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ROOTS BIRTHS & DEATHS
REVIEWS * * * * * (or not)

BILLY BACON & THE FORBIDDEN PIGS • AMBER DIGBY
BLAZE FOLEY • LISA O'KANE • JOE NEW • THE PALADINS
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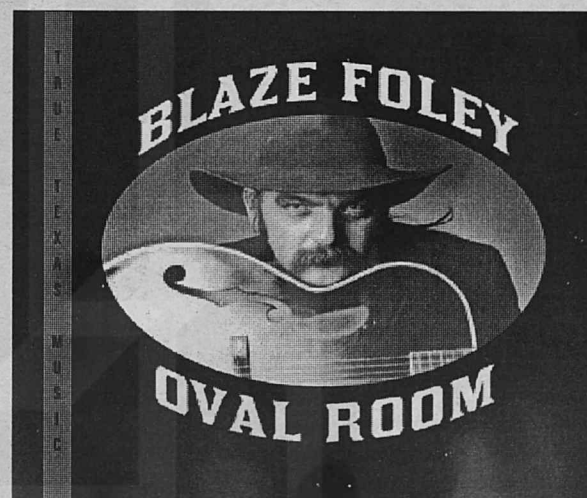
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#1 Steve Earle: The Revolution Starts Now

- (Artemis) *BS/*BW/*FM/*FS/*JP/*LC/*N&T/*SC/*SG
 2 Johnny Bush: Honky Tonic (BGM) *DWB/*EW/*JM/*LB/*LG/*TR
 3 Buddy Miller: Universal United House Of Prayer (New West)
 *AN/*AT/*JB/*MO/*R78
 4 VA: Touch My Heart; Tribute To Johnny Paycheck (Sugar Hill)
 BP/*RR/*RU/*T&L
 5 Jason Ringenberg: Empire Builders (Yep Roc) *BB/*KF
 6 The Hoyle Brothers: Back To The Door (Loose Booty)
 *RMS/*S&D/*TJ
 7= Cowboy Jack Clement: Guess Things Happen That Way
 (Dualtone) *KD/*PP/*RH
 Drive-By Truckers: Dirty South (New West) *JQB/*UC
 8 Tony Joe White: The Heroines (Sanctuary) *BF/*CP/*MT
 9 Junior Brown: Down Home Chrome (Telarc) *SH
 10 Chuck Prophet: Age Of Miracles (New West)
 11 Jon Dee Graham: The Great Battle (New West)
 12= Split Lip Rayfield: Should Have Seen It Coming (Bloodshot) *XR
 Geraint Watkins: Dial 'W' For Watkins (Yep Roc) *JF
 13 Kasey Chambers: Wayward Angel (WB) *DS/*DY
 14 Nels Andrews: Sunday Shoes (Little Kiss) *ST
 15 Rod Picott: Girl From Arkansas (Welding Rod) *KM/*RE
 16 Nora O'Connor: 'Til The Dawn (Bloodshot) *KC
 17 Nathan: Jimson Weed (Nettwerk) *KG/*SR
 18 The Sadies: Favourite Colors (Yep Roc) *DP
 19= Vassar Clements: Living With The Blues (Acoustic Disc) *RJ
 20= Linda Davis: Crocus In The Snow (Recluse) *GS/*MB
 Eleven Hundred Springs: Bandwagon (Palo Duro)
 Bobby Flores: Festival Favorites (Yellow Rose) *JH
 VA: Por Vida; Tribute To The Songs Of Alejandro Escovedo (Or) *HG
 21= Beausoleil: Gitane Cajun (Vanguard) *AR
 I See Hawks In L.A.: Grapevine (Western Seeds) *DO
 James Talley: Journey (Cimarron)
 23 Jason Wilber: King For A Day (Wilbertone) *BL
 24 Kieran Kane & Kevin Welch: You Can't Save Everybody (Compass)
 25= VA: Unbroken Circle: (Dualtone)
 Wailin' Jennys: 40 Days (Red House) *FW
 26 Peter Rowan & Tony Rice: You Were There For Me (Rounder) *WR
 27= Dave Alvin: Ashgrove (Yep Roc) *GC
 Eric Andersen: The Street Was Always There (Appleseed) *SMJ
 Ben Harper & The Blind Boys Of Alabama:
 There Will Be A Light (Virgin) *TT
 Mark Jungers: One For The Crow (American Rural) *MM
 Tift Merritt: Tambourine (Lost Highway) *RC
 Nashville Bluegrass Band: Twenty Year Blues (Sugar Hill) *EB
 29= The Bluegrass Patriots: Springtime In The Rockies
 (Copper Creek) *RW
 Ginny Hawker & Tracy Schwarz: Draw Closer (Rounder) *CL
 The Meat Purveyors: Pain By Numbers (Bloodshot) *DJ
 The Rizdales: Bar & Lounge (Willyboy)
 Percy Sledge: Shining Through The Rain (Varese Sarabande) *TA
 30= Beaver Nelson: Motion (Freedom) *T&C
 Bill Passalacqua: Long Way Home (Reckless Pedestrian) *JCS
 Po Girl: Vagabond Lullabies (Nettwerk) *DWT
 31= Ray Bonneville: Roll It Down (Red House) *TF
 Judy Collins Sings Leonard Cohen: Democracy (Elektra/Rhino) *MR
 Jesse Sykes & The Sweet Hereafter: Oh, My Girl (Barsuk) *BR
 Tres Chicas: Sweetwater (Yep Roc) *MDT
 Wildsang: Sky Dirt Speak Out Truth (self) *DA

- 32= Chet Atkins: The Early Recordings (Interstate) *RM
 Jake Brennan & The Confidence Men Love & Bombs (Yep Roc) *3RC
 Doug Burr: Order Of Worship (self) *MP
 Shawn Camp: Live At The Station Inn *HT
 The Cramps: How To Make A Monster (Vengeance)
 Marco DiMaggio: The Best Of (self) *DC
 Flogging Molly: Within A Mile Of Home
 (USA SideOneDummy) *GM
 Kevin Fowler: Loose, Loud & Crazy (Equity) *MA
 Alice Gerrard: Calling Me Home; Songs Of Love & Loss
 (Copper Creek) *JT
 Giant Sand: Is All Over The Map (Thrill Jockey) *SF
 Honky Tonk Hangovers: Giant (Big Bender) *TG
 Craig Horton: Touch Of The Bluesman (Bad Daddy) *DT
 Laurie & John: Arabella (Broadmoor) *TH
 Leeroy Stagger: Dear Love (Magic Teeth) *JR
 Li'l Cap'n Travis: In All Their Splendor (Glurp) *DF
 The Mammals: Rock That Babe (Signature Sounds) *AA
 Anais Mitchell: Hymns For The Exiled (Waterbug) *CD
 Bill Monroe & His Blue Grass Boys: Live at Mechanics Hall
 (Acoustic Disc) *PT
 Pierce Pettis: Great Big World (Compass) *TO
 The Redlands Palomino Co: By The Time You Hear This....
 (Laughing Outlaw) *JS
 Paul Rishell & Annie Raines: Goin' Home (Tone Cool) *RS
 Suzy & Maggie Roche: Why The Long Face (Red House) *JW
 David Rodriguez: The Lonesome Drover (Wintermoon) *ND
 Sally Timms: In The World Of Him (Touch & Go) *TW
 VA: Country Got Soul Vol 2 (Casual) *HP
 VA: Stay All Night; Buddy Holly's Country Roots
 (Western Edge) *TS
 Jim White: Drill A Hole (Luaka Bop) *SB
 The Zutons: Who Killed The Zutons (Deltasonic) *QB

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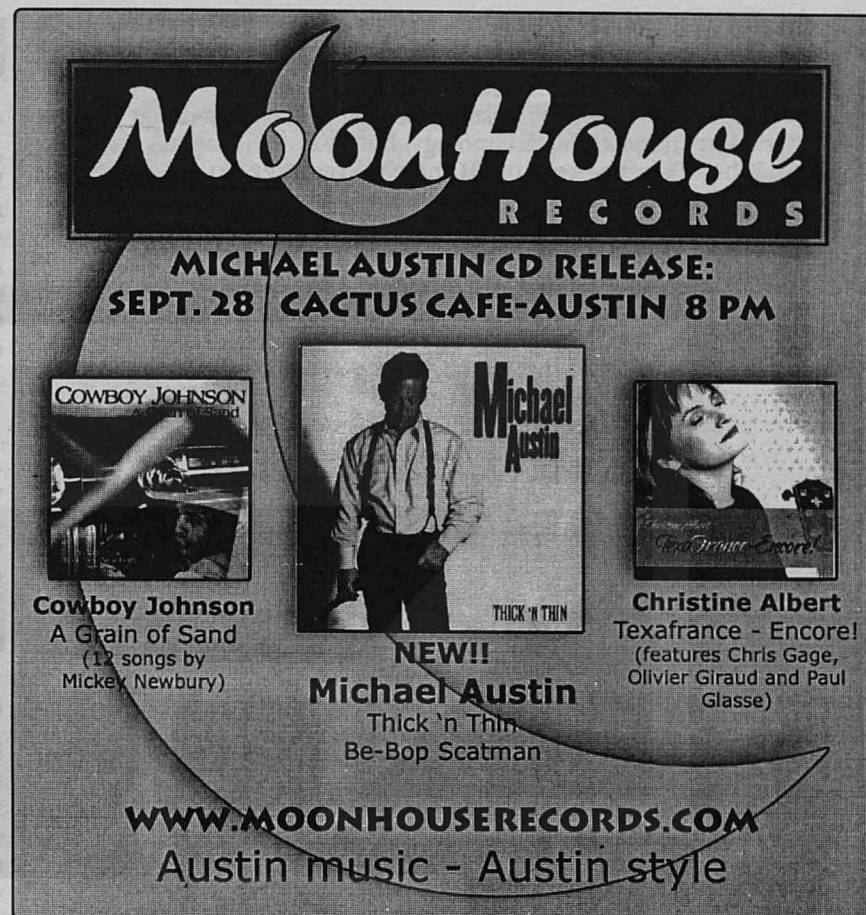
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REDD VOLKAERT • FOR THE LADIES

(Hightone *****)

Reviewing a Robert Johnson reissue last month, I remarked that 15 years is a lifetime in mastering technology, but then so, it seems, are six or even four. When **Telewacker** (1998) and **No Stranger To A Tele** (2000) came out, Volkaert's guitar playing was undeniably impressive but both albums had more than a touch of sideman project about them, a certain element of wallpaper, that made them less interesting than one might have expected or hoped. Between being remastered by Bob Stone, resequenced, and trimmed down to one album, five cuts from the first, four from the second, plus, from the Twangbangers tour with Bill Kirchen and Dallas Wayne, one studio and two live tracks, then plumped up with two videos, this doesn't simply repackage Volkaert, it presents him in a whole new light. Besides more compactly showcasing his ability to play swing, country, rock and blues, the clarity and brightness of the superb remastering make one upgrade one's estimation of Volkaert's playing, from merely 'master of the Telecaster' to 'comparable to Roy Buchanan.' Apart from the wonderfully cheesy cover, check out the liner notes (my emphasis), "Redd Volkaert moved to the Austin, Texas area in 2000 and is currently an important figure in its *prosperous* live music scene."

JC

LISA O'KANE • PEACE OF MIND

(Raisin' Kane ***)

One of the Great Clichés of music writing is "I could listen to her sing the phone book," and on the follow up to the marvellous **Am I Too Blue**, which featured songs by Lucinda Williams (of course), Hank Williams, Bill Monroe and John Prine, the opening track makes you wonder if O'Kane is actually putting it to the test. It would be hard to overpraise O'Kane as an interpretive singer, whose lovely, vibrant contralto is as moving and emotional as ever and, given a real song to work with, such as Fred Rose's *Foggy River*, Mary Coppin's *A Room Up For Rent* and Ernie Payne's *Coercion Street*, she's still pretty much as good as it gets in country-folk. However, most of the material was written or cowritten by guitarist Mark Fosson, who I assume must be O'Kane's significant other, either that or he has compromising pictures he threatened to release unless she recorded his songs, which will redefine your concept of banal or, for the Brits among you, wet. Love or blackmail, this one's down to whether you can tolerate or block out most of the lyrics and focus on Edward Tree's deft production and O'Kane's glorious voice.

JC

BILLY BACON & THE FORBIDDEN PIGS STILL SMOKIN' AFTER 20 YEARS THE PALADINS • EL MATADOR

(Swine Song *****/Lux ****.5)

Seth Russell and Dave Gonzalez have quite a bit in common. Sharing the same management, they've both kept their trios going for 20 years, archetypal roots road warriors who have managed to combine longevity with the kind of relentless touring that runs most bands into the ground after a few years. Neither the Pigs nor The Pals are easy to pigeonhole, inspired by Doug Sahm, Russell calls The Pigs' music 'Tex-Mex-bluesabilly,' while The Paladins straddle rockabilly, rock & roll, country, surf and blues with a strong emphasis on Gonzalez's lean, mean guitar work. Finally, both acts fly under the media radar, neither getting anything like the same ink and airplay as groups that are less proficient but more adept at self-promotion.

Celebrating the 20 years since, looking kinda like Wolverine, he formed the San Diego group which became The Forbidden Pigs in 1988, Russell presents 21 handpicked cuts, all originals, taken from his eight albums and crowd favorites from the thousands of gigs he's played over those years. In last April's cover story, I recommended **Live At The Zoo** as best pick from the band's catalog, live being what they do so well, but with the big brash showstoppers like *Una Mas Cerveza* and *Hasta Mañana Iguana* supported by so much fine material, this showcase of the group's perennial tightness in different lineups and Bacon's talents as a singer and songwriter, both heard to best effect on the more pensive numbers, makes a convincing case for itself, though the EQing is a bit erratic. Of course, no album, even a live one, even a live DVD, is any substitute for going to a Pigs show, but this one will make you wonder why greater fame has eluded Billy Bacon.

Also a terrific live act, The Paladins have a problem when it comes to recording because their fan base is pretty fragmented. Where their gearhead, rockabilly, rock & roll, country, surf and blues factions might have no quarrel with any given show, they tend to be picky about the albums, which usually emphasize one or other aspect of the group's dynamic. However this one, their eighth, with a bit of everything is, rather optimistically, aimed directly at people who like the group across the board. Produced by bassman Thomas Yearsley, who also formed Lux Records (The Paladins' seventh label), and partly recorded ad hoc while on tour, *Soul Farm* in a Nebraska farmhouse basement, *Looking For A Girl Like You* in a Pittsburgh apartment, has the same rather tinny transistor radio sound as **Palvoline #7**, which arguably adds a patina of authenticity to the 15 originals, but while the instrumentals are fine, the vocals are rather too low in the mix.

JC

BLAZE FOLEY • OVAL ROOM

(Lost Art ****.5)

Had I ever thought about it, it'd make sense that John Casner had unused material left over from the nights (December 27th & 28th, 1998) that produced **Live At The Austin Outhouse**. Whether it was usable or not was an even remoter consideration, but while I have absolutely no quarrel with Casner's selection, tailored to fit as many as possible of Foley's best and best loved songs into the limited space of the original cassette tape, it turns out that he had to sacrifice an even longer album's worth of equally powerful material. The timely title track was written about Reagan, but works just as good, maybe even better, for Shrub, but the 16 tracks, plus a couple of intros, mix political satire (*WW III*, *Springtime In Uganda*) and deeply personal, melancholy love songs (*My Reasons Why*, *Someday*, *Ain't Got No Sweet Thing*), profound poetry (*Cold Cold World*, *For Anything Less*) and sardonic humor (*Wouldn't That Be Nice*, *Blaze Foley's 113th Wet Dream*). Discreetly 'strengthened' by former Blaze sideman Gurf Morlix, with a few overdubs of electric and slide guitars, bass, vocals and, on *No Goodwill Stores In Waikiki*, drums, this, once again, demonstrates, 15 years after his death, why Blaze Foley was, and for some people still is, the gold standard of Austin singer-songwriters.

JC

JOE NEW • WEST OF THE WEST

(self ****)

Curious about an attention-getting one-liner in New's press kit, I contacted the writer, Laurence Brauer, who promptly came back with "It would be great if you can help Joe finally get even a quarter of the recognition he deserves. The quote is from a review that appeared in *Bay Area Music* in 1991, 13 years later, I still think it's true. Here's the entire paragraph: 'Joe New is no shuck-and-jive act or manufactured image. He's just a man singing songs, choosing substance over style, reality over appearances. He doesn't grab you, he sneaks up and then—wham—you're caught by a voice and images that cut to the heart. For my money, next to Neil Young and John Fogerty, Joe New is the Bay Area's best male singer-songwriter.'" *BAM* folded in 1997, but New's still around, lauded this summer by *Pacific Sun* as "one of the Bay Area's most engaging roots rockers." Headed for Texas this month, he has one solid local connection, he wrote the title track of Bill Kirchen's **Tied To The Wheel**. With Fats Kaplin dobro, fiddle and/or mandolin on several tracks, Joe Goldmark pedal steel on a couple and Rosie Flores singing harmony on *Guitar Lady*, an ode to a '62 Heritage guitar, the California oilfield worker lives up to Brauer's praise and with neither Young or Fogerty scheduled to play the same clubs anytime soon, maybe you can settle for #3.

JC

BILL PASSALACQUA • LONG WAY HOME

(Reckless Pedestrian ****)

Music lover and law school graduate, Passalacqua thought Austin would be the ideal place to set up as an entertainment industry lawyer. Of course, he came to find that where there's no music industry, there's not much call for specialized legal advice, but meantime he fell in with the Austin Outhouse crowd and started dabbling in music. However, a hobby became a way of life when it turned out he could keep up with the best of them and, as an Americana singer-songwriter, bouncing between country, bluegrass, blues, pop and combinations thereof in his intelligent and witty songs, he's up to four albums and, the acid test, spends much of his time touring. Of his debut, **Reckless Pedestrian**, I remarked that, as a songwriter, Passalacqua was "reminiscent of Robert Earl Keen (on a good day)," but since then he's developed a very individual style and character. Produced by Bradley Kopp, who also plays lead guitar, with Lloyd Maines steel guitar and dobro, Darcie Deaville fiddle and mandolin, David Webb organ and Dave Sanger drums, his latest is occasionally a bit busy, but the ten edgy songs, for some of which the music was written by Slaid Cleaves, Elizabeth McQueen and Jeff Talmadge, should help Passalacqua break even further out of the Austin singer-songwriter pack.

JC

VA • STAY ALL NIGHT BUDDY HOLLY'S COUNTRY ROOTS

(Western Edge ***)

His entire career was shorter than Elvis' Army hitch, but even the most cursory outline of those 20 meteoric months between *That'll Be The Day* and the Winter Dance Party must, especially if you've ever been to Lubbock, or even driven past it, inevitably prompt the question, how come? If there are any answers to be gleaned from this collection of "roots country from Buddy's youth," which includes a song that wasn't even written until 1962, they elude me. Still, there's a Flatlanders cut (Tex Ritter's *Long Time Gone*, learned from an Everly Brothers album) and for Buddy loonies, two previously unreleased, very primitive, tracks, from a 1953 acetate, featuring Holly backing his first musical associate Jack Neal on guitar. Otherwise, this sounds like a jam session during the annual Buddy Holly Music Symposium, with Leon Rausch and The Texas Playboys, Neal, Larry Welborn, who played bass with Buddy & Bob (Montgomery, who never returned any calls about this project), ex-Crickets Tommy Allsup and Carl Bunch, Buddy's brothers Larry & Travis Holley, steel guitarist Al Perkins, Robert Reynolds of The Mavericks, and a couple of ringers from DC, which ends with a clusterfuck *Goodnight Irene*. Rather oddly, Holly's niece, Ingrid Kaiter, who can actually sing pretty good, wasn't invited. My favorite cut is 79 year old Billy Grammer doing a 'short version' of his 1959 hit *Gotta Travel On*, with which Holly opened his last show, making it the only song on the album that has any verifiable connection to him.

JC

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THE FIRST LADY OF... AMERICANA? LYNN WINS BIG AT AMERICANA AWARDS

Nashville plays host to a handful of awards shows each year. We have the hilariously named CMT Flameworthy Awards, which are given out in the spring to honor country music videos. Then there's our annual gathering of gospel singers, contemporary Christian artists and other bible-thumpers that culminates with the Dove Awards. And, of course, November's CMA Awards broadcast is easily our most visible trophy distribution ceremony.

But late last month, the folks from the Americana community got their turn. The Americana Honors & Awards ceremony was the main event of the Americana Music Association Conference that was held here in Nashville. During the three days leading up to the show, those in attendance spent their afternoons at seminars and panel discussions and their nights checking out the latest buzz-generating acts in local clubs (for those of you in Austin, stop me if you've heard that one before). Then, after everyone had boozed and schmoozed, it was time to hand out some awards. Here is a list of the winners along with some analysis and other convention news:

Artist of the Year: Loretta Lynn

Album of the Year: Loretta Lynn: **Van Lear Rose**

Song of the Year: *Fate's Right Hand*

by Rodney Crowell

Instrumentalist of the Year: Will Kimbrough

New/Emerging Artist of the Year: Mindy Smith

Lifetime Achievement Executive: Jack Emerson

Lifetime Achievement Performer: Chris Hillman

Lifetime Achievement Songwriter:

Cowboy Jack Clement

President's Award: The Carter Family

Spirit of Americana Free Speech Award: Steve Earle

Loretta Lynn I am an enormous fan of Ms Lynn, and I was thrilled to see her win, but her victory here is certainly food for much thought. To begin with, I'm finding it odd to see all of these projects where people from the rock community come over to the country genre to work with legendary figures. Not wrong or anything like that, mind you. Just unusual. You pair a Rick Rubin with a Johnny Cash or a Kid Rock with a Hank Jr and the results are, to say the least, out of the ordinary. Such was the case with Loretta Lynn and Jack White. Personally, I can't stand The White Stripes. Some critics may love them, but I think their godawful bashing and screaming makes the early Replacements records sound like King Crimson. However, White came in and coaxed a very good record out of Lynn. It isn't a record she would have ever made by herself, so White certainly deserves some credit. And if younger fans are turned on to the classic work of Lynn as a result, then that is certainly a great thing. Plus, I read recently where Roseanne Cash said that her father took a great deal of pride in his records with Rick Rubin, after having been abandoned by Music Row in the 90s. So perhaps these kinds of projects are the perfect way for some of the greats of our genre to cap off a career.

One last thing about Lynn...what a shame that the folks at the CMA didn't take notice of her for **Van Lear Rose** the way they did for Johnny Cash last year. If you remember, Cash was a big winner at the CMA Awards in 2003. Lynn, however, received no nominations this year. Sadly, I guess she has to die in order for the CMA to remember her.

Will Kimbrough It's been almost 20 years since I first saw Kimbrough fronting Will & The Bushmen

CHARLES EARLE's B-Sides

on a club stage in the college town of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. At a time when every band was trying to sound like either REM or Husker Du, Kimbrough was a dynamic pop-rock performer with guitar skills that far exceeded those of most players for the alternative bands on the same circuit. There were plenty of good club shows to see back in those days, but my friends and I agreed that, because of the immensely talented Kimbrough, Will & The Bushmen were the best cover charge bet for a great night of music. Now, all of these years later, the Americana community knows what we knew back then; Will Kimbrough is a brilliant and soulful musician. He also happens to be one of the nicest guys I have ever met in the music industry. That's why artists such as Rodney Crowell, Todd Snider, Amy Rigby, Tommy Womack, Adrienne Young, Garrison Starr and even Jimmy Buffet have used Kimbrough on various projects.

Mindy Smith One entire seminar session during the AMA conference was devoted to industry pros studying the career (so far) of Mindy Smith, the Americana singer-songwriter who has generated a lot of buzz this past year. Perhaps they were all enamored of Smith due to her decision to shun major labels in Nashville and sign with indie Vanguard. Smith says she figured on being a much bigger priority there than she would at a major, and that has certainly turned out to be the case. As such, she was a major topic of conversation during the convention and an award winner at the show. This is all fine and good except for one thing...her music is so mediocre. I hear one of her songs on the local adult-alternative format station here in Nashville, and ten seconds later I can't remember what it sounded like. When your best isn't even slightly memorable, don't be making plans for any greatest hits albums.

Jack Emerson At the time of his death in 2003, Jack Emerson was a guy with a very impressive list of friends. It was not a 'name-droppers' type of list, rather, it was a group of musicians who will forever deserve the admiration of Americana fans. But if you asked the members of Jason & The Scorchers, Webb Wilder & The Beatnicks, Georgia Satellites or Steve Earle & The Dukes, I'll bet they would all talk about their admiration for Emerson. He worked with all of those groups and plenty more to help them find whatever success was out there for roots rock artists. The word 'visionary' was used about Emerson quite a few times during AMA conference week. I can say for certain that it was an appropriate thing to say.

Steve Earle Say what you will about the guy, but he certainly deserves an award that involves free speech. His outspoken ways are legendary in Nashville. I once did a cover story on his stance against the death penalty for *Nashville In Review*. We spent an hour together, and I believe that maybe the last five minutes of the conversation was devoted to the discussion of music. Earle has plenty to say about the things he believes in, and he has no fear about offering his opinions. And with a career that includes albums such as **El Corazon** and **Guitar Town**, he certainly hasn't done anything to hurt the quality of my record collection.

One sad note for the presenters and performers at the Americana Awards & Honors show...the sound sucked. In a town with plenty of good sound companies and talented mixers, the people of the AMA show had to put up with more buzz and feedback than you'd hear from the PA at a small town livestock competition. The show was filmed by the folks at the Great American Country cable network, with the intention that it would be shown in the near future, but some tech folks present say they can't imagine getting a corrected mix that would be suitable for broadcast. What a shame.

ROCK THE VOTE

The people in the Nashville music industry are certainly not immune to putting their 2¢ worth

in on what has become one of the most divisive elections in American history. For the last year, a strong union of folks from the industry known as the Music Row Democrats has been holding meetings and small benefit shows around town in support of ousting President Bush. Not to be outdone, the local Republicans joined the musical fray last month. On successive nights at a local club called The Trap (winner for ACM Club of the Year), the elephants and donkeys held large scale fund-raising shows. If the quality of the artists on the bill is any indication of who is going to win, Bush should be nervous. The republicans managed to get Lee Ann Womack and a bunch of people you have never heard of to come out, wave a lot of flags and talk about God and country. They called their show Bush Push 2004, which sounds like something that should be held at a strip joint or swingers club, if you ask me. The democrats countered the next night with a show that included Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris, Rodney Crowell, Raul Malo, Allison Moorer, Nanci Griffith, Matraca Berg and Jeff Hanna. If I were an undecided voter, that list might get me off the fence.

E NASHVILLE SKYLINE

Fans of top notch singer-songwriters will have probably heard the music of Nashville's Todd Snider. He had a novelty hit in the 90s with *Talkin' Seattle Grunge Blues*, but has since done what most singer-songwriters do...go indie label. He has sold enough records to make a living and keep a following. He has toured with a band and as a solo artist. He almost got a cut on the pathetic Garth Brooks/Chris Gaines project, which wouldn't have hurt his pocketbook. Otherwise, he has hung around his East Nashville home with his wife and dog while he battles some serious personal demons. A cycle of addictions and rehab visits in recent years seems to have subsided, and the end result of those difficult times is an album called **East Nashville Skyline** that has no less than John Prine and Kris Kristofferson saying that Snider has now joined the ranks of Music City's best songwriters. Pick it up if you get a chance and listen carefully to the words Snider has penned. He has woven a story of his personal woes around life in modern day Nashville. The end result is one of the most impressive things you will hear out of our city this year.

GREAT COVER SONG

I've mentioned Aussie country singer Keith Urban a few times over the years in this column, mainly because the pretty boy image cultivated by his record company doesn't tell the story of the amazing musical talent Keith possesses. On his new album, **Be Here**, Urban offers up a cover of Elton John's *Country Comfort* that is a feast for the ears. I am a huge fan of the early Elton records, and hearing a nod given to that period in his career brought a smile to my face.

AND FINALLY...

This has nothing to do with music, but it's a funny story that will tell you a lot about Nashville. I am a very enthusiastic supporter of our minor league team, the Nashville Sounds. I love the guitar-shaped scoreboard at the park and I think that a night at the game with some beers and good friends is hard to beat. But I winced this year when the team announced a promotion called 'Faith Night,' where church groups were encouraged to come out for...and I'm not making this up...Biblical Bobbleheads. That's right, come on out and get a bobblehead Noah or Moses with your ticket to the game. I'd always heard that Nashville is the buckle of the bible belt, but this was ridiculous. However, my whole season was made after I had a conversation with the music critic for the local daily paper. He said that he and his colleagues had sent in a request for another kind of keepsake on Faith Nights...a Mary Magdalene blow-up doll.

JOE NEW

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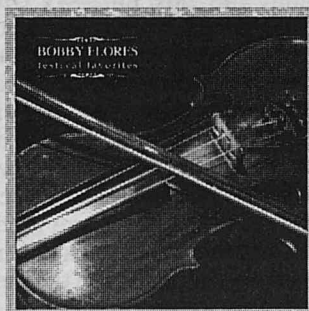
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JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Darn, if I'd said "message on the door of the **Texicalli Grille**," I'd have got away with it. In fact, "Just be Nice" is not a sticker but handpainted on the outer door, followed by "Please" on the inner door. Sorry, Danny.

◆ As we have kids on the cover, let's welcome a couple more. Oskar Adam, born September 9th to **Anna Fermin & Wally Sierzega** (which would make him Filipino-Polish), and Thomas Manuel, born September 19th to **Lisa Morales & David Spencer** of Sisters Morales.

◆ I figure **3CM** readers to be the kind of people who check the credits on CDs, even if they have to break out their reading glasses, or an electron microscope, to do it, so I imagine most of you have spotted a rash of recent changes in long time label affiliations. With several contracts expiring more or less at the same time, **Hightone** would seem to have been hit particularly hard, Dave Alvin and Big Sandy moving to Yep Roc and Buddy & Julie Miller to New West. Taken with their recent back catalog compilations (Gilmore, Ely, Flores, Dickerson, the Millers, Volkaert), these desertions have prompted a few people to ask if all's well in Oakland. Gatemouth Brown's **Timeless** (reviewed last month) and forthcoming Ramblin' Jack Elliott albums should reassure people that Hightone's still alive and kicking, though no more in tall cotton than any other roots label, including Yep Roc and New West.

◆ Why this honky tonk merry-go-round, you may ask? Well, basically because most musicians think that just as a small venue's job is to develop them so they can move on to a bigger one, an indie's job is to develop them so they can move on to a major. This conflicts somewhat with the primary goal of all indies, which is to somehow persuade enough people to buy their CDs that they won't actually lose money on the bastards. Moving to a new label gives musicians the illusion of another throw of the dice, hopefully with a less realistic promotion budget, but mostly it doesn't make a blind bit of difference.

◆ Sometimes the fresh dynamic of a new teaming can give an act a publicity, if not sales, bump, but one rather odd thing about the current round of label jumping is the number of resulting albums, most notably Dave Alvin's **Ashgrove** and The Old 97s' **Drag It Up**, you'd think were contract obligations except they came out on the new label, not the old. For those of you perhaps unfamiliar with the term, which sends an icy chill of dread up the spines of music writers everywhere, a contract obligation album is what you give the label to finish out a contract when you're planning to move or know you're going to be dropped. The trick is that while you want to use as little decent material as possible, the album has to be releasable or, normally, it doesn't count and you have to try again. In short, a recipe for mediocrity, though some are so dreadful you can only assume the label put them out just to get it over with. A little puss gets splattered but at least the boil has been lanced.

◆ Many of us may think of Lubbock as the mystical mother of some of the greatest musical talent to enrich our lives, but when you get down to it, the organizers of the **Lubbock Walk of Fame** have their work cut out for them, even though their brief, "to honor those individuals in the field of art, music or entertainment who have a strong affiliation to Lubbock and the West Texas area and who have gained national recognition in their field," seems pretty broad. 25 years after the Walk's inception in 1979, with, of course, Buddy Holly getting the first plaque, Civic Lubbock Inc was reduced, last month, to inducting Richie McDonald of Lonestar, I hope under the heading of "entertainment" rather than "music." It's actually quite difficult to find a complete list of inductees as most sources prune out the people whose "national recognition" is a bit iffy, like actors in daytime soaps, or on whom Google draws a complete blank, but a 'music-related' list, like the one at the Texas Music Office site, sheds some

interesting light on Lubbock's municipal mentality. Tanya Tucker got her nod two years before Bob Wills, who, adding insult to injury, had to share 1990 with The Gatlin Brothers. Joe Ely made it in 1989 alongside Roy Orbison, but Terry Allen had to wait until 1997, Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Butch Hancock until 1998 and Delbert McClinton until 2001, all trailing Gary P Nunn (1995). I don't hold being born in Oklahoma against Nunn, after all, Allen was born in Kansas, but his West Texas credentials, playing in a rock band called The Fabulous Sparkles while at Texas Tech and South Plains College before he transferred to UT in 1968, seem a bit flimsy.

◆ Back in 1933, someone at Chicago's WLS decided that Muleshoe, TX, sounded better than Mount Carmel, IL, as a birthplace for Dolly & Millie Good, **The Girls Of The Golden West** and this masterpiece of the publicist's art persists more than 70 years later, resurfacing in the October issue of *Texas Highways*. In fairness to **John T Davis**, who cites it in 'Hats Off To The Singing Cowboys,' Muleshoe is still listed in most reference sources.

◆ While I have a little difficulty picturing some of Davis' **Singing Cowboys** on horseback, especially Butch Hancock and James McMurtry, **George Strait** has the opposite problem. I was working on an overview of what was touted in the late 80s as 'New Country,' and MCA sent us at publicity shot of Strait sitting on a horse. *Time Out's* art director, quoting (I think) Gary Cooper, tossed it saying, "One horse's ass in a picture is enough."

◆ Keeping the mike out of a musician's face in a live shot must be a lot harder than you'd think and, as I remarked in a sidebar to the Henry Horenstein cover story last year, some amateur photographers are more adept at avoiding this faux pas than many professionals. There are far fewer people documenting San Antonio's music scene than Austin's—perhaps because there's far less music scene to document—but among them is **Tim Lapping**, carpenter by day, lensman by night. Though he's only been serious about it for a couple of years, he's already built up a sizeable portfolio of local, regional and national acts, from Judy Collins to Johnny Nicholas, and has sent out more than 2000 hand made postcards to musicians he's snapped. **Los Músicos**, a selection of 50 of his photographs, taken in various San Antonio venues, will be displayed at Jump Start Performance Co in the Blue Star Arts Complex, San Antonio, from 7pm, October 1st (First Friday), closing with a Musicians Appreciation Jam on October 26th.

† AMERICANA

From the get-go, Americana had problems as a putative music genre. One could see the possibilities, a home for American roots music that didn't fit comfortably into any existing pigeonhole, not really country or folk or bluegrass or blues or anything else, and for a while, the term was moderately useful. Vague as hell, but you could throw it out and figure people would get something out of it, even if it wasn't really quite what you meant.

Then along came the **Americana Music Association** with a precise definition: "Americana is any form of music that might advance the careers of AMA officers." The nominees for New/Emerging Act at this year's AMA convention were Adrienne Young, The Greencards, Old Crow Medicine Show and **Mindy Smith** and you can almost hear the calculation involved in making Mindy fucking useless Smith the winner. If it had been about music, The Greencards would have been a shoo-in, but it wasn't, this was *Americana Idol*, this was 'please God, let Mindy Smith be the Americana Snorah Jones.'

Smith's elevation signals the end of Americana as a descriptive term, however nebulous. Now it's an insult, and henceforth will only be used in that sense in **3CM**. How come everything turns to shit in Nashville?

† DONALD J LESLIE

Back when I was a roadie for, well, never mind who, a couple of us were sent to pick up a Hammond B3 from the home of a musician who shall also remain nameless and ever since I've associated B3s with the cloud of marijuana smoke that came pouring out of the Leslie speaker when we turned it on. Disappointed with the sound of the B3, Donald Leslie, who serviced radios for an LA department store, invented his electro-mechanical speaker, which projected sound onto rotating bass and treble horns (whoompf, whoompf), in 1940 and offered it to Laurens Hammond who not only turned him down but conducted a long and ugly vendetta against Leslie's Electra Music when it began offering the speakers as an add-on. Hammond dealerships, defying company orders, acted as Electra's unauthorized distribution and installation network and Hammond sponsored musicians often refused to perform without Leslie speakers. Gulbranson was the only organ maker to enthusiastically embrace them but by the 60s, bowing to public demand, Leslie speakers or sockets were industry standards and even after his patents ran out many makers were still willing to pay to have Leslie's name on their instruments. In 1980, after Laurens Hammond's death, his company bought Electra Music, which is still a functioning part of Hammond Suzuki USA. So far, nobody has been able to convincingly simulate the authentic sound of Leslie speakers with electronics, so roadies are still lugging the wonderful brutes from gig to gig. Donald James Leslie died, age 93, on September 2nd.

LOOSE DIAMONDS A DJ's PRIVATE STASH #8 LYNNE GREENAMYRE

Host of *Rockabilly Mood Swing*, heard in & around the Kansas City metro area on KKFI, Lynne and cohosts Hepkat and Toodles try to keep things up-tempo. When not on the air, Lynne is gainfully employed with Susquehanna Radio as an Executive Assistant and as Affiliate Relations Coordinator of the Chiefs Radio Network. In her 'free' time she tramps it up as Lurlene The Trailer Court Queen (www.lurlene.com), and though it's been 5 years and about damn time for a second CD, people are still buying White Trash Jam-Bo-Ree. **Mezcal Brothers: Next Town** (self, 2004) While Lincoln, NE is a stretch, they've played the KC area often enough to be considered home boys. Their latest captures all the energy they bring to live performance.

Lee Rocker: Bulletproof (33rd Street, 2003) Mention Rockabilly and most folks say 'Oh, like the Stray Cats?' You mention Lee Rocker and most folks say, 'Didn't he used to be with the Stray Cats?' Let's live in the now, folks. Here's proof that Lee is as good a front man as Brian Setzer, maybe better, and he doesn't need a horn section to round out the sound. **Chris Scruggs: Honky Tonkin' Lifestyle** (Little Chickadee, 2003) Best known as the new co-lead of BR549, Chris lives up to his heritage with this 10-song CD. I don't know whether much (or any) effort was made to promote it, I found it on the merch table at a BR549 show.

Wild Wax Combo: Hot Rod Doll (Enviken, 2003) I have to admit I'm biased about a group that will write a song about me. I'm assuming its *Sweet Lurlene* (though it could very well be *Alcoholic Baby*). Rockabilly from Denmark, Wild Wax Combo is one of many European groups who demonstrate they've studied up on the American 50s culture as well as any resident of the U. S. of A.

Jack Baymoore & The Bandits: Diggin' Out (Tail, 2003) As above, but change Denmark to Sweden. Some of the finest musicians ever gathered in one place, and they're all still playing & touring! Rockabilly lives in the 21st century! My list could go on—pretty much any CD too rockabilly for Americana shows.

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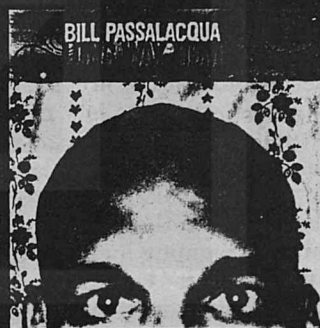
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BORDERLINE RADIO

Microsoft have struck back, stooping to new depths to prove that the capital of the true Evil Empire is Seattle, not San Antonio. What's more, they've done it on Clear Channel's turf and in a way that Clear Channel can't even emulate, let alone outdo.

When Microsoft launched MSN Music, its too little, too late rival to Apple's iTunes, in September, one feature that didn't get much promotion was MSN Radio, possibly because, even by Microsoft's predatory standards, it's such a flagrant and massive rip-off. MSN Radio offers various categories of Internet stations, ten Classical, six Country, nine Jazz, and so on, but by far the largest is 'Local Stations,' 978 of them. However, what you'd hear isn't, say, San Antonio's KCYY or Austin's KVET but a clone labeled 'Like 100.3 FM' or 'Like 98.1 FM.' What they do is take those 978 stations' playlists, strip out the DJs, news, traffic and weather reports and commercials and, without ever asking for permission, rebroadcast them, even listing the originating stations' call signs, slogans and primary artists alongside the Play button.

"It results in a more pleasant experience because you don't have the ads or the DJs," says Rob Bennett, senior director for MSN Entertainment, which appears to be the Even Darker Side of the Dark Side. Who else but a Microsoft stooge would claim, unblushingly, that, however little many stations may have, taking all the personality out of the medium is a good thing?

You may think I don't really have a dog in this fight but who knows? When a company is as bent on world domination as Microsoft, the idea of a faux *Third Coast Music Network*, divested of my, Jim, Joe and Dave's wit, wisdom, insight and knowledge, slips from ludicrous to merely farfetched. Be that as it may, even if I have absolutely no use for most commercial radio, even less for radio conglomerates, or feel much brotherhood with their DJs, MSN Radio's soulless and mechanical knock-offs are utterly repellent.

Nobody turns on the radio to listen to the ads or underwriting, but, whatever Microsoft zombies may think, many DJs, even Johnny Conqueso, have a following. Apart from anything else, we play requests, ask Rob Bennett for *Hot Rod Lincoln* and see where it gets you. In any case, on local radio you can't have the music without the ads, which pay the staff who create the playlists, or, at a noncommercial, underwriting, which keeps the signal going for volunteers who create playlists. Audiences tune in because they like what the station is playing. Take away the financial foundation and the whole structure collapses.

By offering ersatz playlists without having borne any of the costs or done any part of the work involved, MSN Radio threatens, assuming it can fend off 978 'cease & desist' letters, more normally seen in Microsoft's Out rather than In trays, to put many radio stations, dependent on local advertising, out of business by sapping their Arbitron ratings, as Tom Taylor, editor of *Inside Radio*, says, "Piggybacking on their hard-earned brand awareness and potentially cannibalizing their success." Of course, then they won't be generating playlists for MSN Radio to steal, but that may very well be the desired outcome. If, as some analysts believe, wireless broadband radio is the next media battleground, it's quite conceivable the Microsoft is, once more, bent on destroying any competition. Then again, it's also possible that MSN Music will fail to pan out and be quietly buried in the crowded graveyard of failed Microsoft projects.

Meanwhile, if you have a favorite DJ or DJs, next time they're on the air, call the station and tell him, her or them, "I don't care what that slimy reptile Rob Bennett says, I listen to you all the time and I really dig what you're doing." Piss on Microsoft, let's make October DJ Appreciation Month. **JC**

AMBER DIGBY

MUSIC FROM THE HONKY TONKS

THE QUEBE SISTERS • TEXAS FIDDLERS

(self ****.5/self ****)

Before we get to the main message, that the kids, well some kids, well a few kids, well these four kids at least, are OK, I have to acknowledge two debts. One is to Justin Treviño, who put Digby's CD in my hands with the electrifying words, "The best female country singer I've ever worked with." The other is to Sean Mencher, who called me from a festival in Bangor, ME, to tell me he'd just heard three Texas sisters making the most fantastic music he'd heard in ages, and here's the phone number and the email address, get on their case. This is the kind of publicity money can't buy.

I guess Digby, at 23, isn't really a kid anymore, but she's much younger than most Real Country singers, mainly because she never had to work her way back to her roots. Nature and nurture, country music was in her blood, her mother's milk and her parents' record collection. Her father, Dennis, played bass in Loretta Lynn's band for 20 years, her mother, Dee Gee, sang harmony with Connie Smith at the Grand Ole Opry for seven, her uncle is roadhouse country singer Darrell McCall and her stepfather steel guitarist Dicky Overby. Born in Nashville, but raised in Tulsa, OK, where she started singing in VFWs and the like as a high school freshman, she stayed on in Jasper, MO, north of Joplin, when Dicky & Dee Gee moved back to Texas but plans to follow them in the near future. In the meantime, when she came to make an album, it was with Overby and his Texas compadres, Treviño, who produced and played bass and rhythm guitar, his lead guitarist Levi Mullen and drummer John Reynolds, with Bobby Flores on fiddle and Debra Hurd on piano.

Which is a pretty great outfit to have behind you, but from the moment she launches into Connie Smith's (*Heart*) *I'm Ashamed Of You*, Digby is the jewel in this 24 karat setting. Her classic style, phrasing, delivery and the confident and confiding way she lives the songs, well, think Connie Smith recording with the 1965 Cherokee Cowboys instead of being lumbered with the Nashville Sound, or a female Wynn Stewart, and you'll have some idea what a gorgeous treat this album is. Sticking close to her extended musical family, Digby also covers Smith's *The Threshold*, Loretta Lynn's *Here I Am Again*, *Somebody Somewhere* and *Just Get Up And Close The Door* and Overby's *It's So Easy To Forgive Him* (recorded by Treviño as *It's So Easy To Forgive Her*) and his previously unrecorded *Three Years*, one of the album's many highlights. Other tracks are Tanya Tucker's *Cowboy Lovin' Night*, Wynn Stewart's *If You See My Baby*, Red Simpson's *Close Up The Honky Tonks*, Harlan Howard's *The One You Slip Around With*, Roger Miller's *Back Into My Arms Again*, Luke McDaniel's *You're Still On My Mind* and Ralph Mooney's *Foolin'*. When she gets to Texas, Digby's going to torch her way through the honky tonks, clubs and dancehalls. Be there.

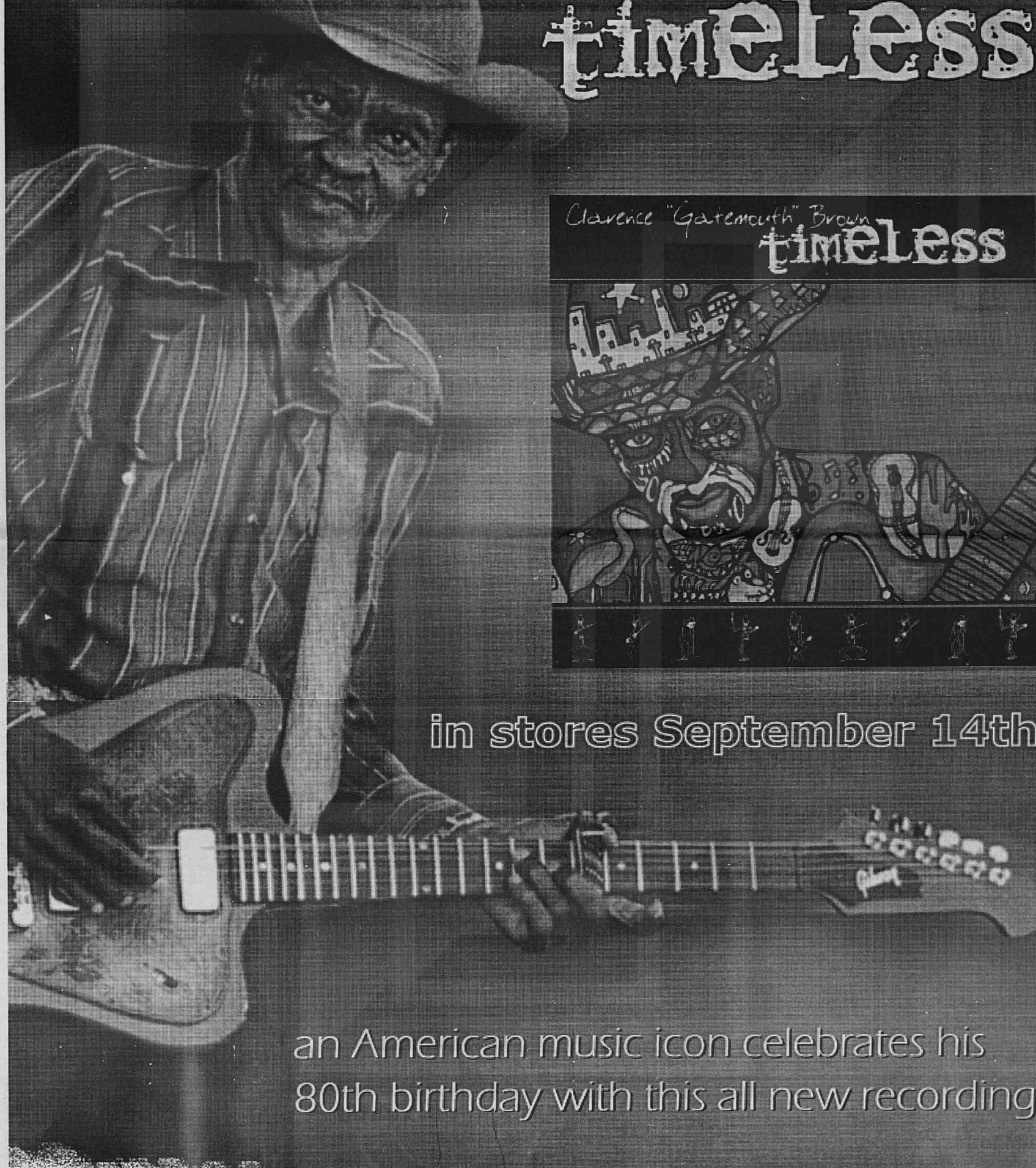
Grace (18), Sophia (17) and Hulda (14) Quebe (rhymes with 'maybe') really are kids, "fairly decent kids" according to their teacher, but how many 14 year olds do you know who might nonchalantly ask, as Hulda did Sean Mencher, "Do you like Spade Cooley?" He's still in shock. Six years ago, the sisters, whose idols are Bob Wills, Cooley, The Mills Brothers, Stephane Grappelli and Django Reinhardt, went to a fiddle contest in Denton and fell in love with 40s music. They also met fiddle champions Sherry & Joey McKenzie, with whom they've studied ever since, the family even moving from Krum to Burleson to be closer to them. In 2002, all Texas State Champions, they entered the national Oldtime Fiddler's Contest in Idaho, Hulda winning the 9-13 division, Grace and Sophia taking first and second prizes in the 14-18 division. Last summer, The Quebe Sisters released the all instrumental *Texas Fiddlers*, on which each of them has two solo tracks, with another eight devoted to three part fiddle playing. Sophia gets to pay homage to the man who invented twin fiddles, Milton Brown (*Black And White Rag*), Grace to his fiddle players, Cecil Brower and Cliff Bruner, both of whom have been credited with *Crafton Blues*, and Hulda to Bob Wills (*Don't Let The Deal Go Down*). There are two other Wills numbers, *San Antonio Rose* and *Home In San Antone* (really got to get these girls down here), traditional fiddle tunes, including Michael Coleman's *Bonnie Kate's Reel*, and country songs like Mel Tillis' *One More Time*.

Joey McKenzie, who produced, arranged all the fiddle parts and played guitars, banjo and mandolin, focussed on showcasing the girls' precocious technique and fabulous tonality. In other words, this album's goal is to impress the crap out of other fiddle players and hardcore fiddle aficionados and while it's not without flashes of fire and passion, it's hard to tell from it whether any or all of the Quebe sisters will develop the individual style and soul of a Johnny Gimble, Gene Elders, Bobby Flores (a big fan of the Quebes) or Elana Fremerman. Still, time is very much on their side and, with this one out of the way and a lot of playing experience behind them, the next album should provide some answers. Meanwhile, if you love the sound of twin fiddles, how can you resist triple fiddles?

One possible knock against both Digby and the Quebes is the extreme shortage of original material, but they're working in fields where there's an incredible wealth of wonderful material that hasn't been recorded in decades. Even if they were to never write a song (though Digby's working on it) or a tune in their lives, they're going to be keeping some great music alive for decades to come. Unless you're far more optimistic about the future of roots music than I am, that's an extraordinarily comforting thought. **JC**

Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown

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1st --- Marc Savoy • 1941 Eunice, LA
 2nd --- Leon Rausch • 1927 Springfield, MO
 ----- Jo-El Sonnier • 1946 Rayne, LA
 ----- Wayne Touns • 1958 Lafayette, LA
 ----- Gene Autry † 1998
 3rd --- Albert Collins • 1932 Leona, TX
 ----- Eddie Cochran • 1938 Albert Lea, MN
 ----- Chris Gaffney • 1950 Vienna, Austria
 ----- Woody Guthrie † 1967
 ----- Victoria Spivey † 1976
 ----- Dennis McGee † 1989
 4th --- Leroy Van Dyke • 1929 Spring Fork, MS
 ----- Larry Collins • 1944 Tulsa, OK
 ----- Janis Joplin † 1970
 5th --- Billy Lee Riley • 1933 Pocahontas, AR
 ----- Johnny Duncan • 1938 Dublin, TX
 ----- Belton Richard • 1939 Rayne, LA
 6th --- Sammy Price • 1908 Honey Grove, TX
 7th --- Uncle Dave Macon • 1870 Smart Station, TN
 ----- Dale Watson • 1962 Birmingham, AL
 ----- Johnny Kidd † 1966
 8th --- Pete Drake • 1933 Augusta, GA
 9th --- Goebel Reeves • 1899 Sherman, TX
 ----- Ponty Bone • 1939 Dallas, TX
 ----- Sister Rosetta Tharpe † 1973
 10th --- Ivory Joe Hunter • 1914 Kirbyville, TX
 ----- John Prine • 1946 Maywood, IL
 ----- Tanya Tucker • 1958 Seminole, TX
 11th --- Gene Watson • 1943 Palestine, TX
 ----- Jon Langford • 1957 Carleon, Wales
 ----- Tex Williams † 1985
 12th --- Gene Vincent † 1971
 13th --- Lacy J Dalton • 1948 Bloomsburg, PA
 ----- Gabby Pahinui † 1980
 14th --- Bill Justis • 1927 Birmingham, AL
 15th --- Victoria Spivey • 1906 Houston, TX
 ----- Mickey Baker • 1925 Louisville, KY
 ----- Sid King • 1936 Denton, TX
 ----- Al Stricklin † 1986
 16th --- Stoney Cooper • 1918 Harmon, WV
 ----- Canray Fontenot • 1922 L'Anse aux Vaches, LA
 18th --- Lotte Lenya • 1898 Vienna, Austria
 ----- Chuck Berry • 1926 San Jose, CA
 ----- Julie London † 2000
 19th --- Piano Red • 1911 Hampton, GA
 ----- Marie Adams • 1925 Linden, TX
 ----- Jeannie C Riley • 1945 Anson, TX
 20th --- Stuart Hamblen • 1908 Kellyville, TX
 ----- Wanda Jackson • 1937 Maud, OK
 ----- Bugs Henderson • 1943 Palm Springs, CA
 ----- Amy Farris • 1968 Austin, TX
 ----- Merle Travis † 1983
 ----- Danny Gatton † 1994
 21st --- Roy Nichols • 1932 Chandler, AZ
 ----- Andy Starr • 1932 Mill Creek, AR
 ----- Mel Street • 1933 Grundy, WV

----- Steve Cropper • 1941 Willow Springs, MO
 ----- Monette Moore † 1962
 ----- Bill Black † 1965
 ----- Mel Street † 1978
 22nd --- Peck Kelley • 1898 Houston, TX
 ----- Bobby Fuller • 1942 Baytown, TX
 ----- Dorothy Shay † 1978
 23rd --- Speckled Red • 1892 Monroe, LA
 ----- Boozoo Chavis • 1930 Lake Charles, LA
 ----- Johnny Carroll • 1937 Cleburne, TX
 ----- Ellie Greenwich • 1940 Brooklyn, NY
 ----- Maybelle Carter † 1978
 24th --- Big Bopper • 1930 Sabine Pass, TX
 ----- Glen Glenn • 1934 Joplin, MO
 25th --- Walter Hyatt • 1948 Spartanburg, SC
 ----- Roger Miller † 1992
 26th --- Mahalia Jackson • 1911 New Orleans, LA
 ----- Beto Villa • 1915 Falfurrias, TX
 ----- Wes McGhee • 1948 Lutterworth, UK
 27th --- Floyd Cramer • 1933 Samti, LA
 28th --- Bill Bollick • 1917 Hickory, NC
 ----- Blackie Forestier • 1928 Cankton, LA
 ----- Iry Lejeune • 1928 Church Point, LA
 29th --- Albert Brumley • 1905 Spiro, OK
 ----- Narciso Martinez • 1911 Tamaulipas, Mexico
 ----- Lee Clayton • 1942 Russellville, AL
 ----- Duane Allman † 1971
 30th --- Patsy Montana • 1914 Hot Springs, AR
 31st --- Dale Evans • 1912 Uvalde, TX
 ----- Ray Smith • 1934 Melbar, KY
 ----- Calvin Russell • 1948 Austin, TX

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30th, The Damnations

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6th, Kimmie Rhodes, Freebo,
 Jim Photoglo

7th, Scott Biram + Kaki King

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3rd & 10th, The Gospelairees

17th, The Durdens

31st, Bells Of Joy

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