories (self) *BR/*GS
- 8 Ray Bonneville: Bad Man's Blood (Red House) *AH/*JB
- 9 John Hiatt: Blue Jeans & Mudslide Hymns (New West)
*MW/*N&T
- 10 Dave Alvin: Eleven Eleven (Yep Roc) *MM
- 11 Eilen Jewell: Queen Of The Minor Key (Signature Sounds)
*BS/*DT
- 12 Nell Robinson: On The Brooklyn Road (Red Level) *RW
- 13 Kirsten Jones: The Mad Mile (Fontana North/Maplecore) *FS
- 14 The Bottle Rockets: Not So Loud (Bloodshot)
- 15 John Doe: Keeper (Yep Roc) *RV
Joe Ely: Satisfied At Last (Rackem) *WR
- 16= Chip Taylor: Rock And Roll Joe (Train Wreck) *MN
Dex Romweber Duo: Is That You In The Blue? (Bloodshot) *LG
- 17 Girls, Guns & Glory: Sweet Nothings (self)
- 18= Steve Cropper: Dedicated; A Salute To The 5 Royales (Savoy)
*JP
- DM Bob & the Deficits: They Called Us Country (Off Label) *SS
Amy LaVere: Stranger Me (Archer) *DF
Imelda May: Mayhem (Decca) *CTS
The Warped 45s: Matador Sunset (self) *JR
- 19 Bobby Flores: Fast Company (Yellow Rose)
- 20= Richard Buckner: Our Blood (Merge) *R78
Kasey Chambers: Little Bird (Sugar Hill)
Rita Hosking: Burn (Trespass)
- 21 Brian Molnar & The Naked Hearts: Of The Fall (Avenue)
- 22= Foster & Lloyd: It's Already Tomorrow (Effin Ell) *JZ
Robert Earl Keen: Ready For Confetti (Lost Highway) *DS
Rob Lytle: You Must Stop (Heart & Hope) *EW
Johnny Nicholas: Future Blues (The People's Label) *TG
Shoobox Letters: Raise A Ruckus (self) *RG
The Sweetback Sisters: Looking For A Fight
(Signature Sounds) *PP



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SLAID CLEAVES

SORROW & SMOKE

LIVE AT THE HORSESHOE LOUNGE

MARK VIATOR & SUSAN MAXEY

THESE ARMS

MICHAEL O'CONNOR

DEVIL STOLE THE MOON

(Music Road ☼☼☼.5/Rambleheart ☼☼☼/Bare Knuckle ☼☼☼)

Family affair here. On his first live album, Cleaves introduces *New Year's Day* by telling how the Maxey family taught the boy from Maine how to do Texas things, like smoke a brisket. The song namechecks Susan Maxey, whose longtime companion, guitarist Mark Viator, played on Cleaves' third cassette, *Life's Other Side*, and *Wishbones*, while Cleaves sang harmony on Viator's *Bayou Teche* (Belle Isle, 2002) and Viator & Maxey's *These Arms*. Finally, acoustic guitarist Michael O'Connor, Cleaves' regular accompanist for the last decade, who played on *Unsung* (Rounder, 2006) and *Everything You Love Will Be Taken Away*, is Cleaves' primary support on *Sorrow & Smoke*. If only O'Connor had played on *These Arms*, we'd have a closed circle.

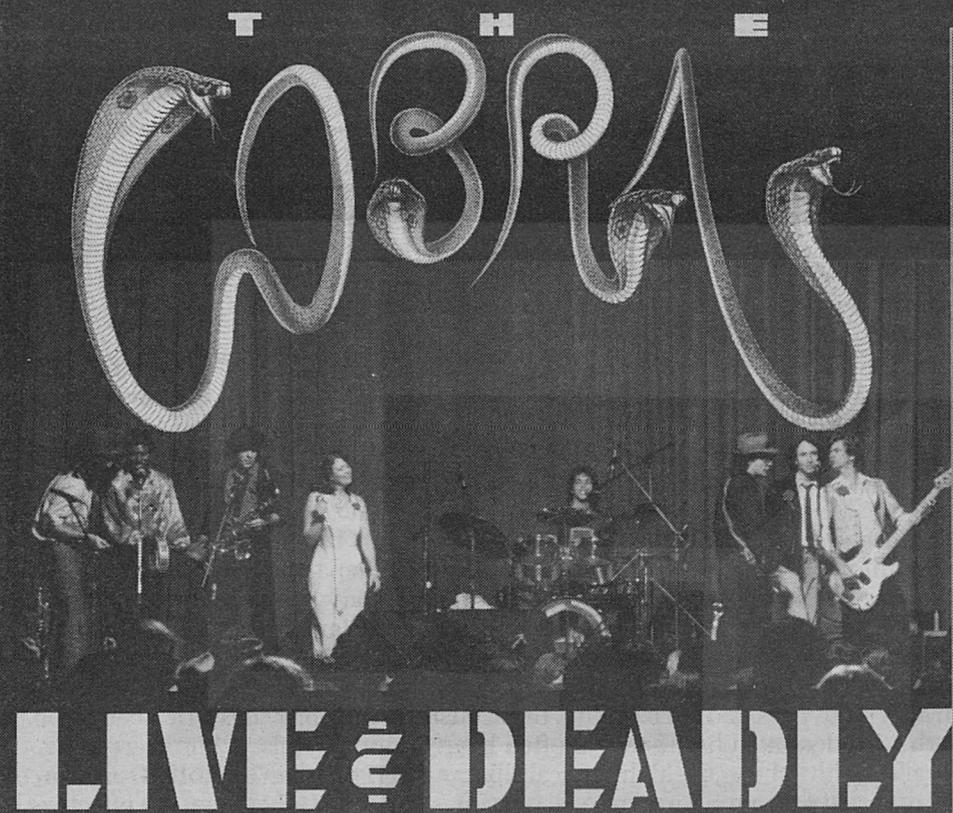
The 21 tracks of Cleaves' double CD, which comes with a beer mat, lean heavily on his most recent albums, with five tracks from *Everything You Love Will Be Taken Away* (Music Road, 2009), six from *Wishbones* (Philo, 2004) and five from *Broke Down* (Philo, 2000), with only one survivor (the title track) from *No Angel Knows* (Philo, 1997) plus one oddball, *Key Chain*, which goes all the way back to *Life's Other Side* (Play Hard, 1992). The numbers are made up by the previously unrecorded *Go For The Gold* and Don Walser's *Texas Top Hand* and his signature *Rolling Stone From Texas*—incidentally, Slaid & Karen went to see Walser at Henry's for the first time when, new in Austin and flat broke, they saw in *Music City Texas* that his was the only New Year's Eve show in town with no cover. There's a very good chance that many of you have seen the hardworking Cleaves play live. I remember, when he broke out with *No Angel Knows*, seeing his schedule for an East Coast tour and asking, "Jeez, Seymour, don't you ever give the poor guy a night off?" So you may well know what to expect from *Sorrow & Smoke*, great songs, ranging from the crowd pleaser *Breakfast In Hell* to the pensive *One Good Year*, masterful and confident delivery and an easy, affable rapport with the audience, devoid of any trace of patronage. I can't help feeling that being so damn likeable has been one of his greatest assets in the crowded singer-songwriter field. I mean, this is a man who could refuse a girl's request to play a James Taylor song and still get her to marry him. You'd never guess that this was recorded, by Fred Remmert, not at a music venue but at a hardcore drinkers' bar (at least it was, I've heard complaints that it's been overrun by trendies), so serious that Cleaves admits he was scared to go into it when first in Austin and living nearby. He got over it.

Back in 1992 (MCT #38), reviewing *Life's Other Side*, I made special note of the exceptional acoustic guitar work of Mark Viator, originally from Port Arthur, who'd recently moved from Houston to Austin after meeting Susan Maxey at Kerrville Folk Festival. At the time, I assumed he'd soon take his place among Austin's A-list pickers, especially as a slide guitarist, but, while always active, most notably during his brief but lively collaboration with Jane Gillman and Marce Lecouture as Rue La-La, he describes himself as a psychotherapist first, musician second. Perhaps celebrating their 20th anniversary, he and Maxey present eleven songs, seven by Viator plus Thad Beckman's *Where Do I Belong*, Robert Earl Keen's *I Would Change My Life*, Kate Wolf's *Across The Great Divide* and Hank Williams' *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*. They're helped out by such friends as Cleaves, Gillman, Jim Stringer, T Jarrod Bonta, Steve Doerr and Chip Dolan, so, not surprisingly, the musicianship overall is first class, but the main attractions are Viator's acoustic, electric, National Steel and Hawaiian guitars and Maxey's spare, atmospheric vocals.

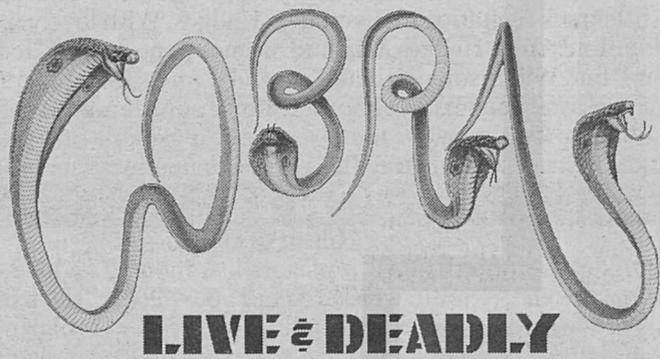
He's been backing Cleaves for ten years, which tells you right there that he's a pretty good picker, and guitarist Michael O'Connor has also worked with Terri Hendrix, Susan Gibson, Adam Carroll, Cary Swinney and Ray Wylie Hubbard. On the side, encouraged by Hubbard, he's put out a couple of solo albums and another with Carroll. Once again working with producer/engineer Jack Saunders, who also plays bass and mandolin, with the great Rick Richards on drums and percussion, O'Connor plays guitars, lap steel, mandolin, harmonica, a \$30 junk store chord organ and a Casio keyboard fished out of a dumpster on ten songs, three cowritten with Carroll, one with Swinney. By his own, preemptive, admission, O'Connor's musical heroes are Tom Waits and Townes Van Zandt and he proves himself an apt student. I can't help feeling that he would have been a little better served by going back to Gabe Rhodes, who did a fine job producing Carroll & O'Connor's excellent *Hard Times* (Down Hole, 2010), but O'Connor proves that he'd make a solid opening act for any of the headliners he accompanies.

JC

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CONNIE SMITH LONG LINE OF HEARTACHES

(Sugar Hill ☼☼☼☼.5)

Considering she turned 70 on August 14th, Connie Smith looks pretty darned good in the album pics, including the candid studio shots, but that ain't nothing compared to how good she sounds on her first new album since 1998 (and only second since 1978). It's not just that she's still in great shape as vocalist, hell, she can give all those 20-something bimbos a 50 year handicap and still steamroller them, it's that she sounds, you know, *country*. It's as if nobody ever told her, during her years of semi-retirement, that the sound that got Ohio housewife Constance June Meadows an RCA contract—she went from singing on local TV shows to a #1 hit in less than a year—is considered hopelessly passé in modern Nashville. And we should all be thankful for that, because what we have here is 12 honest to God heart songs, in fact four of them actually have 'heart' in their titles. As you may know, Ms Smith is married to a fellow called Marty Stuart, who knows a thing or two about country music and produced this album, also playing some guitars on it, and the couple wrote five the songs together, adding Johnny Russell's *Ain't You Even Going To Cry*, Harlan Howard's *I Don't Believe That's How You Feel* (without Tanya Tucker's Tex-Mex flourishes), Dallas Frazier's *A Heart Like You*, Roy Drusky's *Anymore*, Kostas, Patty Loveless & Emory Gordy's *That Makes Two Of Us*, Jerry Galen Foster & Bill Rice's *My Part Of Forever*, originally recorded by Johnny Paycheck, and Diane Berry's *Take My Hand*. Recorded at RCA Studio B, where, come to think, Smith probably cut *Once A Day* 47 years ago, and backed by her own band, The Sundowners, and some guests, including bassist Paul Martin of Stuart's Fabulous Superlatives, it may sound odd to say that an album so retro is a breath of fresh air, but that's what it is. The best moment in **Country Strong** was when Kelly Canter says to Chiles Stanton, "That's how it's done, sweetheart." It's a line Connie Smith, still one of the greatest female country singers of all time, could use. **JC**

AMANDA SHIRES • BEING BRAVE

(Yellowhouse ☼☼☼☼)

Unless I'm missing something, you won't find any mention of Shires' first album, released in 2005, on her website, but I can't imagine that she's one of the many artists who'd prefer that you not even know about, let alone ever hear, their debuts. She most certainly has no reason whatsoever to be embarrassed by **Being Brave**. I first heard of it as her "fiddle album," but, while she does play fiddle on all 14 tracks, she also sings on Fred Rose's *Low And Lonely* and four originals, one cowritten with Daniel Fluit, then a fellow member of Lubbock's alt country Thrift Store Cowboys. The instrumentals, heavy on rags, open with the traditional *Uncle Herm's Hornpipe/Twinkle, Little Star* and close with *La Golondrina*, which I'm guessing Shires and coproducer Andy Wilkinson got from Milton Brown rather than Nana Mouskouri, and, while a stunning showcase of technique, as fiddle albums tend to be, they demonstrate that Shires, who started out at 16 with Tommy Allsup's Texas Playboys and Lanny Fiel's Ranch Dance Fiddle Band, had already moved into virtuoso territory. At the same time, her already confident singing and songwriting raise an interesting question for a music writer. If I'd had this in hand in 2005, would I have extrapolated from it the future fabulousness of **West Cross Timbers** (self, 2009)? I'd like to think that I'd've pegged Shires as an artist to keep an eye on, but no matter, you can't have too much Amanda Shires in your record collection, and surely you want a complete set? **JC**

MARKY QUAYLE So Lucky... To Be Loved By You

(self ☼☼☼☼)

Not only am I breaking 3CM format (such as it is), I'm doing it with a jazz vocalist who also describes herself, God help us, as a "Christian singer" and covers Great American Songbook standards. Given that the contemporary female jazz singers I've checked out have made me nauseous, Quayle starts out heavily handicapped, but, you know, I'm willing to be persuaded and she's pretty plausible. For a start, she's defiantly Old School, as in school of the immortal Julie London, even opening with London's biggest hit, *Cry Me A River*, also covering *You Go To My Head*. Unlike, say, Diana Krall, she keeps it simple, backed by a trio, and what a trio. To describe Noel Jewkes piano, tenor sax, clarinet and trumpet, Dean Reilly upright bass and Vince Lateano drums as veterans of Bay Area jazz hardly does them justice—Reilly was playing with Vince Guaraldi at the hungry i in 1955! Unlike, say, Jane Monheit, Quayle sings to you, not at you, and, like London, her intimate, seductive style makes standards that reference (according to the tattered remnants of a once working knowledge of the field) Lena Horne, Dee Parker, Shirley Bassey, Anita O'Day, Judy Holliday, Dinah Washington and June Christy work. What really closes the deal though is that while Quayle produced, Jewkes engineered, at his own studio, and I'm just nuts about his separations. He makes this sound like one of the small combo West Coast Cool LPs that Roy DuNann engineered for Contemporary. I'm not saying that Quayle can rival Julie London's best albums (or their covers!), but it warms my heart to know that, at least in San Francisco, you can still hear this kind of music. **JC**

GILLIAN WELCH • THE HARROW & THE HARVEST

(Acony ☼☼☼☼)

Given that it's been eight long years since **Soul Journey** (Acony, 2003), any review of Welch's fifth album in 15 years is going to seem rather like a spoiler to any fans who haven't got round to buying a copy. Even saying that, as on 2001's **Time (The Revelator)**, this is strictly duo, Welch (vocals, guitar, banjo, harmonica, "hands & feet") and Dave Rawlings (vocals, guitar, banjo & harmonica)—the only other credits are for engineering and mastering—may be more than they want to know. So, if you don't have a copy yet, all I'm just going to say that you won't be disappointed. Even if she and Rawlings have had a songwriting draught, Gillian Welch makes Gillian Welch albums, as close to perfect and as doggedly non-commercial as records can get. OK, I have no use whatsoever for the symbolist cover art, the work of a heavy metal singer. **JC**

DAVID SERBY • POOR MAN'S POEM ANDY WILKINSON & ANDY HEDGES MINING THE MOTHERLODE

(Crooked Mile ☼☼☼☼/Yellowhouse ☼☼☼☼)

Still living in San Gabriel, Serby may be about the last honky-tonker left in California, but his fourth album is a radical departure in content and style. Wanting to address current American economic woes while avoiding preachiness, Serby found parallels in the 1800s, mainly the Civil War and its veterans, characters from both sides of the range wars, men and women taking desperate chances to deal with poverty. Once again working with producer Edward Tree, who also plays nylon string guitar, bass and harmonium, the acoustic setting provides a rich backdrop for Serby's understated baritone and often heart-rending lyrics. While there are some parallels with Johnny Cash's historical albums and Dave Alvin's **Public Domain**, the big difference is that Serby wrote all ten songs and while all of them are effective, he manages to give stick in your mind hooks to a suicidal veteran ("Give me laudanum for my whiskey, I'm going down to Sugar Creek") and a hired gun ("I confess we were evil men, but no one thought that way back then").

An album that includes versions of Uncle Dave Macon's sardonic *Farm Relief*, The Bently Boys' 1929 *Down On Penny's Farm*, Woody Guthrie's *Dust Can't Kill Me*, *Dust Pneumonia Blues* and *The Jolly Banker* and The Carter Family's *No Depression* may be somewhat more up to date than Serby's, but Wilkinson & Hedges' major concern is the future, the unsustainable future, of the Texas Panhandle, where life has always been dependent on the southernmost basin of the vast Ogallala Aquifer, which is, literally, being tapped out. Where other Texans worry about water not falling from the sky, these Lubbock musicians anticipate water no longer coming out of the ground, the heart of the album being Wilkinson's *Sandstone Champagne* and his seven minute title track recitation, delivered by Hedges. With lovely musical accents by Emily Arellano and Alissa Hedges, lead and harmony vocals, and Hedges' six-string banjo, and some fine Wilkinson originals like *Old-Timey Heart*, *No Room For Big Shots*, which could easily be mistaken for a Guthrie song, and the sprightly *Lloyd's Country Store*, the subtext, that the modern world, incapable of treading lightly on the Llano Estacado, has doomed an entire region, is no mere metaphor. **JC**

NICK 13

(Sugar Hill ☼☼☼☼)

Sending out a heads up to the FAR reporters last month, I added, quoting from an email press release, "Some words to chill your blood: 'the frontman for the internationally celebrated dark rock trio Tiger Army, Nick 13 is blazing new trails as a country music artist.'" Someone must have passed this on to the authorities as I soon got a long, unhappy email from Sugar Hill, telling me how passionate Nick 13 is about country music. "We aren't hurting for quality artists and only work with those we believe create music with heart. Nick's got that in spades." Attached were lists of songs that Jones (his real name) has played as a guest DJ, which look an awful lot like what FAR DJs spin every week, proof of "his deep appreciation of roots music." OK, on the minus side, we have the name, the mega-tattoos, 15 years as a psychobilly and, as one FARster remarked, "The fact that Audra Mae opened for him makes me throw up a little in my mouth." On the plus side, Sugar Hill has a lot of history, even if most of it is just that, and the players include James Intveld and Greg Leisz, who also coproduced, with Lloyd Green steel guitar on three of the ten tracks. So, doing my best to suspend my apprehension that Jones is going to be another Mike Ness, let's jack this sucker in. And what do we get? Well, nothing much. It's not a keeper, for sure, but, even with the rather eerie disconnect between the vocals and the backing, which were recorded in different studios, not unusual, but the mix isn't quite in the pocket, it's monotonous but not unlistenable (kind of a bummer because I was hoping to be able to say "all tats, no cattle"), and, unlike Ness, Jones wrote all the songs, so at least he doesn't butcher any classics. My problem with Jones is that while he's more competent, even convincing, than I would have expected, offhand I can think of a dozen people who are much better at singing and writing country music but aren't on any label. Whether Tiger Army's fans embrace Jones' new direction or, like Social Distortion's, spurn it, remains to be Soundscanned, but I just don't see much future for him as a country artist. **JC**

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COBRAS

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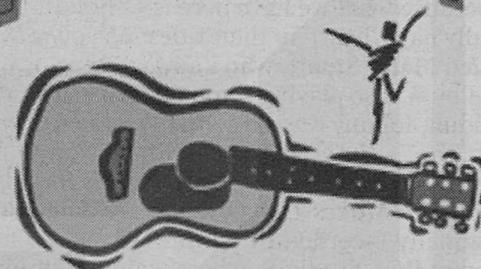
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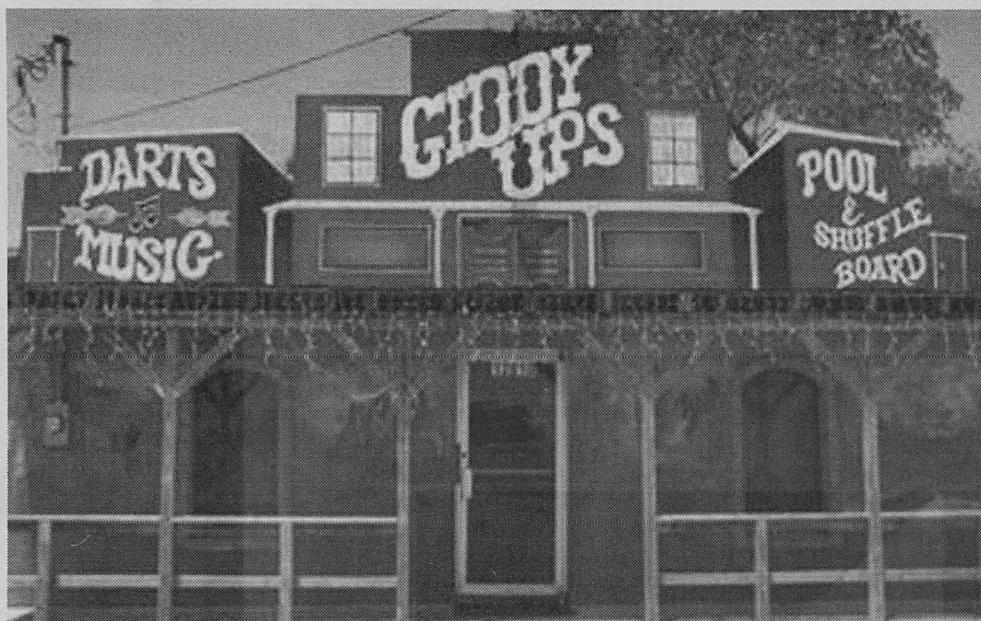
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JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Not having written about, or given much thought to, the blues in quite some time, going back over my early musical history brought up a lot of memories. Some of them, like amazing performances at the American Folk Blues Festivals, I know are shared with many other Brits and, come to that, those Americans who flew to Europe to see lineups that couldn't be duplicated in the US at that time. Others, though are little more esoteric, such as hanging out on Saturdays at **Dave Carey's Swing Shop** in Streatham Hill, one of London's very few sources for US imports, where I first met **Jo Ann & Dave Kelly**. I have no specific memory of the always sensational Jo Ann, of whom Bonnie Raitt once said, "I was not born with a voice like Mavis Staples or Jo Ann Kelly," but vividly remember her brother Dave backing an ecstatic Howlin' Wolf—bear in mind that he was subbing for Hubert Sumlin.

Thinking about producers put me in mind of perhaps the most modest of what's typically a cocksure breed. For some unknown, or anyway long forgotten, reason, *Time Out In London* dropped **John Hiatt's** seventh album in my lap, possibly because, at that time, he'd been cut, after two albums for each of them, by no less than three major labels, Epic, MCA and Geffen, so, rehab or no rehab, there wasn't much reason to think that A&M would break his 'critically acclaimed' (ie sold 12 copies) streak. To be honest, I did wonder why A&M, notorious even in the music industry for a fondness for Peruvian marching powder, signed an alcoholic loser with a really crappy sales record, but their album was, of course, **Bring The Family**. After my review, in which I praised his flawless production, **John Chelew** called me from LA to tell me that, while he appreciated the kind words, "All I did was set the levels, then I read magazines for four days while they got on with it."

After the Academy of Texas Music announced the winners of its annual **Texas Music Awards** ("Recognizing Texas Talent - Rewarding Texas Pride"), **Bob Cheevers**, directly and through a publicist, made a big deal out of winning Singer-Songwriter Of the Year, though perhaps unwisely boasting that "I've been in Texas less than four years." My first reaction was, "buddy, if you're even nominated for a TMA, you're already a loser," but my esteemed colleague **William Michael Smith** of the *Houston Press* used both barrels in an email to the hapless publicist, "Bob Cheevers is a pandering hack. No one down here pays the slightest attention to him. As for the so-called 'Texas Music Awards,' that is a closed loop of inbreds who can't get any attention from the state's music writers or draw flies at gigs, so they formed their own little association to pat themselves on the back. If you were from here, you would know this." To be fair, the awards do occasionally go to deserving musicians, for instance Hayes Carll won Rising Star in 2003, Shake Russell has won Entertainer multiple times and Chris Gage got the 2011 Musician nod, and if Bob Livingston's **Gypsy Alibi** was voted 2011 Texas Album, while Mandy Mercier was given a brand new 'Award of Distinction' for **Singer In A Roadhouse Band**, this only goes to show that the Academy uses somewhat different parameters than most award giving operations, not that they're completely out to lunch. When I pointed out the Carll and Russell awards to him, Smith walked his remarks back a bit, rephrasing as "mostly inbreds and going-nowheres," because, in the big picture, those awards stand out as anomalies—if you went to the trouble of looking through the annual lists of winners, better yet of nominees, it's what the fuck? Who are these people? Mind you, just looking at their pictures usually makes you glad you have no idea, you can practically smell the flop sweat.

There are several words and phrases in the musical lexicon that I can't abide, 'sophomore album,' 'tastemaker' and 'buzz band' for instance, but the one that really irritates me is 'everybody's talking about.' This is sloppy journalism at its sloppiest, because it's so ludicrously and patently untrue. The latest sighting was in an *Austin American-Statesman* feature signed by Deborah Sengupta Stith, though, to be fair, it was in the photo caption, "See why everybody's talking about San Marcos rockers Blue October," so it may well be the work of another, anonymous hand. Either way, it's complete tosh. Have you heard anyone, anyone at all, talking about Blue October? I thought not.

Also from the *Statesman*, I thought this, from a **Peter Mongillo** 'Music Source' column which listed a number of local artists with forthcoming albums, was a bit odd: "(if you have a band with a new album, please send it in to be considered for review)." I've often thought that, post-Michael Corcoran, the *Statesman's* music writers have been addressing an audience that doesn't actually read the paper, I doubt, for instance, that many young people rely on it for information about the Fun Fun Fun or Austin City Limits festivals, but the implication here is that local bands don't read the paper either. Dude, the *Statesman* reviews CDs! Who knew? We didn't bother putting anything like that in the first issue of *Music City*, I guess figuring that people would figure what the deal was, and if they didn't, they were too dim to worry about.

Silk Purse/Sow's Ear PR Headline of the Month. Pretty sure I could make this a standing monthly award, but anyway, for August, it goes to **Austin Universal Entertainment** for "Rosehill's **Dream It All Over Again** Jumps to #33 on Texas Music Chart." Reminds me of a headline I saw one Texas summer, "Temperatures plunge into mid 90s."

Reviewing Amanda Shires' **Being Brave** (elsewhere), reminded me of something that came up when I was talking to Laura Cantrell about **Kitty Wells Dresses** (Diesel Only, 2011). Can't remember how we got on to debut albums being swept under the rug, but I was mightily impressed when Cantrell told me she actually has a copy of Emmylou Harris' ultra-rare **Gliding Bird** (Jubilee, 1970), which Harris used to disown, instead listing **Pieces Of The Sky** (1975) as her 'first' album. However, I see she does now have mention of it on her website.

His first recordings rather than his first album, **Early Tracks** (Epic, 1987) was rushed out after **Steve Earle** hit big with **Guitar Town**, but it seems to have vanished from his *All-Music Guide* discography. Actually it is there, but hidden under Compilations. This one has always stuck in my mind because the day it landed on my desk at *Time Out*, I was meeting Earle later on and when I told him about getting it he made me swear never to listen to it.

Ran into a Too Much Information problem with **Being Brave**. One of the standouts is **Amanda Shires'** version of *Low And Lonely*, credited, correctly, to Floyd Jenkins. However, as you may know (or not), 'Floyd Jenkins' was actually **Fred Rose**, who also published several other songs, including *Home In San Antone* and *Whose Heart Are You Breaking Now?*, under that name. I'm sure there were good, probably financial, reasons for using a pseudonym, Rose was a consummate businessman, but this late in the day (he died in 1954), I see no reason not to give him the credit under his own name.

If you've spent any time in San Antonio, you've more than likely seen the local bumper sticker that says '**Keep San Antonio Lame**' (the a in lame is shaped like the facade of The Alamo). If you've drawn any conclusions from this sardonic slogan, you're probably

right. Just to show what my friends at KSYM have to put up with, this is an actual, swear to God, quotation from an email announcing a 13th birthday celebration being thrown by the **Texas Music Coalition**: "The Hot Tin Roof's regular Sunday night karaoke follows the TMC Showcase, for those interested in staying on."

No comment: "Polyvinyl is pleased to announce the release of **Someone Still Loves You Boris Yeltsin's** new album, **Tape Club**. **Tape Club** is a truly unique 26-song double album that highlights the band's vast archive of 10 years worth of unreleased and rare material."

Seems to be a rash of bimbo country trios recently, I've been getting PR emails about **Lucy Angel**, a mother and two daughters, **The McClymonts**, three Australian sisters who've relocated to Nashville, sent me their absolutely godawful US release, and iMusic sent out a picture of **The Pistol Annies**, featuring a really scary looking woman called Ashley Monroe, and when I say scary, I don't mean Goth, I mean making **Twilight's** Victoria look sweet and cuddly. There may well be others, but I really don't want to know about them. The odd thing about all three groups is their presentation. I haven't gone into semiotics recently, maybe next month, but for some reason they're all posing as tramps, going, as **Joe Pareres** of KSYM, San Antonio's *Third Coast Music Network*, puts it, for "the pentecostal rural tart look," which is quite extraordinarily unattractive. As we say in England, "I wouldn't poke her with yours."

Publicists often, if not usually, go over the top, that's pretty much built into the job description, but you'd think that they wouldn't allow artists they're hyping from shooting themselves in the foot. However, a recent email, concerning the reissue of an album that, despite being produced by George Martin, bombed 25 years ago, **Say Something** (Atlantic, 1988), actually quotes **Andy Leek**, who fronts a British party band, as saying of his album's failure to set the world alight, "Everyone was into Britpop and guitar bands like Oasis and my classy balladeering orchestral pop didn't fit in with the fashion." Thing of it is, Andy, you don't use words like "classy" to describe your own music, you cross your fingers and hope other people will do it for you.

A minor oddity in Leek's account is that it opens with "Having left **Dexy's Midnight Runners...**" You may remember their huge 1982 hit, *Come On Eileen*, and, possibly, their ever-changing stupid stage outfits, formats stolen (literally) from other bands and personnel. By my count, the group went through 23 members in eight years, so being an ex-Dexy did not exactly make you stand out in a crowd of British musicians, though you have to dig pretty deep to find any evidence of Leek's tenure, which seems to have lasted about 15 minutes in 1979. **Kevin Rowland**, the group's control freak leader, was best known in the trade for his one man-war against the music press, of which the most bizarre aspect was that his delivery system for attacks on music writers (and former band members) was full page ads in music magazines. David Rodriguez once advised an exceptionally useless former Austin singer-songwriter, "Don't get into a pissing match with someone who buys ink by the bucket," but Rowland had to learn the hard way when the last Dexy's album and his two solo ones were systematically trashed. Mind you, they were fucking awful, especially **My Beauty** (Creation, 1999), the cover of which alone would make you want to puke. Drag was not a good look for Rowland.

As the death of **Jerry Leiber** was well covered, instead of an obituary, I'm giving another plug to **Josh Alan Friedman's** extraordinary 73 page interview with Leiber in **Tell The Truth Until They Bleed** (Hal Leonard, 2008). The title is a quote from Leiber.



SEPTEMBER MUSIC

Mondays, Austin Cajun Aces, 6.30pm
 Tuesdays, Brennen Leigh, 7pm
 1st, Liz Morphis, 7pm
 2nd, Larry Lange
 & His Lonely Knights, 10pm
 3rd, Sunset Valley Boys, 3pm
 5th, CLOSED
 7th, Cleve & Sweet Mary, 7pm,
 The Peacemakers, 10pm
 8th, Danny Britt, 7pm
 9th, Alan Haynes, 10pm
 10th, Seceders, 10pm

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 The Peacemakers 10pm
 15th, Flyin' A's, 7pm
 16th, Redd Volkaert, 10pm
 17th, Freddie Steady 5, 10pm
 21st, Floyd Domino
 & Redd Volkaert, 7pm
 The Peacemakers 10pm
 22nd, Evolution-Phil Auldridge, 7pm
 23rd, Hank & Shaidri Alrich, 10pm
 24th, Omar & The Howlers, 10pm
 28th, Tony Airoidi, 7pm
 The Peacemakers 10pm
 29th, Matt Smith, 7pm
 30th, Charlie Terrell & The
 Murdered Johns, 10pm

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 Twisted Roots, WCNI, New London, CT
 Songs Of The Mother Road, KSUT, Ignacio, CO
 The Medicine Show, Loch Broom, TX, Ullensaker, California
 Third Coast Music Network, KSVM, San Antonio, TX
 Green Chile Revival & Medicine Show, KGLP, Gallup, NM
 The Musty Cat, WJHR, Nevada City, CA
 Country Roots, KOZB, Austin, TX
 Border Blasters, WJHR, Kingstrop, PA
 Chickenskin Music, KTRU, Houston, TX
 Highway 61, Radio Voice Spazio, Alessandria, Italy
 Lost Highway, WMBR, Cambridge, MA
 Wide Cut Country, CKUA, Alberta, Canada
 American Roots Music, ISA Radio, La Tour Du Pin, France
 Rockabilly Jukebox, Dublin City FM, Dublin, Ireland
 Denim Alley, KPZZ, Lakeport, CA
 Folk Fury, KTER, El Paso, TX
 Roots Rock Review, WBZC, Pennington, NJ
 Borderlines, CTR, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
 WQML, Carolina, NC
 Taproot Radio, WQML, Carolina, NC
 Country, WVA, Caldwell, New Mexico, USA
 Saturday Morning Folk Show, KDVS, Davis, CA
 Under The X In Texas, KOOP, Austin, TX
 Freight Train Roogie, KACB, Santa Rosa, CA
 Texas Renegade Radio, KNDN, Dallas, TX
 Amarillo Highway, KZMU, Moab, UT
 Big G's Texas Roadshow, #00K, Junction, TX and KERV, Kerrville, TX

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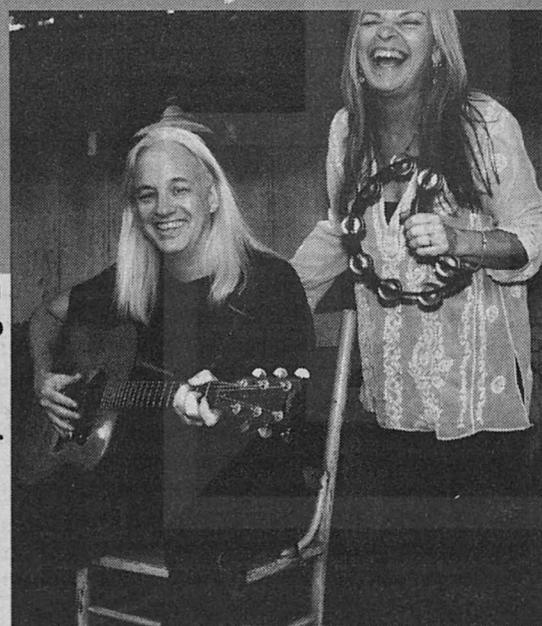


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BELLS & WHISTLES

When a man who's spent a good part of his life in recording studios, backing the likes of Elvis Presley, Webb Pierce, Ray Price, Patsy Cline, Porter Wagoner and Faron Young, tells you what's going wrong with a session, I think we can all agree that it might be a good idea to pay attention. While Don Walser was cutting **Rolling Stone From Texas** (Watermelon, 1994), Jimmy Day, then playing steel guitar in Walser's Pure Texas Band, spent the best part of an hour explaining to me, in minute detail, exactly how the producer was screwing it up.

Jimmy was, admittedly, addressing a very receptive audience—record producers have long been among my bêtes noires. The problem is that record producers can walk away from the wreckage with a paycheck—often the single largest item in a budget—and not only avoid any responsibility for the outcome but move on to other projects, as, for instance, Roy Bittan did after totally fucking up Will T Massey's one and only major label album.

Musicians do have to accept some of the blame for production debacles. Much as I loved Don Walser, I would never call him assertive and I imagine that he naively assumed that Ray Benson knew what he was doing (similarly, Mingo Saldivar assumed that Carl Finch knew how to make Conjunto work in the Anglo market), while Massey, dumping the team that had brought him to MCA's attention in the first place, allowed himself to be seduced by a member of The E Street Band with virtually no experience as a producer.

Which brings up something that's always puzzled me. When choosing a producer, you'd think musicians with any sense would check resumes and listen to the candidates' previous work, but all too often they go with people who simply aren't a good fit for them or have an iffy track record. Much as I admired HighTone Records, I would have advised any friends being signed to the label to stipulate that they not be produced by Bruce Bromberg or Dave Alvin. Bromberg illustrates a good rule of thumb, don't let anyone who owns a label produce your album. Alvin gets us into thornier territory. There are obvious exceptions, look no further than Lloyd Maines and Gurf Morlix, but it most certainly does not follow that an outstanding musician will be an outstanding producer, they're completely different skill sets.

A besetting sin of record producers is, of course, 'creative input.' Indeed, one went so far as to describe himself as "the person who creatively guides or directs the process of making a record, like a director would a movie," the implication being that musicians are merely actors. When a great pioneer like Eli Oberstein set up makeshift studios in hotel rooms, with one microphone and no retakes, his options were somewhat limited, but, given the primitive technology, what he recorded was pretty much how, say, Lydia Mendoza really sounded in the early 30s. Today, with all the bells and whistles available even to people producing themselves in their bedrooms, it's impossible to know whether a recording is merely idealized or downright misleading, though the deception sometimes goes against the act, albums that fall far short of the live show (Sarah Borges comes to mind).

Which is why house concert promoters like Paul Barker and Robert Hurley never book anyone they haven't seen in person. I have to admit that I've taken the some chances during NotSXS, but the single most important consideration when thinking of booking on the strength of an album is, who produced this sucker? **JC**

RAY BONNEVILLE BAD MAN'S BLOOD

(Red House *****.5)

Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, John Lee Hooker, T-Bone Walker, Otis Rush, Big Walter Horton, Big Joe Williams, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Willie Dixon, Otis Spann, Big Mama Thornton, Howlin' Wolf, Sleepy John Estes, Victoria Spivey, Lightnin' Hopkins, Buddy Guy, Magic Sam and Roosevelt Sykes. You will, of course, make the obvious 'Blues Giants' connection, but this is not a random list—they're just a few of the Giants I heard at the American Folk Blues Festivals when they passed through London in the early/mid 60s. Those Festivals jumpstarted the British blues bloom but that didn't mean much to me because, being at an impressionable age, they imprinted on me the belief that blues were not just an American thing but an African-American thing. Seeing whites, especially English ones, play the blues was like seeing an actor in blackface playing Othello.

That said, I've never managed to be a full-blown Blues Nazi. Back home, I'd go and see just about any lineup that included Jo Ann or Dave Kelly, admired John Mayall for his blues seminars and just plain enjoyed Long John Baldry's Steampacket (also the first two or three Fabulous Thunderbirds albums). Over here, I've had kind words to say about Steve James, Gary Primich, Guy Forsyth, Spencer Thomas and Erin Harpe.

In other words, I'm OK with about 0.1% of white boy (and girl) blues, which is why you don't see much blues coverage in these here pages, and why I'm a good deal more comfortable with Ray Bonneville's formulation, "I'm a blues-influenced writer, and a bit swampy." Tellingly, he cites Slim Harpo, who, as Cub Koda once said, wrote "blues that could be sung by elements of the Caucasian persuasion with a straight face," and Tony Joe White as major influences. However, he makes no secret of his background in the blues. "In my early 20s, it got a hold of me, simple, truthful music, In Boston, I'd go to see people like JB Hutto, Hound Dog Taylor, Muddy Waters." With his own, very distinctive sound, Bonneville has many recording credits playing harmonica on albums by Tim O'Brien, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Mary Gauthier, Eliza Gilkyson, Gurf Morlix and many others, but he was originally inspired to take up the instrument by bluesmen like Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, Charlie Musselwhite and Paul Butterfield.

Born in Ottawa and raised in Quebec, Bonneville's family moved to Boston, where he learned to speak English, started banging on guitars and was in a High School band. After a stint in the Marines, he taught himself harmonica and started playing professionally in Boulder, where he qualified as a pilot before moving to Alaska, then Seattle, to develop his solo act, spent some time in Paris (the French one) and New Orleans before returning to Canada to work as a bush pilot.

A close shave ended that side career and, 20 years after he started playing, he decided he'd developed his own style well enough to justify an album, **On The Main** (Electric Desert, 1993), a reference to his then home in Montreal. Since then, he's put out six more, getting significant career boosts from the Juno-winning **Gust Of Wind** (Stony Plain, 1999), his first Red House album, **Roll It Down** (2003) and **Goin' By Feel** (Red House, 2008), which was produced by Gurf Morlix. **Roll It Down** added his now signature hand-made foot percussion, inspired by Jesse Fuller's 'footdella' and crafted to travel as carry-on, to guitar and neckbrace harmonica, "Round New Orleans, people want to dance, so I tried to make myself sound like a band."

While his seventh album was engineered and coproduced, with Bonneville, by Justin Douglas, it features Morlix on electric and baritone guitars, bass, banjo and harmonies and Mike Meadows drums/percussion, with Dexter Payne alto and baritone sax on two tracks, and even if Bonneville himself and Red House's one-sheet hadn't already suggested it, 'swampy' is the mot juste. The eleven songs, of which *Good Times* and the bilingual *Blonde Of Mine* originally appeared on 90s Canadian albums, but kept evolving in Bonneville's head, touch on very different aspects of the human condition, the title track, for instance, about a son doomed to follow in his father's criminal footsteps, is followed by a song about apartment neighbors' make-up sex, *Mississippi*, a successful digital single about the floods, precedes the self-explanatory *Darlin' (Put Your Suitcase Down)*.

Last month, I editorialized about the complexities of promoting an album, but Red House's Ellen Stanley has a rather unusual problem with Bonneville's. Over the years, he's built up a strong support base in print media and radio, but it's a bit spread out, so, to cover all her bases, she has to send out promo copies to blues, roots and jazz writers and DJs (Bonneville, somewhat unexpectedly, has a lot of jazz festivals in his touring schedule). Ironically, Stanley, a FARster, won't be spinning **Bad Man's Blood** on her own radio show, not because of any conflict of interest but because she only plays female artists on *Womenfolk*. When most artists appeal to a fairly narrow sector, such wide appeal is, of course, welcome news to a promotions director, not to say a tribute to Bonneville's art. Starting from the same place as so many others, he's found a way to be, as he describes himself, "a roaming blues poet," neither slavishly imitating or trying to be even bluesier than his influences. "I'm a product of my influences, like everybody is. I'm just trying to be the best artist I can be. God knows, I have nothing else!" **JC**



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20th, 9:30

One Good Lung w/ Guest Bands

22nd, 8pm

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Lazers

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Rally Rally

27th, 9:30

Christy Hayes w/ Guest Bands

29th 8pm

The PJ's

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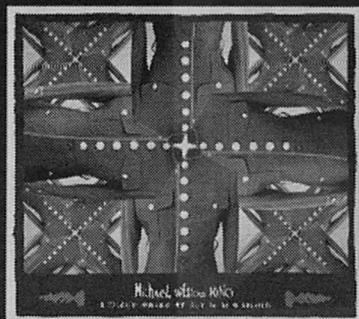
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SEPTEMBER ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

- 1st Lawrence Walker • 1907 Scott, LA
Conway Twitty • 1933 Friars Point, MS
Archie Bell • 1944 Henderson, TX
- 2nd Johnny Lee Wills • 1912 Limestone Co, TX
Charline Arthur • 1929 Henrietta, TX
Jimmy Clanton • 1938 Golden Meadow, LA
- 3rd Hank Thompson • 1925 Waco, TX
Freddie King • 1934 Gilmer, TX
Knocky Parker † 1986
- 4th Danny Gatton • 1945 Washington, DC
Blackie White • 1951 San Angelo, TX
- 6th Jimmy Reed • 1925 Dunleith, MS
Ernest Tubb † 1984
- 7th Buddy Holly • 1936 Lubbock, TX
Warren Zevon † 2003
- 8th Jimmie Rodgers • 1897 Meridian, MS
Milton Brown • 1903 Stephenville, TX
Harlan Howard • 1929 Lexington, KY
Patsy Cline • 1932 Winchester, VA
Guitar Shorty • 1939 Houston, TX
Sunny Ozuna • 1943 San Antonio, TX
Zachary Richard • 1950 Lafayette, LA
Neko Case • 1970 Alexandria, VA
- 9th Joe Clay • 1938 Harvey, LA
Otis Redding • 1941 Dawson, GA
Tex Owens † 1962
Bill Monroe † 1996
- 10th Roy Brown • 1925 New Orleans, LA
Rosie Flores • 1950 San Antonio, TX
Mary Battiata • 1956 Brooklyn, NY
Cary Swinney • 1960 Lubbock, TX
Gatemouth Brown † 2005
- 11th Jimmie Davis • 1902 Beech Springs, LA
Roger Wallace • 1971 Knoxville, TN
Leon Payne † 1969
Curtis Jones † 1971
- 12th Kenneth Threadgill • 1909 Peniel, TX
Armando Marroquin • 1912 Alice, TX
Ella Mae Morse • 1924 Mansfield, TX
George Jones • 1931 Saratoga, TX
Christine Albert • 1955 Rome, NY
Johnny Cash † 2003
Charlie Walker † 2008
- 13th Bill Monroe • 1911 Rosine, KY
- 14th Malcolm Yelvington • 1918 Covington, TN
Don Walser • 1934 Brownfield, TX
Elizabeth Cotten † 1998
- 15th Roy Acuff • 1903 Maynardsville, TN
Jimmy Gilmer • 1940 Chicago, IL
Vernon Dalhart † 1948
Beaver Nelson • 1971 Norman, OK
- 16th BB King • 1925 Itta Bena, MS
Ralph Mooney • 1928 Duncan, OK
Little Willie Littlefield • 1931 Houston, TX
Phil Lee • 1951 Durham, NC
- 17th Hank Williams • 1923 Georgiana, AL
Bill Black • 1926 Memphis, TN
John Delafosse † 1994
- 18th Jimi Hendrix † 1970
- 19th Bill Neely • 1916 McKinney, TX
Red Foley † 1968
Gram Parsons † 1973
- 20th Ana Egge • 1976 Estevan, Canada
Karl Marx Farr † 1961
Steve Goodman † 1984
Don Walser † 2006
- 21st Ted Daffan • 1912 Beauregarde, LA

- 22nd Jesse Ed Davis • 1944 Norman, OK
- 23rd Jimmy Bryant † 1980
Ray Charles • 1930 Albany, GA
Roy Buchanan • 1939 Ozark, TN
Jimmy Wakely † 1982
Gary Primich † 2007
- 24th Helen Hall † 2006
- 25th Royce Kendall • 1934 St Louis, MO
Joe Sun • 1943 Rochester, MN
Eric Taylor • 1949 Atlanta, GA
- 26th Merrill Moore • 1923 Algona, IA
Marty Robbins • 1925 Glendale, AZ
Julie London • 1926 Santa Rosa, CA
Dolores Keane • 1953 Caherlistrane, Ireland
Bessie Smith † 1937
- 28th DP 'Dad' Carter • 1889 Columbia, KY
Joe Falcon • 1900 Rayne, LA
Jim Boyd • 1914 Fannin Co, TX
Tommy Collins • 1930 Bethany, OK
Country Johnny Mathis • 1933 Maud, TX
Willie 'Jitterbug' Webb • 1941 San Antonio, TX
- 29th Gene Autry • 1907 Tioga, TX
Bill Boyd • 1910 Fannin Co, TX
Jerry Lee Lewis • 1935 Ferriday, LA
Alvin Crow • 1950 Oklahoma City, OK
Mickey Newbury † 2002
Amy Farris † 2009
- 30th Pearl Butler • 1927 Nashville, TN
Ronnie Dawson † 2003

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- 13th, HalleyAnna & The Tennessee Volunteers
- 15th, Ray Wylie Hubbard
- 17th, The Travelin' McCourys
- 18th, Jackie Bristow
- 19th, Mark Jungers 20th, Lincoln Durham
- 23rd, The Gourds
- 24th, Jimmy LaFave 25th, Michael Fracasso
- 26th, KC Clifford 27th, Somebody's Darling
- 29th, Liars & Saints 30th, Uncle Lucius

Old #1

6416 North Lamar

- 2nd, Van Wilks
- 3rd, Omar & The Howlers
- 8th, Owen Temple
- 9th, Jack Wilson
- 10th, Will Sexton
- 11th, Danny Santos y Los Bluegrass Vatos, 11am
- 14th, AirCargo 15th, Brian Pounds
- 18th, AirCargo, 11am
- 21st & 25th, Hank & Shaidri Alrich, 7pm
- 22nd, John Inmon
- 23rd, Nakia & The Blues Grifters
- 24th, Sam Baker
- 28th, SWRFA Showcase
- 29th, Midnight River Choir 30th, Los Texas Wranglers

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