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#16/105 MAY 1998



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BIRTHS & DEATHS

REVIEWS

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No Depression

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CENTZONTLE

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EDGE CITY

•

RAMBLIN' JACK ELLIOTT

•

FRED GOODMAN

Mansion On The Hill

•

The Horse Whisperer

•

KIM LENZ & HER JAGUARS

•

WES MCGHEE

•

GENE VINCENT

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REDD VOLKAERT

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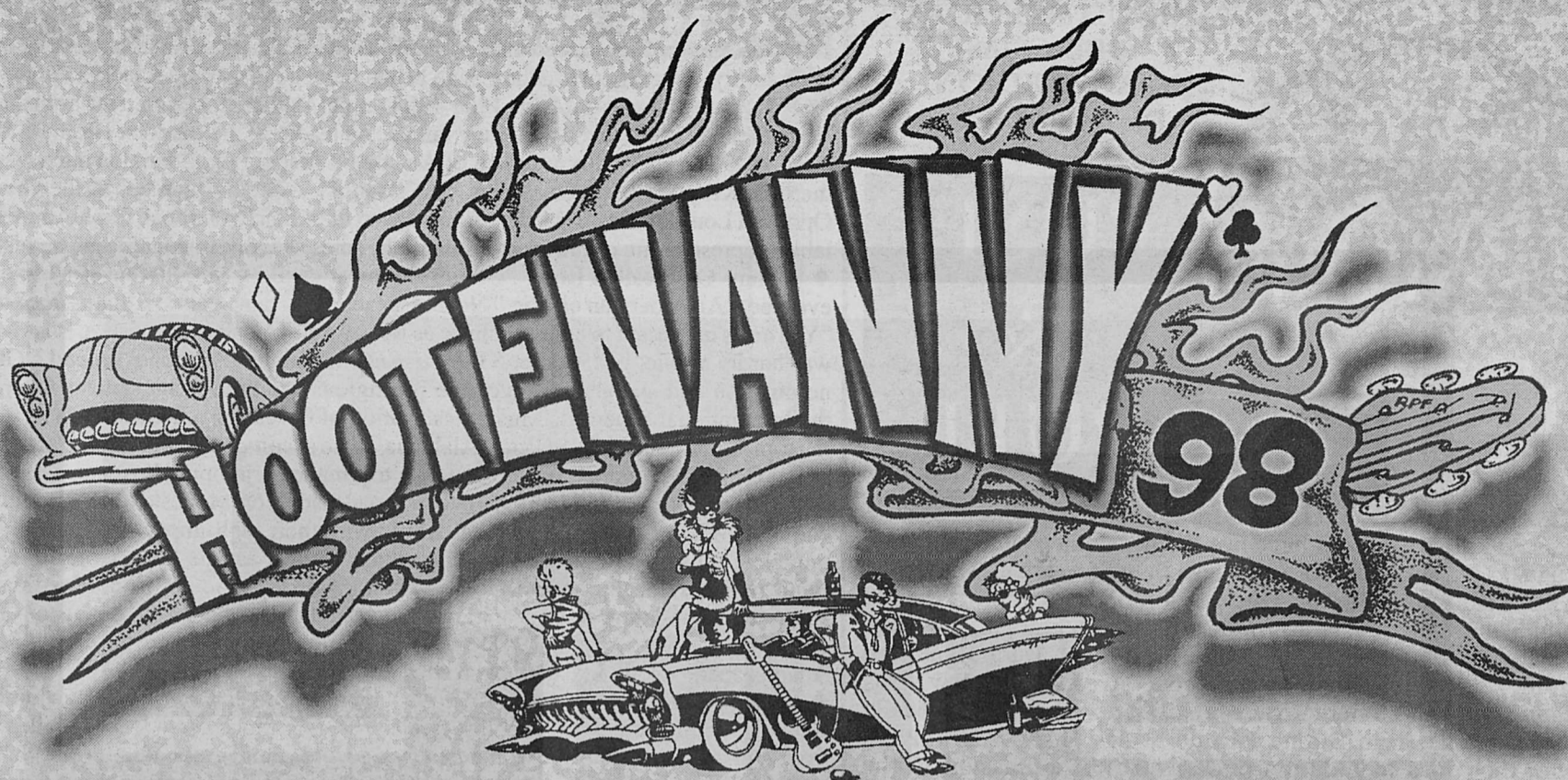
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ACCORDION KINGS

Texas Folklife Resources have put the finishing touches on their August 15th & 16th Accordion Kings Camp & Festival. The Camp, at the Rabb House, on Brushy Creek, in Round Rock will offer eight hours of workshops by Ponty Bone, Johnny Degollado, Santiago Jimenez Jr, Walter Mouton, John Ondrusek, Ed & Danny Poullard and Bradley Williams, who between them cover most every Texas accordion style and model. Advance registration is \$75 (\$100 walk-up), more details from Donna Pardue at 512/441-Y'ALL (9255). However, that does include ten bucks worth of admission to the Festival in Old Settlers Park, with Walter Mouton & The Scott Playboys + Poullard, Poullard & Garnier on the 15th, 8-11pm, Santiago Jimenez Jr y Su Conjunto + The Majek Orchestra on the 16th, 5-8pm.

ACCORDION SHOWS

SUNDAYS

Texana Dames Guero's, 3pm, \$0
Johnny Degollado El Jacalito,
9.30am-noon (445-4109)

WEDNESDAYS

Ponty Bone & The Squeezetones
Jovita's, 8pm, \$0
Rubinchik's Orkestyr Flipnotics,
8.30pm, \$0

THURSDAYS

Gulf Coast Playboys Antone's,
6pm, \$0
Steve Jordan Salute, N St Mary's,
San Antonio, 10pm, \$0
Tosca Ritz/Upstairs, 7pm, \$0

FRIDAY 1st

Los Pinkys Texas Medical Assoc,
15th/Guadalupe, noon, \$0
Centzontle El Sol y La Luna,
7.30pm, \$0

SUNDAY 3rd

Beausoleil East First Garden
Theater, 6pm, \$?
Tosca Top Of The Marc 8.30pm,
\$2

TUESDAY 5th

Los Cadillos Central Market, 5-
7pm, \$0
Tosca Continental, midnight

WEDNESDAY 6th

Gulf Coast Playboys Broken
Spoke, 9pm, \$4

FRIDAY 8th

Gulf Coast Playboys Jovita's,
8pm, \$0

SATURDAY 9th

Bayou Beaujolais + Jet Set
Zydeco Threadgill's World HQ,
9.30, \$0
Brave Combo Liberty Lunch,
10pm, \$?
Centzontle El Sol y La Luna,
7.30pm, \$0

SUNDAY 10th

Gulf Coast Playboys Hoody's
Cajun Cafe, Hwy 71 W, 4-9pm, 1st

Annual Keith Ferguson Memorial
Crawfish Boil
Ponty Bone & The Squeezetones
Gruene Hall, 5pm, \$0
Tosca Top Of The Marc 8.30pm,
\$2

TUESDAY 12th

Debra Peters & The Love Saints
Broken Spoke, 8pm, \$0
Tosca Ritz/Upstairs, 7pm, \$0.
3CAN May Rendezvous

SATURDAY 16th

Los Pinkys Jovita's, 8pm, \$0
Centzontle El Sol y La Luna,
7.30pm, \$0

SUNDAY 17th

Los Cadillos Curra's, 11am-2pm,
\$0
Tosca Top Of The Marc 8.30pm,
\$2

WEDNESDAY 20th

Bayou Beaujolais + Glenn Glaz
Filling Station, 8pm, \$0. 3CAN
Showcase (7pm)
Gulf Coast Playboys Broken
Spoke, 9pm, \$4

FRIDAY 22nd

Gulf Coast Playboys Club 21,
Uhland, 8pm

SATURDAY 23rd

Centzontle El Sol y La Luna,
7.30pm, \$0

SUNDAY 24th

Los Pinkys Club 21, Uhland, 3-
7pm
Tosca Top Of The Marc 8.30pm,
\$2

TUESDAY 26th

Debra Peters & The Love Saints
Broken Spoke, 8pm, \$0

FRIDAY 29th

Gulf Coast Playboys Jovita's,
8pm, \$0

SATURDAY 30th

Centzontle El Sol y La Luna,
7.30pm, \$0

ROSE MADDOX 1925-1998

Country singer Rose Maddox, who began her legendary career in 1937 at the age of 11, passed away on April 15th, 1998, at an Ashland, Oregon, rest home, age 72. The official cause is listed as kidney failure. As leader of the Maddox Brothers & Rose, circa 1949 Miss Maddox was one of America's first national female country stars (at the time Kitty Wells was covering Rose's songs). A former member of the Grand Ole Opry and Louisiana Hayride, her recordings on the 4 Star, Columbia, Capitol and Starday labels represent one of the most influential bodies of work in country music history.

◆ Johnny Cash called Rose, "One of the most exciting, fascinating performers I've ever seen. An American classic." No less an authority than Hank Williams once told her "You're as important to country music as Roy Acuff." A national treasure, Miss Maddox was hardly a relic: in 1996 her \$35 *And A Dream* album (Arhoolie) reaped a Grammy nomination and she also received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Bluegrass Music Association of Owensboro, Kentucky.

◆ Born August 15, 1925, in Boaz, Alabama, Rose accompanied her family, at the height of the Great Depression, to California—a trip made by jumping boxcars. The Maddox Brothers & Rose formed in 1937, began broadcasting on Modesto's KTRB and by the end of WWII were making national waves with their high-impact blend of old timey mountain music and hot, jet-age honky tonk. Known as 'the Most Colorful Hillbilly Band in America,' they were the very first country music act to don extravagantly embroidered and rhinestone spangled stagewear, and introduced the image to Nashville on the Grand Ole Opry in 1947. "Their costumes," Tennessee Ernie Ford later said, "made Liberace look like a plucked chicken."

◆ When the band split in 1957, Rose went on to record as a solo act for Columbia and Capitol, singing country, rockabilly, pop and sacred songs; she was also, with an assist from Bill Monroe, the first woman ever to record a bluegrass album. In 1963, at the height of Patsy Cline's popularity, *Cashbox* named her Top Female Singer: Rose's *Sing A Little Song Of Heartache* spent 37 straight weeks in *Billboard's* Country Top 20.

◆ She never ceased performing, and in recent years recorded a critically acclaimed album with Merle Haggard (1983's *Queen Of the West*), was prominently featured in the 1991 PBS documentary *Bakersfield Country* and CBS's 1993 television special *Women Of Country*. A regular performer in Europe and on the festival and nightclub circuit up until 1997, Rose Maddox was a true country music champion whose fiery, traditional singing style still echoes through today's country music.

Jonny Whiteside

(author of *Ramblin' Rose: The Life & Career Of Rose Maddox*, CMF, 1997)
Of available recordings, Whiteside recommends: *The Maddox Brothers & Rose: America's Most Colorful Hillbilly Band* (Arhoolie, 2 vols)

RAMBLIN' JACK ELLIOTT FRIENDS OF MINE

(Hightone, CD)

Softboiled review: Elliott is an American treasure, a wonderful old fart who, well, yeah, OK, we all know he's not much good, but he has so much personality and so much history and he's known everybody and been everywhere and really you shouldn't consider this as music but as a celebration of the quintessential troubadour, singing duets with some of the many folk and country artists he influenced so much, though what a shame Bobby isn't on it, but just look who is—Guy Clark, Nanci Griffith, Arlo Guthrie, Emmylou Harris, John Prine, Peter Rowan, Rosalie Sorrells, Tom Waits, Jerry Jeff Walker and Bob Weir.

◆ Hardboiled review: in a recent interview, Elliott posed the question, "Why can't I write?" answering, "Just don't have any talent I guess." He got that right. His *Bleeker Street Blues* may well be the worst song ever written though he claims it's a poem, in which case it may well be the worst poem ever written. Of the 'Friends' trying to help him out, Nanci Griffith and Emmylou Harris fuel the album's sole redeeming track, joining Elliott on Townes Van Zandt's *Rex's Blues*. Otherwise, turgid best describes such disasters as a storyteller version, with Peter Rowan, of Joe Ely's *Me And Billy The Kid* and Elliott and Bob Weir's double croak of Robert Hunter's *Friend Of The Devil*. The maraschino cherry atop this orgy of self-indulgence is Susanna Clark's liner note, equal parts saccharine and pretension, that makes me proud not to be a songwriter.

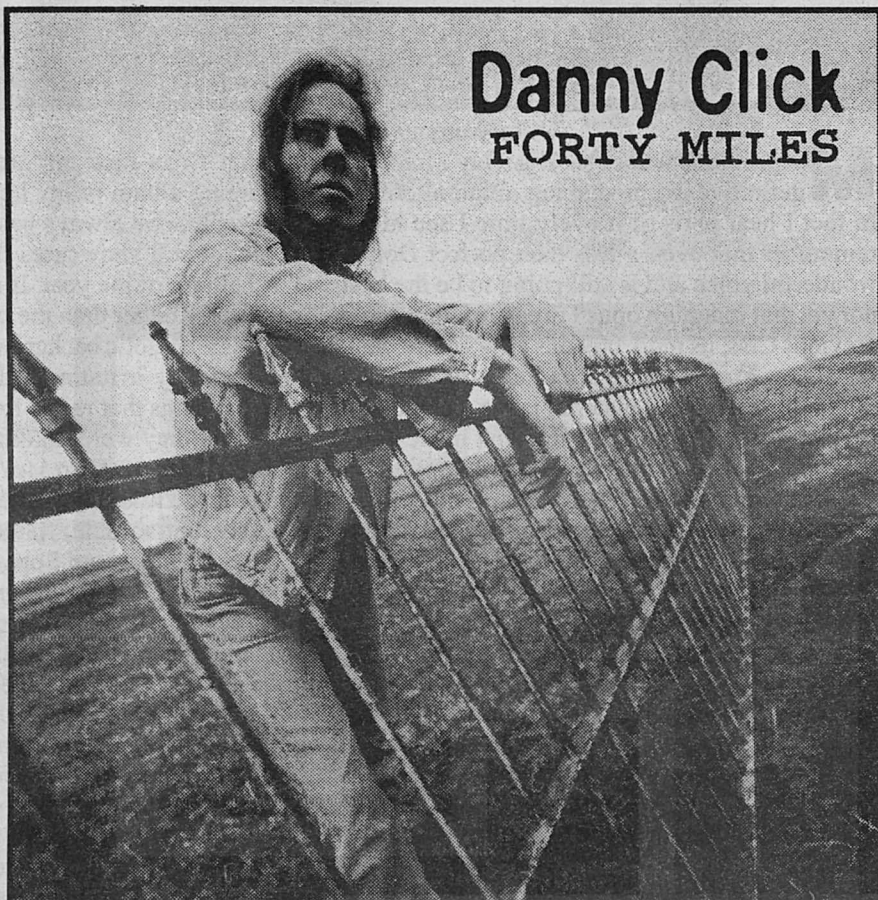
◆ Take your pick. Ramblin' Jack, by the way, was born Elliott Adnopolz, in Brooklyn. Not many people know that.

JC

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Bloodshot • www.narl.com/bloodshot
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Bohemia Beat • www.rounder.com/bobeat
Checkered Past • www.checkeredpast.com
Dragon Street • www.dragonstreet.com
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Koch International • www.kochint.com
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• www.lancnews.com/moderntwang
RealCountry • www.realcountry.net
Road Goes On Forever
• www.rgfrecords.demon.co.uk
Texas Round-Up
• www.eden.com/~freedom/roundup.html
Third Coast Music Network
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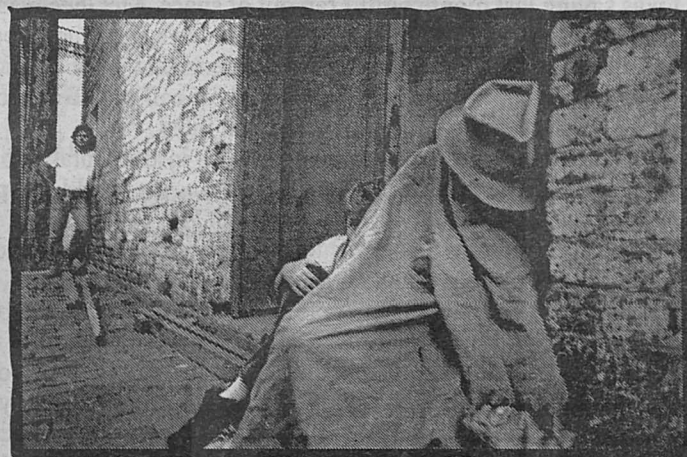
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3CM REVIEWS

WES MCGHEE • BORDER GUITARS HEARTACHE AVENUE; CLASSIC RECORDINGS 1978-1992 BACKBEAT

(Road Goes On Forever, British CDs)

So, as I was saying last month until I ran out of space, McGhee was the finest roots musician in Britain when I left some ten years ago, and I hear nothing in these three albums to give me any reason to amend that view. In fact, I'll add another dimension—when it comes to Texas rock & roll and Tex-Mex, he's as good as anyone, in any country, and far better than most.

◆ In descending order, McGhee's talents are as a multi-instrumentalist, bandleader, songwriter and singer. The pathetic fad for pretending to be able to play many different instruments seems to have passed, thank God, but McGhee is the real deal, turning in, on these albums alone, virtuoso performances on acoustic, Spanish, baritone, high strung, 12-string and electric guitars, bajo sexto, dobro, bass, six-string bass, banjo, oud, harmonica, accordion, piano, Farfisa and keyboards. He is, I may say, one of only three guitarists I've ever seen for whom a twin-neck isn't just jewelry. As a bandleader, he inspires tremendous loyalty, some of his sidemen having stuck with him, through thick and thin, for almost 20 years. As a songwriter, in both English and Spanish, suffice to say he's in Bug Music's stable. Singing is, admittedly, his weakest suit, but his feel for dynamics and atmosphere more than offsets his limited vocal range.

◆ Pivoting round the sensational 7.39 minutes of *Monterrey*, **Border Guitars**, partly recorded in Texas and featuring Krc, Ponty Bone and Kimmie Rhodes, is largely acoustic and Tex-Mex in feel. **Heartache Avenue** includes some wonderful cuts from the LPs *Airmail* (*Whisky Is My Driver*), *Landing Lights* (*No Angel on My Wing*, *Texas Fever*, *Train Time* and *Neon And Dust*) and *Zacetecas* (notably *Soy Extranjero* and *I'll Be Thinking Of You*) plus previously unreleased recordings. **Backbeat** fills a few more gaps in the Greatest Hits, with Joe Gracey's beautiful *Contrabandistas*, a kickass version of Joe Carrasco's *Mezcal Road*, McGhee's great take on Chips Moman's *This Time* and the anthemic *Heat Of The Highway*. Other high spots are Richard Dobson's *She Almost Reminds Me Of You* and Dave Alvin's *Every Night About This Time*. Oddities are two oud instrumentals written for a documentary and Vince & The Viletones' *Justine*, a story I'll tell elsewhere.

◆ Alternative country long before the expression was invented, McGhee is one of the best, most consummate musicians I've ever heard and I have no hesitation in recommending anything he records very highly. These CDs are available at Antone's and Lubbock Or Leave It, from Miles Of Music and Village Records (also Wes left a few with me, let's make a deal).

JC

EDGE CITY • OUTSIDERS • RAY OF LIGHT

(IAR, CDs)

Fired by sharing a stage with Butch Hancock, Jimmy LaFave and others, Jim Patton and Sherry Brokus decided to abandon Baltimore, where they were enjoying some success, and moved to Austin in 1994. Their timing could hardly have been worse. During the first few years of MCT, there was a well defined career ladder/talent filter for Austin singer-songwriters. From Open Mikes, they could, in theory, work their way up to real gigs, but, even before Chicago House and Austin Outhouse, integral to the infrastructure, lost their leases, the audience for emerging singer-songwriters, never very large, pretty much evaporated and the system simply collapsed. Since then, it's hard to think of any newcomer other than Ana Egge who's managed an end run round the lack of springboards. Mainstays of Chicago House in its twilight days, Edge City seem to have fallen back on woodshedding. **Outsiders** is a collection of 14 songs from Maryland days, **Ray Of Light** a four song trailer for a projected album (in which Lloyd Maines has expressed an interest) and both might be described as acoustic rock with an electric guitar, mainly Gurf Morlix, amazing as always, on the latter, which was produced by drummer/percussionist Paul Percy. Singing dual leads, creating a distinctive wall of vocal sound, the tracks on which Brokus is at the forefront are the more easily accessible, but Patton's ragged edge brings an essential intensity to his intelligent urban poetry. Had they got to Austin earlier, Edge City would doubtless be much better known, but **Ray Of Light**, at least, is an intriguing taste of the shows they might have been playing by now.

JC

CENTZONTLE

(Luciernaga Productions, CD)

Latin American music is not, to be honest, high on my agenda, and Vallenato, Milonga, Guajira and Forró are not in my vocabulary. However, accordionist Mike Maddux, singer/guitarist Martha Davids, singer/percussionist Reynaldo Arteaga and bassman Glenn Rexach play these, and other, more familiar styles with assured authority. Moreover, they mercifully lack the didactic test-after-the-show approach so common in this field. Their version of Facundo Cabral's *No Soy De Aquí* is so wonderful, I may have to look deeper into this stuff.

JC

DON WALSER DOWN AT THE SKY-VUE DRIVE-IN

(Sire/Watermelon, CD)

My problem with The Big Guy's recordings is that I can hear his great, definitive, earth-shaking, mind-altering, life-changing album in my head. In fact I hear parts of it every time I see him live. However, one always has to remember that even a less than perfect Don Walser album still showcases that wonderful voice and is still going to be the best country album of the year. If it's not yet that magnum opus I dream of, this one is considerably better than the two previous CDs, its more obvious errors of judgement, such as the idiotic background vocals on *Fool Such As I* and *Cherokee Maiden*, being merely irritating rather than infuriating. The material is the usual odd mix, mostly songs that range from perfect to acceptable but a few that make you wonder what they were thinking. Walser's own *Hot Rod Mercury* and *Ramon*, Hank Lochlin's *Please Help Me I'm Falling*, Jimmie Rodgers' *In My Dear Old Southern Home*, the Louvin Brothers' *Are You Teasing Me?*, the uncredited (and from my resources, untraceable) "poodle skirt era" *Hearts Made Of Stone*, Johnny Bush's *An Eye For An Eye* and Sons Of The Pioneer's *The Devil's Great Grandson* work fine, but the swing chestnut *Marie* and the even more chestnutty *Rose Marie*, performed with The Kronos Quartet, fall pretty flat. One plus is that Pure Texas Band members Howard Kalish fiddle, Scott Walls steel guitar and Philip Farjado drums, and regular PTB associates Floyd Domino piano, Jason Roberts fiddle and Rick McRae guitar, get rather more of a look in, but are still replaced on various tracks for no apparent reason—steel guitarist Kevin Owens at least is no match for Walls. Like any longtime Walser fan, I'm also an admirer of Don Keeling, whom Mark Rubin defers to as "the dean of Texas country bass players," and my question is, if he could play on one track (*Devil's Great Grandson*), why not on all of them? Spencer Starnes may be a great jazz/Western Swing bassman, but he doesn't seem to know jack about country and on a very basic, almost subliminal, level, he throws much of the album just a little off-kilter. While Walser has his reasons for wanting Ray Benson to produce his albums, and make such questionable decisions, my real quarrel with the combination is that it sets its sights too low, not daring to be great. Once again, an album that falls short, if not as short as its two predecessors, of what anybody who's ever seen him *knows* Walser is capable of. Technical flaws notwithstanding, Volume 1, at least, of the **Archive Series** albums still stands up as his best and truest recording.

JC

FRED GOODMAN THE MANSION ON THE HILL

(Vintage, paperback)

Misleadingly subtitled 'Dylan, Young, Geffen, Springsteen, and the head-on collision of rock and commerce,' which, if nothing else, omits two of the former *Rolling Stone* editor's lead characters, Albert Grossman and Jon Landau, while overstating the prominence of Dylan and Young, his book, opening in early 60s Boston coffeehouses and closing in 90s LA corporate boardrooms, essentially charts the transformation of a business driven by music into a music driven by business. While it's pretty obvious where his sympathies lie, Goodman is nonpolemical, letting readers draw their own conclusions, and stoke their own anger, from a deadpan factual account illuminated by copious, well deployed, and often incendiary or self-damning, quotes. Though he plainly admires Neil Young's wilful artistic integrity, the only person in his narrative he unambiguously approves of is Reprise/Warner/WEA exec Mo Ostin, the only one he patently despises is Dave Marsh, rock critic turned Springsteen hagiographer. For the rest, Goodman refrains from overt judgements, but, even from the equivocal evidence he presents, Dylan's keen regard for megabucks emerges from behind his gnomic facade, while Springsteen is revealed as superficial and easily manipulated. Springsteen's manager, Jon Landau, once a highly regarded and influential critic (though an object of British ridicule after he trashed Jimi Hendrix in 1967), is quite clearly a shameless mercenary who has never held himself to anything remotely resembling the same standards of integrity he so freely demanded of others. As for David Geffen, Goodman simply adds to one's knowledge of, and thus further inflames one's loathing of, a man already exposed as a vile shithhead by Frederic Dannen (*Hit Men*). Ostin aside, the only person in this entire book who emerges with much personal credit is former White Panther John Sinclair. There are a couple of fascinating tangents, the rise and fall of Boston's WBCN and *Phoenix*, the soar and crash of Peter Frampton and Goodman's revealing aside on the difference between American record labels and the foreign companies which bought them, the latter appreciating the cultural, not merely fiscal, value of their acquisitions, the former just wanting the cash. However, the book ends very abruptly, leaving the reader to infer conclusions. Mine would be that even musicians who have some initial commitment to art—and this is not a given, Goodman remarks of The Eagles, "they were the only clients whose greed and ambition matched [Geffen's] own"—eventually accept that money is the true priority. One can, of course, think of exceptions, if precious few, such as Neil Young, wealthy almost despite himself, but as a good rule of thumb, the answer to the question 'Will success spoil [fill in the blank]?' seems to be, 'Absolutely.'

JC

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30th • Asylum Street Spankers

3CM REVIEWS

KIM LENZ & HER JAGUARS

(HMG, CD)

Had I promoted Jovita's Not SXSW Rockabilly Night, I might have billed it The War of the Roses, as it featured back to back appearances by the redheaded Lenz and platinum blonde Josie Kreuzer (close enough, damn it). I haven't seen actual blows exchanged, but I sure have heard some very heated arguments over the respective merits of these two ladies. Personally, I stand aloof, trusting in the sure and certain return of Marti Brom, however, in the interim, I do have to retract some of my remarks about Kreuzer's *Hot Rod Girl* (#10/99), because Lenz is very much a contender. Both Kreuzer, from Buffalo, based in San Diego, and Lenz, from California, based in Dallas, have their (very different) rockabilly visual styles down cold, both have mastered, and are perhaps overreliant on, classic vocal techniques, Lenz's role model clearly being Janis Martin, and both have good taste in material. On the originals, Kreuzer gets an edge with her *So-Called Boyfriend* but had to enlist Hot Rod Lincoln for backing on her album, so Lenz pulls well ahead by recording her solid road trio (great hair). Moreover, the album, produced by Fly-Rite Boy Wally Hersom, was cut live to one track which is pretty ballsy and lends them an authentic sound, complete with occasional vintage style flubs. Of the 14 cuts, *Kiss And Tell Baby* was written specially for Lenz by Shaun Young, *The Swing* comes from the late Johnny Carroll, *Ten Cats Down* from The Miller Sisters, *You Made A Hit* from Sun rockabilly Ray Smith, with *Havin' A Ball* "unknown," the rest, including *Saturday Jump*, a tribute to The Comets, are originals. Taken individually, every track is pretty fine, but, like so many genres, rockabilly works best a single at a time, and this album falls into the familiar trap of sounding monolithic after a while. Nonetheless, Lenz has some good moves and, if push came to shove, I'd rally under the banner of the red rose. If the cover art rings a bell, it's an homage to Gene Vincent. **JC**

GRANT ALDEN & PETER BLACKSTOCK (EDS)

No Depression

(Dowling, large format paperback)

Nobody can fault Alden & Blackstock for lack of visionary courage, launching a national magazine devoted to alternative country with little or no idea if there was a viable market. From a 32pp quarterly, with an initial print run of 2000, they've grown over the last three years into a 96pp bimonthly printing 13,000 copies, while their title has become an industry catchphrase synonymous with alternative country. However, while I can't but admire their ability to get written up and cited in other media, my feeling is *ND* plays better to perplexed outsiders trying to gauge the strength and potential of this alternative country stuff than it does to the home crowd. In the gamut of reactions, positive and negative, I've come across, mine's somewhat ambiguous; I wish *ND* was better than it is, but on the other hand, as I am also an editor, I appreciate Alden & Blackstock's problems, chief, and most debilitating, of which is simply finding sharp critics. This is not to say that some *ND* contributors aren't good writers but, as Blackstock recently admitted in an Internet discussion, they only want to write about people they admire. Compounding this, he prefers the variety of a large pool of volunteers to the consistency of a dozen or so regulars. The upshot is that *ND* has a relentlessly upbeat partisan approach which, while it does the magazine no harm in an industry that dearly loves a blow job, I, for one, find exasperating. As a German music maven once pithily remarked to me about *ND*, "My criticism is, there is no criticism." Subtitled 'An introduction to Alternative Country Music (whatever that is),' Alden & Blackstock's "as much definition as we're prepared to offer" culls their back issues for 37 painfully prolix articles—all of which could be edited down to half their length without losing any substance whatsoever—and their basic message is 'It's All Good.' If only that were true. **JC**

REDD VOLKAERT • TELEWACKER

(HMG, CD)

Despite the '53 Telecaster, the cover picture suggests 'when Amish go bad' rather than hotshot guitar picker, but Volkaert, whose name and playing you might have noted on Dale Watson's *I Hate These Songs*, is currently filling the lead guitarist slot in Merle Haggard's band. Roy Nichols is, not surprisingly, one of the influences cited by the Vancouver-born player, along with Jimmy Bryant and Eldon Shamblin, though Jerry Reed is acknowledged by *Reed My Tele*, Buck Owens by *The Buck Stops Here*, while *It's A Minor Thing* strongly evokes Roy Buchanan. These are three of the seven original instrumentals, plus Zez Confrey's *Stumblin'*, on which Volkaert demonstrates his mastery of country guitar styles from jazz to blues. He also steps up to the mike to fill out the Western Swing and honky tonk portion of the program with his own *She Loves Anything That Swings*, the Bob Wills standard *Home In San Antone*, George Jones' *You're Still On My Mind*, two Ronnie Milsap hits, *I Hate You* and *The Girl Who Waits On Tables* and Liz Anderson's *All My Friends Are Going To Be Strangers*. Though still inescapably a sideman project with a strong wallpaper element, Volkaert is state of the art of country picking. **JC**

THE HORSE WHISPERER

(MCA, CD)

Hard to see how Robert Redford's movie can possibly live up to this album, even if not all the tracks are actually heard in the film. Though personally I'd have passed *Cattle Call* from Dwight Yoakam to Don Walser, *Big Ball's In Cowtown* from Walser to George Strait and *Red River Valley* from Strait to Yoakam, any album with them, The Flatlanders, Lucinda Williams, Gillian Welch, The Mavericks, Emmylou Harris, Allison Moorer (good voice, terrible arrangement), Don Edwards, Steve Earle and Iris DeMent has to have *something* going for it. The sound is all a tad on the slick side, but I think we can live with that to hear Joe Ely, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, & Butch Hancock back together, not to mention a sort of preview of Lucinda's return. Wonder why they use that horrible bit of pop nonsense in the ads for the film. **JC**

GENE VINCENT & HIS BLUE CAPS THE LOST DALLAS SESSIONS '57-'58

(Dragon Street, CD)

Free associating from an item in the paper, I thought while listening to this how much I'd rather have one primitive, 40-year old Gene Vincent demo than have Mariah Carey's seven triple-platinum albums. In fact how much I'd rather have one primitive, 40 year old Gene Vincent demo than, well never mind. To properly understand this 21 track collection of home and studio demos, demos of songs pitched to Vincent and live recordings, it's necessary to provide some background.

◆ Dallas once enjoyed a vigorous, even seminal, though now all but forgotten, heyday as a rockabilly and rock & roll hotbed, served by local studios and labels and, crucially, supported by one of the great live 'barn dance' radio shows. The Big D Jamboree, conceived by wrestling promoter Ed McLemore and DJ Johnny Hicks as a way of filling the Dallas Sportatorium, ran every Saturday night from the late 40s to the mid 60s, presenting a dazzling array of national touring stars and local acts, the latter often brought up through its opening talent segment. Modelled on The Louisiana Hayride rather than the Grand Ole Opry, The Big D was an early booker of rockabilly and rock & roll, perhaps because the hall's owner, not primarily in the music business, was more concerned with filling seats and selling beer than taking moral stands.

◆ Broadcast live on Dallas' KRLD, The Big D was also one of the revolving regional shows in CBS' national Saturday Night Country Style, which was recorded on transcription discs by the Armed Forces Radio Network for rebroadcast to troops overseas. These discs were eventually stored, unlabeled and uncataloged, in the Library of Congress' sound archives, where Dragon Street's David Dennard identified 17 complete Big D shows from 1957-59, along with recordings of The Old Dominion, Tennessee and Kentucky Barn Dances, WWVA Jamboree and The Louisiana Hayride, a find of epic proportions. Additionally, Dennard located the recorded archives of a subsidiary company, Big D Publishing, in a lady's closet (what he was doing there is another story).

◆ By early 1957, the demands of touring had cost Vincent the services of most of the original Blue Caps, including, of course, guitar god Cliff Gallup and he'd also parted company with his manager. Producer Ken Nelson set him up with McLemore, who was already managing Capitol's Sonny James, and Vincent moved to Dallas to regroup. There, he cut demos for his upcoming sessions and performed at the Sportatorium. More than doubling the known live recordings, *Blue Jean Bop*, *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*, *Dance To the Bop* and *Lotta Lovin'* come from an October 1958 Big D show. Highlights of the demos are the solo acoustic *My Love* (aka *In Love Again*), *Hey Mama* (aka *Say Mama*), featuring Ronnie Dawson on lead guitar, both the home and studio versions of *In My Dreams* and *Lotta Lovin'* and two studio takes of *The Night Is So Lonely*. Additionally, there's writer Bob Kelley's very fine demo of *Git It* and Norton Johnson's of his *Lotta Lovin'*. These recordings may be technically primitive, but the most sophisticated studio on earth still hasn't got a knob that'll turn up the talent and that's what comes pouring out of this album, which captures Vincent's special magic at its peak, between *Be-Bop-A-Lula* and *Dance To The Bop*. Failing either to die young or sell out, Vincent remains to this day the quintessential rock & roller.

◆ As a footnote, the album cover is a very cool publicity still from *Hot Rod Gang* (originally doublebilled with *High School Hellcats*), which features locally-recruited 15-year old drummer Juvey Gomez, who later joined Buddy Knox and is still active in Dallas music.

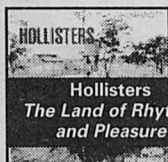
◆ That so many previously unknown recordings should have eluded rock & roll and rockabilly archivists, among whom Vincent fanatics are by no means the least anal, for four decades is amazing enough, but this album is merely (!) the first fruit of Dennard's sensational coup in historical recovery. The debut of a 'Legends of the Big D Jamboree' series, it'll be followed, over the next few months, by vintage recordings of Johnny Dollar, Groovy Joe Poovey, Orville Crouch, Eddie McDuff and a multiple CD set of live recordings by Sun-era Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins, Wanda Jackson, Cowboy Copas, Ferlin Husky, Ronnie Dawson, Warren Smith and many more. **JC**

Texas Music Round-Up

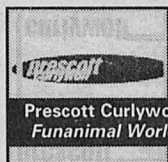
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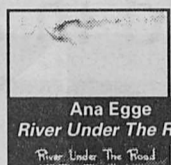
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Red Dirt Rangers
Oklahoma Territory



The Songs of
Route 66



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River Under The Road



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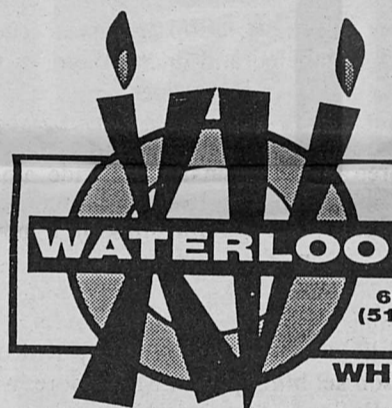
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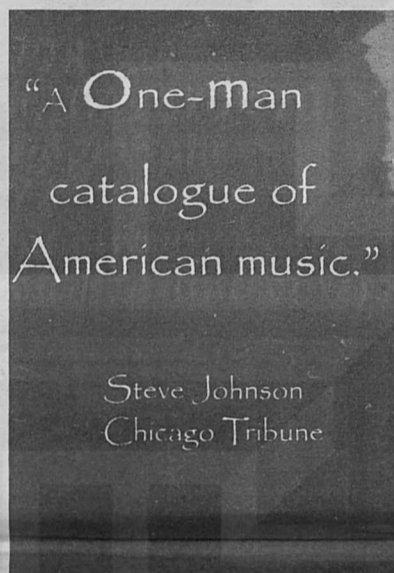
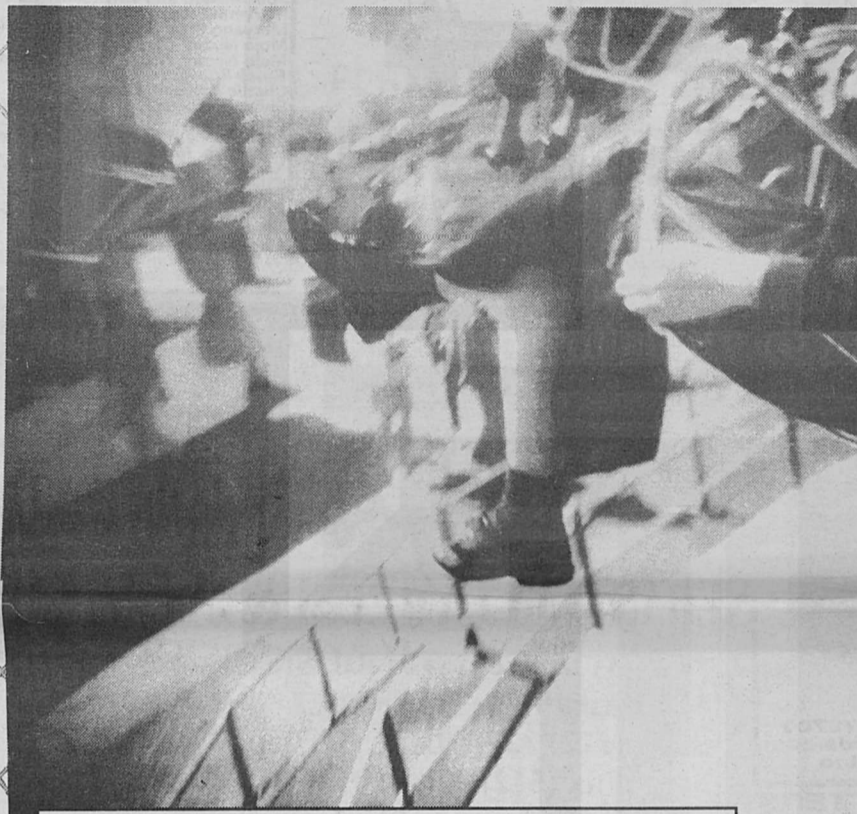
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Martin Fullington ~ Music Reviews Quarterly

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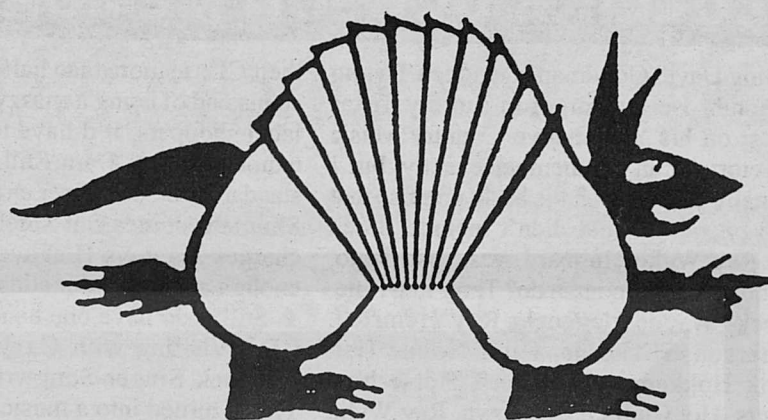
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THE ZULEIKA DOBSON MEMORIAL PAGE

IT'S FARON'S WORLD.
WE JUST LIVE IN IT.

Reviewing David Goodman's *Modern Twang* last month, I clean forgot to run my Texas 'H' test on his 'Alternative Country Music Guide & Directory.' Can't remember exactly, but I assume I originally picked H on the basic premise that any guide—to *anything*—that didn't include Butch Hancock and Ray Wylie Hubbard was, ipso facto, worthless. So how does Goodman do? Terry Lee Hale, Butch Hancock, Wayne Hancock, Roy Heinrich, Homer Henderson, Hickoids, High Noon, Tish Hinojosa, Erik Hokkanen, Hollisters, Horseshoe, Horton Brothers, Hot Club Of Cowtown, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Jeff Hughes and Cornell Hurd. Not too shabby, eh? Goodman tells me corrections to the nuts and bolts errors I mentioned are already coming in and, as he's printing small runs direct from computer disks, every reprint will have fewer of them. Even so, the original v1.0 is still very highly recommended.

◆ One thing I should add about *Modern Twang* is that it pretty much lets me off the hook as far as keeping up the **3CM Radio Guide** is concerned. Goodman was kind enough to lend me his notes when I was putting the last one together, but, while I was able to help him add to them, his final list is far more comprehensive, if more skeletal, than mine. Apart from anything else, he includes Bluegrass shows, which I couldn't bring myself to mention. The two guides are rather different, I went for selective depth, Goodman for inclusive width, but he lists most all my Art & Grit shows and, as getting blood out of a turnip is child's play compared to gouging basic information out of public, college and community stations, I'm happy to let him supersede me.

◆ Felt a bit guilty about letting the first anniversary go by unmentioned, except under Births & Deaths. So, as some recompense, I'd like to draw your attention to the (1st Annual) **Keith Ferguson Memorial Crawfish Boil** at Hoody's on May 10th. It'll run from 4-9pm, with music by Gulf Coast Playboys. Hoody's is on 71 West, just pass the Y in Oak Hill.

◆ Marking the second anniversary of **Walter Hyatt's** death, friends and fans will gather at 7.30pm, Monday May 11th, to dedicate a memorial bench on the south bank of Town Lake, directly across from Seaholm Power Station. There'll be acoustic music from Champ Hood & The Threadgill's Troubadours, with Hyatt's longtime supporter Steve Clark acting as MC.

◆ Ponty Bone sez, "Be on the look out for a Showtime movie sometime this summer called **The Baby Dance**, starring Laura Dern and Stockard Channing. First, this is an exceptional movie, secondly, music is by **Terry Allen** and features Terry, Lloyd Maines, Richard Bowden and others (ok, yeah, me too) coloring a southern Louisiana setting."

◆ Driving down the Slaton Highway into Lubbock, for reasons too complicated to go into, suffice to say folding money was involved, I saw a melancholy sight indeed. The old **Cotton Club**, owned at various times by Tommy Hancock and Joe Ely, is now Nibbles, 'An Adult Superstore.' Guess there's a certain 90s irony there, a place people used to go to get laid is now a place people go because they can't get laid.

◆ Thought I'd stumbled onto a neat concept for a feature when a veteran recording artist remarked of his new label—the name really doesn't matter as this is true of virtually all labels—"The only important thing in a contract is how much you have to pay for your own records, because what you get selling them is the only money you're ever going to see." Knowing the cost to artists varies from label to label, I thought it might be instructive to run a comparison. However, Bloodshot's Nan Warshaw threw a spanner in the works by pointing out all kinds of wrinkles—eg "one attorney wanted us to pay Master Recording Royalties on the CDs we sold the band, therefore we sell them

their CDs at more than half of retail (our standard)"—so instead of being a snazzy quick reference guide for label shoppers, it'd have to be a long, complex and tedious analysis. Darn. Still, I did establish the industry standard is \$7-\$7.50 per unit, so Bohemia Beat's Mark Shumate comes out smelling of roses as he only charges his guys (LaFave, Fracasso) \$6. Hey, sell enough albums and it adds up.

◆ Still, I do have one handy tip for people hawking CDs. Visiting with **Cary Swinney**, The Greatest Lubbock Singer-Songwriter Who Actually Lives There, turned into a music biz seminar during which a long dormant memory bubbled up from my book reviewing days. I once heard, as a publishers' dictum, that a review copy pays for itself if the review generates just one sale. Crunch the numbers and you'll see the same principle holds true for CDs. That's assuming the review copies actually get reviewed.

◆ Course, the math only makes sense if you use manufacturing costs, say \$2 per unit, rather than total production costs, which can be just about anything per unit, but once you've pressed them, the main thing is to move the bastards somehow. Which reminds me of a very neat little high concept scam **Terry Allen** and I came up with one time. Way it works, Terry cuts a record and creates original artwork for it. Then we destroy the masters and have a New York or Los Angeles art gallery sell the certified *one and only* copy of that CD to a Japanese bank for, oh, let's say \$250,000, we're not greedy. Do that a couple three times a year and it beats the crap out of mass marketing. Art with a capital A and lots of zeroes.

◆ Reminds me, did you notice **Garth Brooks'** idea of a limited edition? This month, his label is stopping individual production of his first six albums which will henceforth only be available in a box set or which only two million copies will be made. Yeah, right.

◆ On one of his CDs (see Reviews), Wes McGhee included **Vince & The Viletones'** version of Don & Dewey's *Justine*, which, he remarks, "started as one of those stoned after gig ideas usually forgotten next morning, but somehow this one got carried through. Most of us are first generation rockers and love to play this stuff, but rarely get the chance, so we invented The Viletones, got the shades and pink suits and did a couple of gigs. Mary Costello had us as guests on her radio show and we ran up a fake biog and fake quotes from rock 'n' roll history books. The premise was we formed in 1958 but split acrimoniously in 1963, and this was our first gig since then. Ian Bartholomew (Vince 'Charming' Vaccari) was appearing in a West End musical and could only get into the studio between the matinee and evening performances. We had to have a reason for his early departure, so we rehearsed an 'on air' fight which ended up with him walking out. It was convincing enough for people to phone in and complain and the performance was convincing enough for a couple of people to insist they'd seen us play live in 1958—weird or what? We made two album length tapes; **Live At The Time**, a phoney live album with dubbed-on stage announcements and applause, and **Vile Christmas**, which is self-explanatory. Be warned—they could be back..."

◆ The Old Settlers Music Festival ducked the rain this year but cold evenings ran a lot of people off early, leaving the headliners playing to very thin crowds. This, at least, will not be a problem for Texas Folklife Resources' **Accordion Kings** in August. Also in Old Settlers Park—as I may have mentioned before, the City of Round Rock is a rather generous in supporting such events than the worthless so-called 'Live Music Capital of the World'—the festival will feature **Walter Mouton & The Scott Playboys + Poullard, Poullard & Garnier** on the 15th, **Santiago Jimenez Jr y Su Conjunto + The Majek Orchestra** on the 16th.

◆ As Josh Arnson is kindly lugging a bundle of mags up to The Gypsy Tea Room, enabling me to claim, somewhat speciously, that **3CM** is now distributed in Dallas, I'm returning the favor with a plug for **Asylum Street Spankers'** Wednesday night shows at The Electric Lounge, which he says have fallen off lately. "Trouble is, most of our fans just graduated."

◆ Elsewhere, you'll find my contention that **Ramblin' Jack Elliott's** *Bleeker Street Blues*, written when Bob Dylan was sick, may well be the worst song of all time, or possibly the worst poem, makes no odds to me. I aired this view on Postcard2 where someone pointed out "Good thing Dylan recovered or it might have been even worse." However, another P2er took exception to my candidate: "Sorry, the worst song ever written is *Someone's Knocking At The Door* by **Paul McCartney**. It's even worse than the rest of his crappy songs." This drew a rejoinder supporting *Biker Like An Icon* and when last seen my original posting had become a thread about exactly which McCartney song was the worst song ever, while spinning off a subsidiary thread about which was the worst cover of all time, with Willie Nelson's version of *Mona Lisa* showing strongly.

◆ Getting kind of worried about **Michael Corcoran**, he keeps saying things I approve of (mind you, maybe he's the one who ought to worry). I thought of commenting on the frightful outbreak of hypocrisy that broke out when **Linda McCartney** died, but he beat me to it. I mean, I'm sorry for her, and McCartney and their children, but dying doesn't change the fact that in life she was a truly appalling musician with an overindulgent husband. There really does seem to be something about death that brings out the absolute revisionist worst in the American media.

◆ Orson Welles once said that a film studio was the best toy a boy could have, but a radio station comes pretty close. Last month, Joe Horn handed over the controls and sat back for my first solo **Third Coast Music Network** broadcast, an exhilarating, if occasionally bumpy, ride which featured an accidental repetition of *Tonight I Think I'm Going To Go Downtown*, about 90 seconds of dead air and a visit from Ponty Bone and Wes McGhee, who were playing Cibolo Creek that night. Apparently the next development is having a nickname bestowed on me, with **Johnny Con Queso** the current frontrunner. So far, I haven't been able to ascertain whether this implies I'm the Big Cheese or just a dip.

◆ Even though you'd think it's obvious enough, I'm beginning to feel I need to put another motto on the masthead every month—"It's not just me, you know." Hard as this may be for some people to believe, my experience is that I usually, alright quite often, hold the middle ground and that, on any given subject or artist, there are always people who more or less agree with my view and others who feel far more strongly, for or against, than I do. The problem, of course, is that I put my opinions into print and they don't.

◆ A specific example is **Shawn Colvin**. A while back, I mentioned that I'd tried several times to get it, but had had enough and was giving up on her. This outraged *Texas Beat* so much that it listed my remarks as one of the 1997 Ten Worst Things in Austin Music. While it's always gratifying to be attacked by Keith Ayres, even if no one else notices, the plain fact is that while I'm basically indifferent to Colvin's music, I know people who absolutely *detest* it and if anybody whose opinion I respect actually likes her stuff, they've been keeping quiet about it, as well they might.

◆ Then again, if I'm going to have another motto, I think I'll just stick to the hardboiled British standby, popularized during World War Two by RAF Bomber Command, that's served me so well all these years—"Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke."

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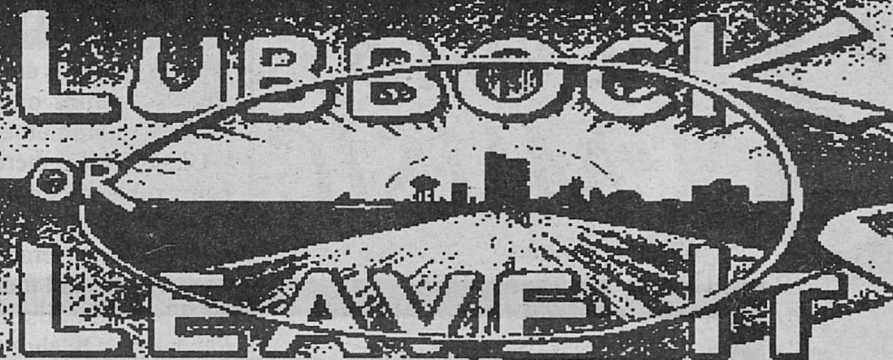


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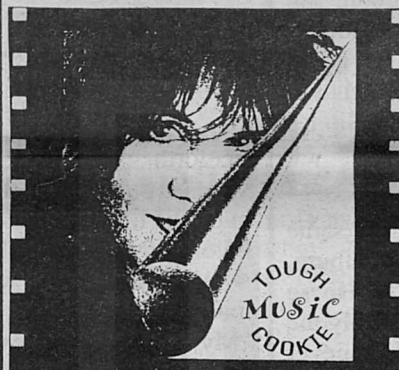
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MAJOR CRISIS

Got a surprise call last month from Polygram's marketing division inquiring about advertising rates. Seems they're planning a grassroots—and by God you don't get much more grassroots than 3CM—level campaign for a Mercury album by someone whose name does ring a faint bell, though it's been so long that, OK, I'm sorry, I refer, of course to Ms Lucinda Williams. Naturally, my first thought was that this had to be a prank call, especially when an *actual release date* was mentioned. I'm not going say what it is for fear of jinxing it somehow, but the next thought was that my long standing No Majors Labels policy was going to be put to severe test if I had to cope not just with what to do about Lucinda's album, which redefines the cliché 'long-awaited,' but with having Nashville gold thrust at me as well (actually, New York gold in this particular instance, I was just going for cheap sensationalism).

◆ Even as I pondered this, and the thought that the same label will eventually be putting out a Mary Cutrufello album, I was told copies copies of Joe Ely's latest and *The Horse Whisperer* soundtrack were on their way, and suddenly the whole policy was in a shambles. Since Day One, I've never directly contacted a major label, but it looks like the bastards haven't just found 3CM, they know exactly what bait to use.

◆ The origins of the No Majors deal are pretty straightforward. MCT started out Austin-specific, but even when it became Texas-specific, in the music making circles we were interested in, record contracts were rare as hens' teeth, so we simply had very little reason to fuck with the majors. In any case, it was already impossible to cover all, or even most, of the indie and DIY stuff received in the space available. What I'm saying is, while there was a principled element, the policy never created any real problems or angst, except when Jimmie Dale Gilmore was on Elektra. When I did covet major label releases, mainly reissues, it was because I wanted them for myself, not to review.

◆ Leaving aside the sordid consideration that being on major label promo lists would do wonders for my cash flow, if you know what I mean and I think you do, since the changeover to 3CM the ratio between incoming releases and space has got wider yet, so I really have even more reason to keep excluding majors, but on the other hand. Lucinda, Joe and Mary—you see the problem? It's not like they're going to get the big Garth style hype either.

◆ One friend I consulted thought I should just amend the policy without saying anything, my marbles, my rules sort of thing, but there's part of me that still thinks of reviewing major label releases as going over to the dark side. So I figure I ought to try and explain what's going on, which would be a whole lot easier if I understood it better myself. I mean, it'd be real hard to explain just why I cover some of the indies & DIYs I do and not others. Guess it comes down to keeping priorities straight, so while I'm opening the door to major label releases, I'm going to work on the assumption they're chaff until unquestionably proven otherwise.

JC

BOB, MARY LOU & ROSETTA WILLS

Bob Wills and Mary Lou Parker, his third wife, divorced when Rosetta, their only child, was 11 months old. Ten years later, when Wills moved back to Oklahoma from California, her grandmother drove her to a dance at which her father was performing:

"Okay, Rosie, there he is." Grandma broke the silence in the car when his long yellow Cadillac convertible glided into the Sinclair gas station across the highway. 'You just run over there and tell him who you are.' As I darted across the dark road, my skinny legs shook in rhythm with my churning stomach. I desperately longed to run the other direction, but I never defied Grandma. I halted, took a deep breath, and then slowly crept to the driver's side. 'Hi, I'm Rosetta Wills.'"

◆ When they first met in 1940, Wills was 34 and a celebrity, Rosetta's mother was a 17-year old Pawhuska, Oklahoma, schoolgirl:

"When Bob added phone calls (averaging over \$150 a month) to his courtship practices, the delirious operators made sure Mary Lou Parker did not miss any calls from Bob Wills. If she didn't answer, the operators put him on hold and phoned round town until they located her at a friend's house, J.C. Penney's, or the Rexall Drugstore."

◆ Their marriage was not a success:

"My father forbade Mary Lou to attend Cain's dances after they were married, which was a big disappointment for her. He didn't want his wife or even his band members' wives there. Johnny Lee [Bob's brother] said . . . 'One or two of his wives thought there would always be bright lights.'"

◆ Nor was the divorce:

"My mother even made a feeble attempt to win him back after their divorce. She wore a beautiful silver fox fur draped over her shoulders to attract his attention at a Pawhuska dance. 'Every time I tried to get where he could see me, he put Leon between us. Leon just kept movin' back and forth. I later found out Bill Newport had told Bob I had a gun under my fur and was gonna shoot him. Bob said, 'Leon, you stay between me and Mary Lou 'cause she won't shoot you. She likes you.'"

◆ Being the child of Bob Wills had its drawbacks:

"I attended an Oklahoma State rush week dressed in my tight, straight skirt with a kick pleat, my broad-brimmed hat, white gloves and three-inch heels. A sorority member whispered, 'I heard her daddy's some kind of a hillbilly singer and her parents are divorced. I don't think she's material.'"

◆ Amazingly, Wills and his fifth (and last) wife, the domineering Betty, were able to conceal his previous marriages and offspring from their own children until they were adults:

"Then he pointed his bow at me, flashed a radiant smile, and motioned for me to come nearer. As I moved closer, he nodded to someone else. He then bent down, grasping both my hands as usual, and turned to a handsome young man with liquid brown eyes standing next to me. 'James, I want you to meet your sister Rosetta.'"

◆ But then Wills was not exactly the model husband and father:

"One article referred to him as 'Bob Wills, a Tulsa musician, crooner, composer, actor, and rancher.' When reporters asked him about his career and marriages, he said, 'Wives just don't understand men in public life. Regardless of bands, movies, music, and wives, horses are my real weakness. Especially Palominos. I've got about 16 more horses than I've had wives.'"

◆ While in therapy, Rosetta wrote a letter to her father "declaring my pain and my love," and finally mailed it in late 1973:

"My stepmother's power surfaced again when James phoned to tell me she felt Bob was to ill to read my letter.

'I love you, honey,' my father said at the end of our next phone conversation . . . I hoped he didn't think he was talking to one of his other daughters. But then my inner voice asserted, 'No, Wait! Don't question it. Just cherish the moment.'"

◆ Even her father's will was, to say the least enigmatic:

"(2) I hereby give, devise, and bequeath unto my daughter, ROSETTA ARNETT, formerly Rosetta Wills, the sum of One Dollar (\$1.00) and my love and affection."

◆ However, she did have one, albeit indirect, consolation:

"I remembered what the musicians who travelled in the car with him had told me. 'Rosetta, he feels so guilty 'bout you. When he's drinkin,' he always talks 'bout you.'"

ROSETTA WILLS

THE KING OF WESTERN SWING; BOB WILLS REMEMBERED

(Billboard, hardback)

Pam Tillis is quoted here as saying, "Country music of the 50s and 60s was about being on the road 300 days a year, and that makes it real hard to get to know your kid . . . My dad and I have an understanding, but we don't really know each other." For Rosetta Wills, this was only the start. Her parents divorced when she was a baby, she didn't see her father again until she was ten and after that only intermittently, mostly at his shows or when he was in hospital. Moreover, his fifth wife (Wills was actually married six times, twice to Milton Brown's ex-wife Mary Helen) went to considerable lengths to prevent Rosetta and her half-sister Robbie Jo, Wills' daughter by his first marriage, from developing any real relationship with their father. Betty Wills was also a strong influence on Charles R Townsend's *San Antonio Rose*, so Rosetta's 'very personal biography' presents a rather different picture. Though his music is, inevitably a constant strand, she focuses less on Bob Wills as radically inventive musician and bandleader, more on Bob Wills as husband and father, two roles in which, it has to be said, he was considerably less successful. I still remember what a thrill it was to met Bob Wills' daughter at Henry's and learn that she was a regular MCT reader, but clearly being born into what is, at least in certain circles in certain states, the equivalent of royalty, and being immortalized in a song Wills made a Western Swing standard, Earl 'Fatha' Hines' *Rosetta*, is a very mixed and ambiguous legacy. However, while there's clearly an element of catharsis in her clear-eyed, and very readable, account of both the pain her father caused many people, for which she has long forgiven him her own ration, and the love he inspired, which still burns strongly, she seeks sympathy not so much for herself as for her father's all too human frailties, evoking him as a man rather than a legend.

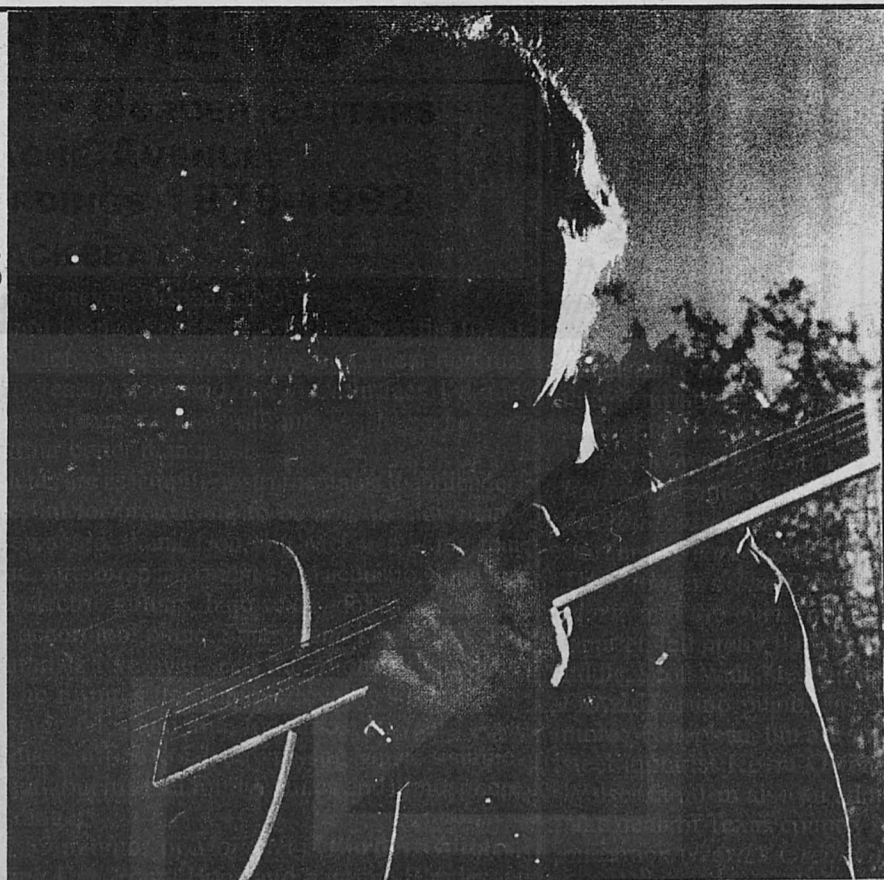
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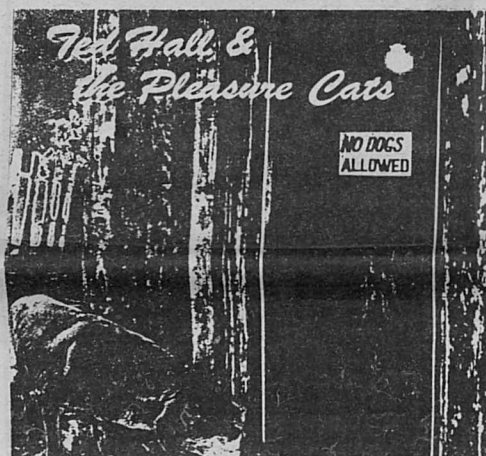
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