

# 3<sup>rd</sup> COAST MUSIC

**JANIS MARTIN**

**#188/277 SEPTEMBER 2012**



**ARMANDO**

**MARROQUIN**

•

**JOHN THE  
REVEALATOR**

•

**FREEFORM**

**AMERICAN**

**ROOTS #157**

•

**ROOTS BIRTHS  
& DEATHS**

•

**REVIEWS**

**\*\*\*\*\* (or not)**

**JIMMY LaFAVE**

**STAN MARTIN**

**BRAD MOORE**

**THE STONE**

**COYOTES**

**JERRY JEFF**

**WALKER**

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**THE HITS,**

**ALL OF THE TIME'**



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## FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #157

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DURING AUGUST 2012

### #1 CORB LUND: CABIN FEVER

(New West) \*BS/\*DA/\*EE/\*JH/\*KW/\*MDT/\*MN/\*MO

- 2 VA: Even More Songs Of Route 66: From Here To There  
(Lazy SoB) \*DC/\*SC/\*TG
- 3 Liam Fitzgerald & The Rainieros: Last Call! (self)  
\*BR/\*DV/\*KF/\*MB/\*PGS/\*SH
- 4 Jimmy LaFave: Depending On The Distance (Music Road)  
\*AB/\*TR/\*WR
- 5 JP Harris & The Tough Choices: I'll Keep Calling (Cow Island)  
\*DT/\*JZ
- 6 Old Crow Medicine Show: Carry Me Back (ATO) \*CJ/\*RS
- 7 The Flatlanders: The Odessa Files (New West) \*CP/\*RL
- 8 The Deadfields: Dance In The Sun (self) \*CTS/\*GF/\*GM
- 9= AJ Downing: Good Day (Charkansas) \*JM/\*JT/\*MP  
Malcolm Holcombe: Down The River (Gypsyeyes) \*JB/\*RC
- 10 Great Recession Orchestra: Double Shot (NewTex) \*BP/\*MM
- 11 Zoe Muth & The Lost High Rollers: Old Gold (Signature Sounds)
- 12 Leyla Fences: Itty Bitty Twang Twang (self) \*EW/\*OAM
- 13 Janis Martin: The Blanco Sessions (Cow Island) \*ATC/\*MT/\*TB
- 14 Kelly Hogan: I Like To Keep Myself In Pain (Anti-) \*TJ/\*TM
- 15= Derek Hoke: Waiting All Night (Electric Western) \*JP/\*SS  
Charlie Shafter (Dogs Hit) \*BB  
Andy Vaughan & The Driveline: Searching For The Song (self)  
\*DWB/\*MI
- 16 Robin & Linda Williams: These Old Dark Hills (Red House) \*LMG
- 17= Reverend Payton's Big Damn Band: Between The Ditches  
(SideDummy) \*ST  
VA: We Walk The Line: A Celebration Of The Music Of  
Johnny Cash (Legacy) \*LB/\*N&T
- 18 Stan Martin: Distilled Influences (Twangtone)
- 19= Radney Foster: Del Rio Texas: Revisited (Devil's River) \*RV  
The Honeycutters: Irene (self) \*BW/\*TL  
VA: Kin; Songs By Mary Karr & Rodney Crowell (Vanguard) \*PT
- 20 Caroline Herring: Camilla (Signature Sounds) \*GN
- 21= JD McPherson: Signs & Signifiers (Rounder) \*BL  
Shovels And Rope: O' Be Joyful (Dualtone) \*DG
- 22 My Darling Clementine: How Do You Plead? (Drumfire) \*FS
- 23 The Mavericks: Suited Up & Ready (Valory)
- 24= Lisa Biales: Just Like Honey (Big Song Music) \*MF  
Kasey Chambers: Storybook (Sugar Hill) \*GS  
The Coal Porters: Find The One (Prima)  
Elizabeth Cook: Gospel Plow (31 Tigers) \*KC  
Pat Donohue & Butch Thompson: Vicksburg Blues (Red House) \*AG  
Adam James Sorensen: Midwest (City Creek) \*GC  
Steve Spurgin: Folk Remedies (Blue Light) \*AA  
Dwight Yoakam: 3 Pears (Warner Brothers) \*DS

## † ARMANDO MARROQUIN

9/12/1912—7/4/1990

**B**ecause they get little public recognition, one of the categories in FAR & Away, my annual poll of the FAR reporters, is 'Best In The Business.' Were I to poll my reporters, or you come to that, on the all-time 'Best In The Business,' I imagine the names of famous music men like Sam Phillips, John Hammond and Jerry Wexler, maybe the Chess brothers, Ahmet Ertegun and Ralph Peer would feature in the voting. I am somewhat less confident about Eli Oberstein, Johnny Vincent, Art Rupe, Syd Nathan, Ernie Young, Jay Miller, the Bihari and Mesner brothers, Eddie Shuler, Stan Lewis, George Goldner, Lew Chudd, Floyd Soileau and Cosimo Matassa, but all of them, from behind the scenes, left their mark on American music, even if their names are far less familiar than those of the musicians they made into stars. There is, incidentally, a fascinating book about these largely unsung heroes, whose importance can hardly be overstated, John Broven's **Record Makers And Breakers** (U of Illinois Press, 2009)

Turning to Texas, one could add more names to this list, such Pappy Daily and Bill Hall, though two of the best known, Don Robey and Huey P Meaux, blotted their reputations, the one by what can most charitably be described, as it is the **Handbook of Texas Music**, as "his shrewd business practices and dealings with artists" (ie he robbed them blind), the other, of course, by his taste for child pornography. However, some are much less well known because they worked under the Texas music media's radar, ie they were Hispanic, or, in the special case of San Antonio record store owner Hymie Wolf, of Russian descent, only recorded Hispanic artists (Flaco Jimenez cut his first singles for Wolf's Rio Records).

To set the scene, before WW2, national labels like Bluebird, Vocalion, Okeh and Decca had Tejano stars like Lydia Mendoza and Narciso Martinez on their rosters, but they abandoned them when vinyl was rationed and never returned. This not only meant that no new Mexican-American records were being released during and after the war, while tariffs on Mexican records, which, in any case, often weren't to Tex-Mex tastes, made them prohibitively expensive, but that many hugely popular artists were free agents. This void was filled by Hispanic-owned regional labels, such as Manuel Rangel Sr's pioneering Discos Corona in San Antonio and Arnaldo Ramirez's Discos Falcon in McAllen, but preeminent among them was Discos Ideal in Alice.

Before the war, Armando Marroquin, who was born in Alice 100 years ago this month, serviced jukeboxes in the Corpus Christi area. When the supply of new singles dried up, he bought a disc recorder and recorded his wife and her sister, as Carmen y Laura, in the family kitchen, selling acetates for up to \$5 each to music hungry jukebox owners. In 1946, he struck a deal with an LA label, Four Star, to mass-produce Carmen y Laura's 78s and their success led Paco Bettancourt, owner of a San Benito record store, who also serviced over a hundred jukeboxes and was regional distributor for RCA and Columbia, to propose a partnership. Marroquin would get new recording equipment, a proper studio, make all the recordings, and receive all the records he needed for his jukeboxes, Bettancourt for his part would arrange for the manufacturing of the discs and their distribution both in the US and in Mexico. Thus was born Discos Ideal.

The combination of Marroquin's rapport with musicians, his ear for talent, sense of what the public wanted to hear and ability to get great sound out of the available equipment, with Bettancourt's distribution clout, made Discos Ideal the first stop for Tejano musicians, and Marroquin was soon recording the giants, Lydia Mendoza, Narciso Martinez, Beto Villa, Isidro Lopez, Don Santiago Jimenez, Valerio Longoria, Tony De La Rosa, Chelo Silva. He was a champion of women performers, especially the female duets, in what is still a patriarchal society. By 1959, when the partnership was dissolved, he had produced hundreds of sides by hundreds of artists and acts. Some Discos Ideal acts moved to Marroquin's Discos Nopal and he continued to produce records into the 70s.

After that, Marroquin might have faded from the memories of all but some dedicated record collectors, but Chris Strachwitz of Arhoolie Records, himself a great music man (and record collector!), learned not only that Discos Ideal was for sale but that the label's masters, thought to have been lost or destroyed, had actually been carefully stored in Bettancourt's San Benito building. A stream of CD reissues, including compilations consisting entirely of South Texas and Rio Grande Valley jukebox hits, not only restored some of the greatest music made in Texas, but also the reputation of a great A&R man and record producer.

In 2007, having lobbied for him, I was invited to induct Armando Marroquin into the South Texas Music Walk of Fame in Corpus Christi. It was my honor and privilege to be able to tell his widow and two sons that her husband and their father was, without doubt, the greatest music man in the history of Texas.

JC



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Omar and the Howlers (9:00)

9/21 David Grissom Band

9/22 The Coffee Sergeants (8:00)

Why Not Satellite (10:00)

9/26 The Flyin' A's

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## JIMMY LaFAVE • Depending On The Distance BRAD MOORE • That Old Texas Groove

(Music Road \*\*\*\*/self \*\*\*\*.5)

Not that I dream of being Chancellor of an Austin College of Musical Knowledge, but, the idea having presented itself, some of the staff appointments more or less write themselves—Terri Hendrix, Christine Albert, Jerry Tubb, Fred Remmert, Jenni Finlay, Brad Reed come instantly to mind as heads of various departments. As does Jimmy LaFave, Dean of Making Records. I have no idea why his 1988 cassette, **Highway Angels... Full Moon Rain**, has never been released on CD, but it not only won him a Tape of the Year award, but more significantly, and perhaps uniquely, it led to Mark Schumate setting up a record label for the sole purpose of making Jimmy LaFave albums. Bohemia Beat did eventually record Michael Fracasso, Wyckham Porteus and Abra Moore, but the focus was always on LaFave's six albums (during this period, there were also a couple of Dutch EPs that I'm not sure I should admit to owning). After that, LaFave moved to Red House for two albums before becoming a partner in Music Road Records, which, up to now, has only released a BoBeat retrospective, **Favorites 1992-2001** (2010). What distinguishes his discography is the consistency of the ratings, and I'm not just talking about 3CM flowers but *All-Music Guide's* stars, of which LaFave routinely got four (actually, **Texoma**, despite a glowing review, only got three, but I attribute this anomaly to human error). In other words, LaFave simply doesn't make dud records. One of his claims to fame is as an interpreter of Bob Dylan songs, but over the same period, Dylan's output has been clobbered with one, two, two and a half and three star *AMG* ratings.

For his first new album in five years, LaFave offers eight original songs, five covers, including a healthy dose of Dylan, *Red River Shores*, *I'll Remember You* and *Tomorrow Is A Long Time*, John Waite's 1984 hit *Missing You* and Springsteen's *Land Of Hope And Dreams*. He surrounds himself with first class musicians, notably John Inmon, Radoslav Lorkovic, Chip Dolan and Glenn Scheutz, brings in friends like Eliza Gilkyson, the fab Carol Young of The Greencards and Tameca Jones to sing harmonies, uses the first class facilities of Fred Remmert's Cedar Creek Recording and, of course, is still in sensational voice. If this sounds like a formula, well, it's a damn good one and well worth yet another four flowers or stars in anyone's book.

If I had LaFave as a teacher at the College of Knowledge, Brad Moore might have been one of his students, but as it doesn't exist, he had to go the autodidact route. I deduce, from the fact that they funded UT Press' Roots Music Series, that Moore and his wife Michele have done well for themselves, but Moore is also a country boy from north of Amarillo ("I didn't live within two miles of paved road until I moved to Austin"), who's been soaking up music all his life, at home, in Panhandle roadhouses and, since 1975, various Austin joints going back to Soap Creek Saloon, The Split Rail and The One Knite (I like that he specifies "the original Joe Ely Band"). After taking voice lessons from Maryann Price, instead of a Rolodex coalition of hired guns, Moore hooked up with a top notch working ensemble, The Cornell Hurd Band, to record 16 of his favorite songs, a freewheeling selection that references Doug Sahm, T-Bone Walker, Charley Pride, Ted Daffan, Leroy Van Dyke, Lalo Guerrero, Don Gibson, Moon Mullican, Loretta Lynn & Conway Twitty (a duet with Price), Bobby Helms, Lloyd Price, Gene Thomas, Lefty Frizzell, Lulu Belle & Scotty, Merle Haggard and Kokomo Arnold. I'm not saying that Moore is a great singer, or that musicians like T Jarrod Bonta, Howard Kalish, Scott Walls, Will Indian et al can make anyone sound good (they'd have uphill work with me for a start), but while the band swings like crazy, he is firmly in the rugged authenticity tradition of Ernest Tubbs, who was no great shakes as a singer but could deliver a country song like nobody's business, and that, my young friends, is something you can't fake. Moore's love isn't just genuine, it's endearing. **JC**

## THE STONE COYOTES • A Wild Bird Flying

(Red Cat \*\*\*\*)☒

Barbara Keith is one of my guilty pleasures—normally I don't have much use anymore for a no frills, in your face, electric lead guitar crushing rock & roller—mainly because she has one particular talent that I wish were rather more common among people who send me their CDs. Many years ago. When I was working with Fairport Convention, the group cut a parody of *The Sailor's Alphabet* ("A is for Anchor," etc) which ended "Z is for zollocks, it's wrong but it's rhyme." If I had a dime for every time I've heard a word in a song that was obviously only there because it was rhyme, I could start my own country, and that includes contributions from well known and respected songwriters. When Barbara Keith writes a song, whether during her early 70s folksinger career (*Detroit Or Buffalo*, *The Bramble And The Rose*, *Free The People*) or any of those, some co-written with her husband/drummer Doug Tibbles, on the eleven albums she, Doug and her stepson John Tibbles have made since they reinvented themselves as The Stone Coyotes, you feel, in fact you know, that every single word is there for a reason, to express, with steely precision, exactly what Keith wants to say. There's no fat or self-indulgence in a Barbara Keith song. Plus she can outcrush guitarists half her age. **JC**

## JERRY JEFF WALKER • Live From Austin, TX

(May6 double CD/DVD \*\*\*\*)

Now here's a new way of sorting Austin residents. Primus, those who attended *Dixie's Bar & Bus Stop* tapings between 1983 and 1986, or at least saw some of the 75 or so episodes when they were broadcast by Austin Cablevision. Secundus: those who missed out but have at least heard tell of *Dixie's Bar & Bus Stop*. Tertius: those who have never even heard of *Dixie's Bar & Bus Stop*. Having arrived in Austin a little too late, I obviously don't belong in the first group, but, thanks to hearing Butch Hancock reminisce about the pioneering indie video lab, I do belong in the second, though I strongly suspect that the third far outnumbers the other two put together.

Before we get to the human heroes who originally created the show and those who are now bringing the legend back to life, it's worth noting the technological underpinnings. In 1982, Sony introduced the Betacam system, which made broadcast quality video affordable for the first time, and, the same year, the FFC created the Low Power Television service specifically for local community TV stations.

This confluence was seized on by George Howard, "writer, builder/architect, High Plains cowboy intellectual, barkeep, philosopher, visionary and much more," former UT physics professor Herman Matthews and Butch Hancock, who needs no introduction in 3CM. Their grassroots vision was, as Adrienne Evans, one of the show's directors, put it, to create "an East Austin basement version of *Austin City Limits*." The show actually beat *ACL* in the 1985 Austin Music Awards.

Named for Howard's wife, *Dixie's Bar & Bus Stop* was a set, built by the threesome and others, which combined a bus from which the artist would step straight into a small, low pressure Austin-style venue and perform. The booking was done by Hancock, who "just asked all my friends to come by and play," among them, making multiple appearances, Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clark, Lyle Lovett, Nanci Griffith, Billy Joe Shaver, Robert Earl Keen, Lonnie Mack, Tom Russell and Marcia Ball. Hancock also used one of the handheld cameras to get up close and intimate with the players, while the sound was run by the late Joe Gracey.

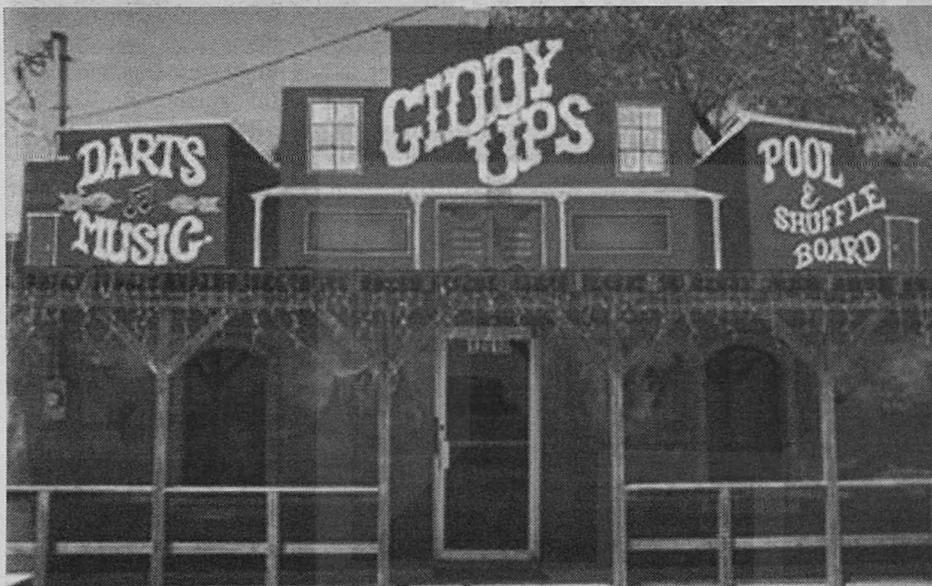
Though Howard was convinced that the concept would eventually make money, LPTV never took off. "We lost everything," says Matthews, and the show closed down in 1986. Howard gave some of the master tapes to Matthews, others ended up with Ray Campi's brother Harvey and were stored in a non-air conditioned shack for over 25 years until they were rescued by record dealer Jurgen Koop, who played some of them to Heinz Geissler and Randolph Clendenen. "I was floored by how good the stuff was," says Clendenen. The two veterans of Texas Music Group immediately set up a new venture to make available as much as possible of this musical treasure trove.

Between legal rights and prickly personalities, there's no knowing exactly what the future of this project holds, but it's launching with a Jerry Jeff Walker show from 1984, the 18 songs of Disc One are electric, featuring Gonzo Compadres John Inmon, Bob Livingston, Freddie Krc and Mike Hardwick, the eight on Disc 2 are acoustic. I never quite understood the residual affection so many Austinites, including Debra Lou, have for Walker, even when they consider him to be a long burned-out dickhead, but seeing him on the DVD, "at the height of his performing powers" as Rob Patterson rather cruelly puts it in the liner notes (that was 26 years ago, after all), I get it now. He really was pretty impressive back then. **JC**

## STAN MARTIN • Distilled Influences

(Twangtone \*\*\*\*)

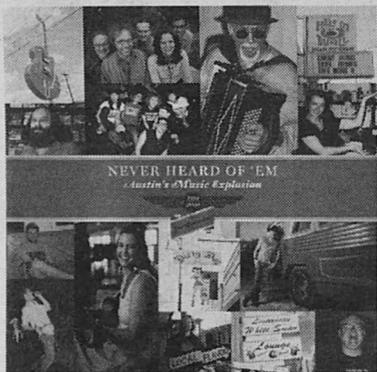
Eilen Jewell notwithstanding, Boston seems as hard a town for a honky tonk act to break out of as Austin. Martin's third full-length album once again features him as singer, sensitive, indeed romantic, songwriter and Bakersfield-style Telecaster master (long his role in other groups before striking out on his own), but the album title reflects his feeling that his influences have come together to create his own distinctive style. This is certainly true of his sensational guitar playing and the intelligent songwriting, though *Mr Lonely Me* does have a Johnny Paycheck feeling (not that that's a bad thing) while I can't say I'm crazy about his attempt at Texas Swing, *Goodbye Houston*, but the restrained melancholy of his vocals will probably still invite comparison to Yoakam and Isaak. Backed by his regular, and killer, rhythm section, Ducky Carlisle drums and Matt Hickox bass, with overdubbed fiddle by the marvelous Scott Joss (currently touring with Haggard), Martin's eleven originals offer twang along with quietly thoughtful reflections on love, positive and negative, ambiguous and equivocal. **JC**



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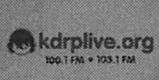
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# JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Very embarrassingly, a typo snuck into last month's piece about people spelling **Bobbie Gentry's** name and the title of *Ode To Billie Joe* wrong. After citing Jean Synodinos, I rewrote the sentence directly in the layout app, which is always a mistake and I really should know better by now. Anyway, as a result, "Synodinos is..." became 'Synodinosis,' rather blowing my whole point.

• Big apology to **Jason Luttrull**. In last month's review of Ronnie Elliott's *I've Been Meaning to Write*, I wrongly attributed *Something Bad*, misled by a typo in the credits which listed it as being by 'Jason Latrall,' then by Google which decided I really meant to search for Primer 55's Jason Lattrell. Luttrull tells me, "I've been a Ronny Elliott fan for years. I sent him an acoustic demo of *Something Bad* in 2008. It's a song that I wrote after listening to his album *Poisonville* over and over. He told me at the time he didn't have any plans on making a new record, but then late last year he sent me a message that he had cut my song and was going to put it on his new album. Anyway, just wanted to clear this up. It's the first song I've ever had recorded by another artist, so you know, it's pretty special for me. Especially since I'm such a fan of Ronny Elliott."

• For some years now, I've poked fun at the **International Country Music Conference**, but that got ruined by Caroline Gnagy who told me that "I can totally see how the topics, as announced, appear ludicrous," but assured me that they were, in fact, serious and valid, the contributing academics just having a bit of fun with their portentous titles. Another ICMC attendee isn't so sure: "The only way to determine whether a session has any merit is, unfortunately, to attend it. After five, maybe ten, minutes you'll know whether the guy or gal delivering the talk is speaking plain English or some arcane form of Martian."

This may (or may not) prevent me offering future ICMC academic gobbledegook for your amusement, but the good Rick August (*Borderlines*, CJTR, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada), sensing that I might be "down a quart on academic baffle-gab," sent me a "Call for Proposals" for **Liminality & Borderlands**, the theme of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, US Branch's Annual Conference, to be held in Austin next February, and it makes the ICMC sound like a bunch of good ol' boys and girls shooting the shit. As Nolan Porterfield remarked when I forwarded it to him, "Perhaps first, however, we should decide if these people are really speaking English, or what?" Try this for size: "Whereas liminality's temporal underpinnings index as a processual transition betwixt what has been and what is yet to come, the notion of borderlands (exemplified by the work of Gloria Anzaldúa) attends to the dynamic and tangible spaces that exist between binaries and geographies." Well, duh.

Apparently this organization "is situated on the cutting edge of popular music studies and has remained an important part of the popular music landscape since the early 1980s," so I guess it's just my dumb ignorance that I've never heard of it before. Or of "liminality" if it comes to that, which leave me poorly placed to answer Nolan's question, and challenge, "How do we account for multiple meanings and interpretation afforded by liminal practices of signification? Indeed, this is only one of the burning questions that **3CM** should address, and I look forward to further discussion in your pages."

OK, let's take a run at this. Far as I can make out, **liminality** is a state of in-betweenness. "As performers and audiences seek out unique experiences of music, they often find themselves at the border of many different genre distinctions without fully belonging to any one. Some musicians, like MIA, play at international boundaries, existing in many spaces at once while risking being misunderstood. Still others—Lady Gaga, Elvis Presley, LMFAO—work with racial and gender signifiers that suspend them between traditionally constructed groups." Well, there you have it.

So these folks are coming to Austin to give papers on something that, to take just one of their examples, as I know very little and care much less about Lady Gaga and LMFAO (and since when does Lady Gaga get to head any list that includes Elvis Presley?), that Sam Phillips figured out almost 60 years ago, without a PhD. What I take away from this missive—and I will happily email you the whole thing, should you want to see how this conference promises to be balls/tits-achingly soporific on a level that ICMC can never hope to rival—is that these academics are utterly unable to distinguish between meaningful signifiers and bullshit affectations.

Rick August added a blood-curdling question, "Can you imagine what it would be like if these tossers had **showcases** at their conference?" I can see the application form now: "artists and acts must carry signifiers of more than one identity at a time while fully embodying none. They must be 'neither' and 'both' at the same time while challenging norms by unsettling accepted practices and conventions." Or, to put it slightly plainer language, they should be neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring.

• This could probably be expanded into an editorial piece of its own, but as a footnote to this month's commentary on the **Chloe Papas'** imbroglio, I passed over the personal attack on **Chris Brown** which many took exception to as bad journalism. I have to say that, as the kind of musicians with whom I've come into direct contact have rarely been convicted felons, I've always categorized my assignments or choices as being either interesting or boring, ie producing usable or useless interviews. However, I will admit that there were two, Hank Williams Jr and Reba McEntire, whose personalities were so repellent that I publicly questioned whether or not they were entirely human. However, in the 23 years since moving to Austin, I've only come across one local musician I truly think should be shunned for being a shit human being, but, so far, I've managed to keep that out of any coverage of his music. On the other hand, I will freely admit that I've never had to process anything like the hospital photos of Rihanna, so I can't and won't condemn Papas for slagging off Brown.

• "After playing at a small, local venue in Nashville, Tennessee, a seemingly unknown songwriter and producer recently became an overnight sensation thanks to Today Show co-host Hoda Kott. **Paul Sikes** was given the opportunity most in this industry only dream of—a live appearance and performance on the NBC Today Show." Call me jaded and cynical, but I'm thinking, 'hunk.'

• I may be the last person not to know this one already, but I came across a **Moon Mullican** quote in which he said he took up piano "because the beer kept sliding off my fiddle."

• Well, I gotta say that, as Austin gigs go, this one really is a bit different. On September 30th, at Nutty Brown Cafe out there on Highway 290, **Be-Bob-Alooza 2012** will present Kevin Welch, Walt Wilkins & His Mystiqueros and more, which is all well and good. The kicker is that the proceeds will go to an Austin singer/songwriter to be chosen by a panel of Austin music professionals, after which Bob Cheevers' non-profit Over-A-Cheevers will pay a studio, CD manufacturer, record promoter, publicist and/or others associated with the process to assure that it goes toward the cost of his or her project only. If you want to take a crack at this, there are some hoops to jump through, sending in MP3s and completing a questionnaire ([www.bobcheevers.com/bebobalooza.html](http://www.bobcheevers.com/bebobalooza.html)) by September 15th. Oh, and you'll be going up against Shelley King and a bunch of other singer-songwriters who've already thrown their hats in the ring.

• One of the artists I really liked on **The Best Of Ripsaw Records** (Part, Germany) was **Bobby Smith**. However, he recently sent me a truly godawful new album, **It's Summertime** (Exploding Rabbit), from which I can only deduce that he needs someone like Jonathan Strong to give him direction in the studio. That I am not alone in disliking Smith's album is evident (I think) from this Dutch review, as translated into English, sort of, by Google: "What do you do as a reviewer if you have never heard of an artist? The man once googling, what with a name like Bobby Smith obviously hopeless. Hence probably his website [www.bobbymusicsmith.com](http://www.bobbymusicsmith.com) and not [bobbysmith.com](http://bobbysmith.com) or [bobbysmithmusic.com](http://bobbysmithmusic.com) or so. In any case, really a lot of info we found them not, but he apparently is from Baltimore and has been making rock 'n' roll and blues since the early '80s, "mostly on the East Coast and in Holland." he already occurred in the Netherlands or something? Anyway, seeing as he has been at least 6 CD's and released in 1987 LP **Two Sides** of the American rockabilly label Ripsaw. In addition, he sang backup on the Ripsaw release **Wanted True Rock 'n' Roll** by Billy Hancock and he stood on Ripsaw compilations. Beautiful credentials, but also provides a good CD? Unfortunately not, because after opener and title track *It's Summertime* (under license from Ripsaw, it was previously on **Two Sides**), smooth rock 'n' roll song (no rockabilly) with piano, electric bass and saxophone, is here only '70s pop, piano ballads, a touch of swing and dixieland flat blues, whether or not fitted with funky wah-wah. Well, because it is summer we put half an indent in the half-baked stereotype medium tempo country thingy *Beg Borrow And Steel* (must not steal his?) And strollerige *Cicada Song* you can for lack of a better description as a Cramps-like treat, but then it stops. Add to this very mediocre singing (*Begin The Beguine* Cole Porter is vocally and musically so over the top that it is a parody of easy listening seems) and songs such as *Air Conditioning Beer* and *Too Poor To Be Eccentric* not half as funny as their title suggests (though there are texts in a few good finds), and you understand that the undersigned is not thrilled. Of everything but no rock 'n' roll, we call this. Bobby Smith as a translator on this discussion, we suspect that he puts us in the future no longer going to send CDs, but that he bet on [www.bobbymusicsmith.com](http://www.bobbymusicsmith.com) still going to write that in Holland he "rave reviews" gets?

(Frantic Franky)



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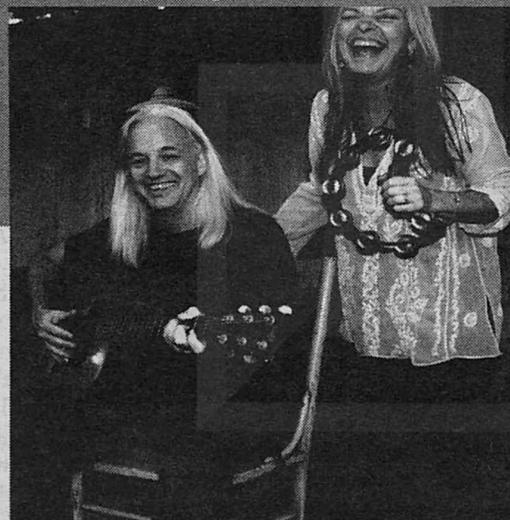


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## REVIEWS CODE

\*\*\*\*\* Killer

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\*\* Why did they bother? \* Piss on this noise

## “ADMIRABLY FORTHRIGHT”

**B**y now, you may well have heard the name of Australian music writer Chloe Papas. Her scathing review of Chris Brown's latest album, and condemnation of Brown himself, in Perth's *X-Press*, which was probably forwarded to you by a friend (if not, it's easy enough to find online), went viral. To be honest, I'm not really sure exactly what constitutes “going viral,” but she sure stirred up a lot of people, some cheering, others booing. On the album's merits, I have to pass as Brown operates in the contemporary version of a genre I used to love but in which I no longer have any interest much less any expertise. From what little of him I've seen on TV, Papas' description, “generic, overly auto-tuned, commercialised R&B,” seems superbly accurate.

There have been some who have lauded Papas to the skies, “The Best Album Review You Will Ever Read,” “brutally honest” and, one I'll go along with, from British daily *The Guardian*, “admirably forthright.” Papas sure didn't piss around with weasel words. Leaving aside ludicrous accusations of racism (she hates one black man, ergo hates them all), some have criticized her ad hominem attack, arguing that the music maker must be considered separately from the woman-beater, otherwise we shouldn't listen to anything done by John Lennon, Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, Ike Turner, Glen Campbell, Miles Davis, Lindsey Buckingham et alia (on the plus side, yet another reason to ignore John Denver and Yanni). My favorite comment on this argument was “It's shit music by a shit human being, and even if he wasn't, it would still be shit music.”

Another line of attack on Papas was that she wrote a deliberately provocative review simply in order to get noticed. Perth and Austin are almost exactly the same size, so I'm guessing that she assumed this piece would, like those before it, get read by a few hundred locals, and had absolutely no idea it would become world-famous. However, I also found a long, pompous and marginally literate attack on Papas' “dis-functional subjective journalism.” Or possibly not, as the last line refers to her “personal and totally objective drivel,” but I assume the blogger, a fashion designer, just got confused between those big words, the English language clearly not being his strong suit.

One thing I've learned in America is that for many musicians and, even more, their fans, who don't quite grasp the distinction between advertisements and reviews and regard music writers as unpaid publicists (which, to be fair, some of them are, especially fanboy bloggers), “subjective” means viciously unfair and unprofessional. Without belaboring the obvious, all opinions, however well-informed, are *by definition* subjective. A review can contain factual errors—to recycle an example from last month, an article on “Patsy Klein” lacks a certain element of credibility—but while you may regard an opinion as wrong-headed, that doesn't actually make it wrong. A disagreement with Papas, or any other music writer, is a subjective opinion about a subjective opinion.

Looking at *X-Press*' website, I have to say that I doubt I'd be reading Papas' reviews if I lived in Perth, but I can think of a daily and a weekly right here in Austin that would benefit from having her fearlessness on staff.

JC

## JANIS MARTIN THE BLANCO SESSIONS

(Cow Island \*\*\*\*)

**F**irst time Rosie Flores heard Janis Martin's name was at a 1979 rockabilly show. Chatting with another woman, Flores mentioned that she fronted a rockabilly band, but when talk turned to the band's material, Flores was asked if she did any Janis Martin songs. When she confessed to not knowing who Martin was, the other woman told her, “If you don't know Janis Martin, you don't know anything about rockabilly,” (I suspect this is the expurgated version) and walked away. A crushed Flores did due diligence, and this month she can fairly claim to be Martin's all-time #1 fan.

Dubbed ‘The Female Elvis’ by RCA, Martin could have been a real rival to Wanda Jackson for the ‘Queen of Rockabilly’ title, but she made not one but both of the fatal mistakes for female rockabillys. Married at 15, she was able to keep it secret, but RCA dropped her when she became pregnant—in 1958, ‘baby bumps,’ let alone actual babies, were a huge no-no. Sparkle Moore had had to quit the year before for the same reason, while The Collins Kids were pretty much washed up when Lorrie became a teen mom in 1961. In 1960, Martin signed to a Belgian label, Palette, but soon after married a man who decided he wanted her to stay home and not be in the music business (it may have been voluntary, but Jo Ann Campbell hung up her skintight Capris when she got married). However, Martin's third and last husband fully supported her when she formed a band, The Variations, and started playing local gigs round Danville, VA, in the 70s, which led to US and European rockabilly festivals during, and since, the 80s revival.

In 1995, not long after they met for the first time, Martin made a guest appearance on Flores' *Rockabilly Filly* (Hightone, 1995), and it was then that recording an album for Martin became Flores' dream. When she returned to Austin in 2006 and reconnected with drummer Bobby Trimble, ex-Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys, who now plays with more people than you can shake a stick at, she set about making the dream a reality. In April 2007, Martin, Flores, Trimble, Dave Biller, Beau Sample and T Jarrod Bonta (who, I absolutely have to say, is totally amazing on this album) assembled at a studio in Blanco, TX, and in two and half days cut eleven tracks, with only one do over.

That turned out to be the easy part. Sadly, Janis Martin died of lung cancer in September 2007, and Flores soon learned that, without tour support, labels weren't interested, “I have a pile of rejection letters.” At one point, Sony expressed interest in releasing a double CD of Martin's 50s RCA material plus the new album, but that went away with a personnel change. Eventually, Flores realized that she wasn't going to get anywhere shopping the album and launched a Kickstarter campaign, which raised \$16,500, exceeding Flores' goal of \$15,000. One of her 332 backers was Bill Hunt of Cow Island Records, who, since then, has taken on the distribution and promotion.

While Flores admits that she and Trimble would have tried to persuade Martin to cut more obscure material for the album, in the event their touchstone was “If it makes Janis happy.” The album opens with Jesse Stone's *As Long As I'm Movin'*, a 1955 hit for Martin's lifelong idol, Ruth Brown, followed by Ronnie Dawson's *Wham Bam Jam*, Dave Alvin's *Long White Cadillac*, Australia's first homegrown rock & roll hit, Johnny O'Keefe's *Wild One (Real Wild Child)*, Cowboy Jack Clements' *It'll Be Me*, Don Gibson's *Sweet Dreams*, Jerry Crutchfield's *Find Out What's Happening*, The Rock & Roll Trio's *I Believe What You Say*, Billy Scott & The Prophets' *Roll Around Rockin'*, Don Gibson's *Oh Lonesome Me* and Bill Monroe's *Walk Softly On This Heart Of Mine*, transformed into a duet with vocals by Kelly Willis added in 2011.

Though her ‘Female Elvis’ days belong to another, bygone era, Martin was only 15 when she signed to RCA and, while, almost 50 years later, her register was deeper and fuller, her voice is still instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with *Bang Bang*, *All Right Baby* or *Cracker Jack*. As you can tell from the set list, she and Flores didn't set out to make a pure rockabilly album, indeed the piano-driven version of *Sweet Dreams* is as much jazz as country (I wish Patsy could have recorded it with a small combo as good as this). I have to admit that I find the interjected male voice repetition of “long gone” in *Find Out What's Happening* a tad irritating, but Flores tells me that that's the way it was done on The Sidells' original 1962 version and Janis wanted to keep it.

While Martin, sadly, didn't live to see her last album be released, there will, in fact, be a promotional tour for it, featuring Flores on lead guitar, Martí Brom and a rhythm section. With a planned early September kickoff in LA, Flores is setting up West Coast dates in October, moving on to Chicago and the East Coast in November. On top of all that, Flores has an album of her own out in October, more on that next month.

JC

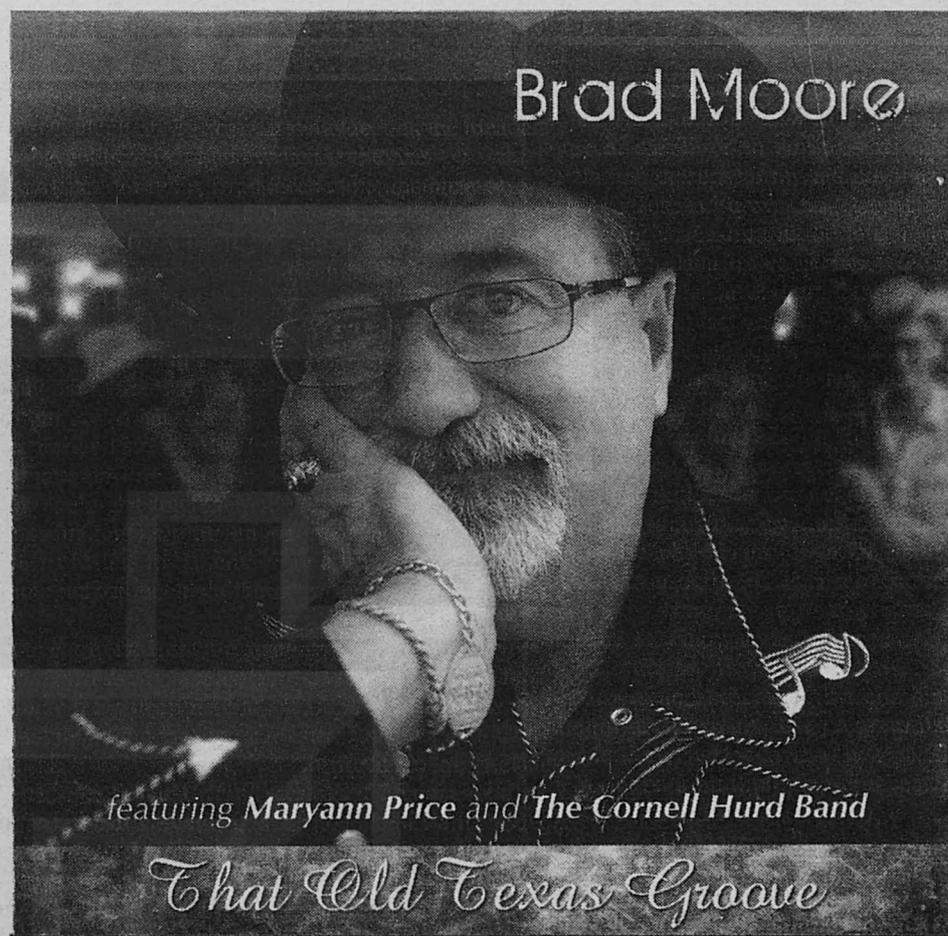


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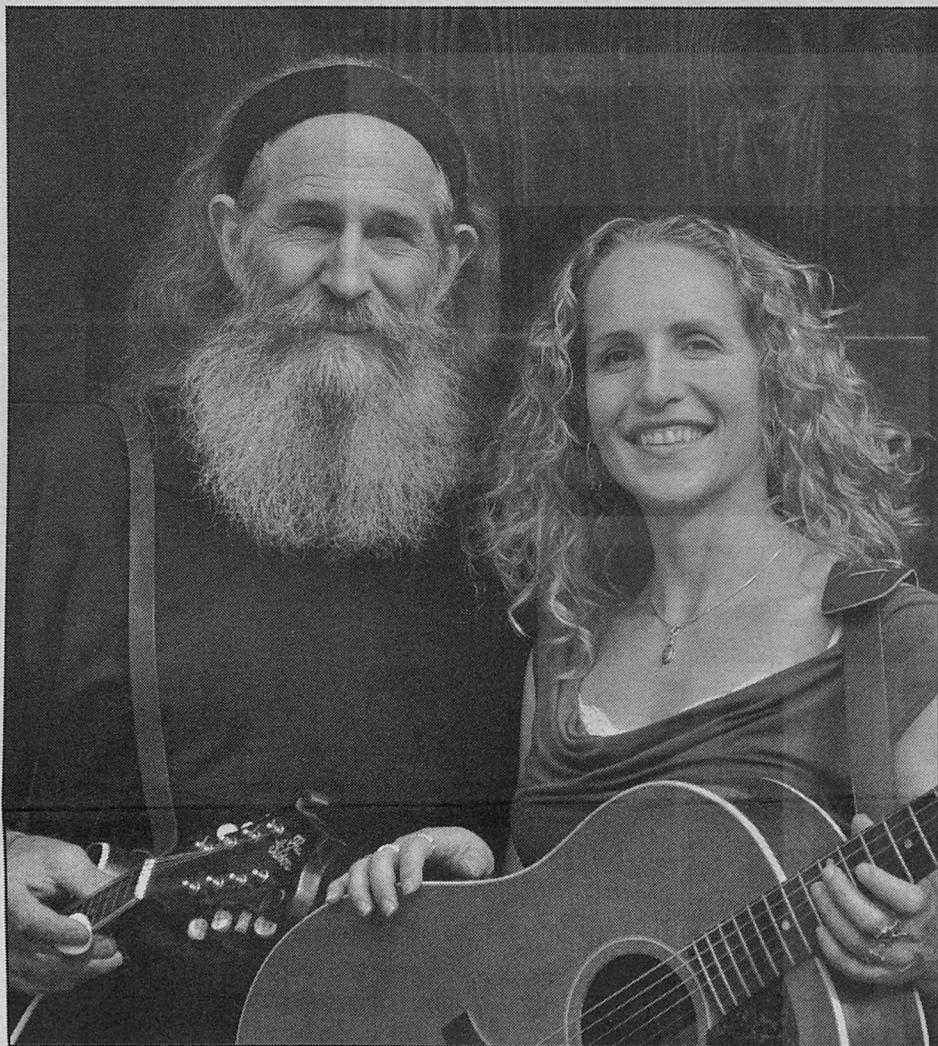
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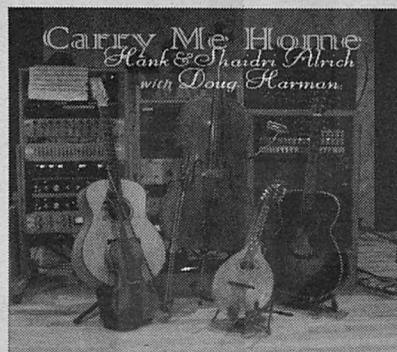
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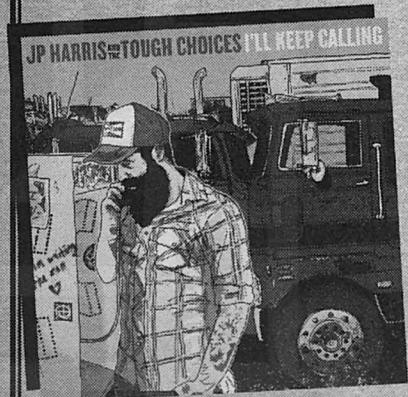
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- 2nd Johnny Lee Wills • 1912 Limestone Co, TX  
Charline Arthur • 1929 Henrietta, TX  
Jimmy Clanton • 1938 Golden Meadow, LA
- 3rd Lefty Perkins • 1917 Clarksville, TX  
Hank Thompson • 1925 Waco, TX  
Freddie King • 1934 Gilmer, TX  
Knocky Parker † 1986
- 4th Danny Gatton • 1945 Washington, DC  
Blackie White • 1951 San Angelo, TX  
Lydia Loveless • 1990 Columbus, OH
- 6th Jimmy Reed • 1925 Dunleith, MS  
Mark Chesnutt • 1963 Beaumont, TX  
Rhett Miller • 1970 Dallas, TX  
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
- 8th Joe Clay • 1938 Harvey, LA  
Otis Redding • 1941 Dawson, GA
- 9th 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  
Beaver Nelson • 1971 Norman, OK  
Vernon Dalhart † 1948
- 16th BB King • 1925 Itta Bena, MS  
Ralph Mooney • 1928 Duncan, OK  
Little Willie Littlefield • 1931 Houston, TX  
Vince Bell • 1951 Dallas, TX  
Phil Lee • 1951 Durham, NC  
Jenny Wolfe • 1992 Austin, TX
- 17th Hank Williams • 1923 Georgiana, AL  
Bill Black • 1926 Memphis, TN  
John Delafosse † 1994
- 18th Lefty Perkins † 1984
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- 24th Helen Hall † 2006
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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  
Bessie Smith † 1937  
Sahara Smith • 1988 Austin, TX
- 28th DP 'Dad' Carter • 1889 Columbia, KY  
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Tommy Collins • 1930 Bethany, OK
- 29th Gene Autry • 1907 Tioga, TX  
Bill Boyd • 1910 Fannin Co, TX  
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