

3rd COAST MUSIC

**RAVENNA &
THE MAGNETICS**

#186/275 JULY 2012

REVIEWS

(or not)

Terry Allen

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Jason Eady

•

**The Fabulous
Thunderbirds**

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**Fort Worth's
Rock & Roll Roots**

•

Joe Goldmark

•

Matt Harlan

•

Rachel Harrington

•

**Hot Texas
Swing Band**

•

Cornell Hurd Band

•

Zoe Muth

•

Penny Ney

•

Troubadour Blues



JOHN THE REVEALATOR

FAR #155

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ALL OF THE TIME'**



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#1 JP HARRIS & THE TOUGH CHOICES: I'LL KEEP CALLING

(Cow Island) *CS/*MM/*SH/*TR

- 2 Great Recession Orchestra: Double Shot (NewTex) *MF/*MI/*TB
- 3 Kelly Hogan: I Like To Keep Myself In Pain (Anti-) *AN/*DF/*DWT/*RC
- 4 VA: Even More Songs From Route 66 (Lazy SOB) *AG/*CP/*MDT
- 5 VA: Kin: Songs By Mary Karr & Rodney Crowell (Vanguard) *AH/*LB/*MW/*N&T
- 6 Chris Smither: Hundred Dollar Valentine (Signature Sounds) *CJ/*RL/*RV
- 7 Tif Ginn (self) *BB/*BS/*FS
- 8 John Fullbright: From The Ground Up (Blue Dirt) *KW/*OO/*TL
- 9 Lil' Mo & The Monicats: Whole Lotta Lovin (Passin Fancy) *GS/*RT
- 10 The Two Man Gentlemen Band: Two At A Time (Bean-Tone) *MN/*SC
- 11 Rachel Harrington: Making' Our Home A Honky Tonk (Skinny Dennis)
- 12= Cory Branan: Mutt (Bloodshot) *DG/*SG
JD McPherson: Signs & Signifiers (Rounder) *JE
- 13 The Honey Dewdrops: Silver Lining (self) *AA
- 14= Penny Jo Pullus: Through The Glass (MaHatMa) *NA
Karl Shiflett & Big Country Show: Take Me Back (Pinecastle) *LMG/*TF
- 15 Paul Thorn: What The Hell Is Going On (Perpetual Obscurity) *RF
- 16 Willie Nelson: Heroes (Sony/Legacy) *TPR
- 17= JWW & The Prospectors: It's High Past Time (self) *MB
Grant Peeples: Prior Convictions (Gatorbone)
- 18 Moot Davis: Man About Town (Highway Kind) *BR
- 19= Tom Armstrong: Wine Stained Heart (Carswell)
Joe Goldmark: The Wham Of That Steel Man! (Lo-Ball)
Turnpike Troubadours: Goodbye Normal Street (Bossier City) *TG
- 20 Cornell Hurd Band: Drop In On My Dream (Behemoth)
- 21= Tony Denikos: Under The Church (self) *MP
Old Crow Medicine Show: Carry Me Back (ATO) *KC
- 22= Jason Eady: AM Country Radio (Underground Radio) *PT
Jim Hurst: Intrepid (self) *EB
Langhorne Slim & The Law: The Way We Move (Ramseur) *GM
Ed Romanoff (self) *RE
Marty Stuart: Nashville, Vol.1: Tear The Woodpile Down (Sugar Hill)
- 23= Del Barber: Headwaters (Six Shooter) *SR
The Blasters: Fun On Saturday Night (Rip Cat) *JM
Doc Marshals: Look Out Compadre (self) *BP
Hot Texas Swing Band (self) *ATC

FORT WORTH'S ROCK AND ROLL ROOTS

(Arcadia, paperback ***)

Should you actually want hard information on 60s Fort Worth rock & roll, Mike Buck recommends the liner notes to the three CDs of **Fort Worth Teen Scene!** (Norton, 2004), the contents of which drew heavily on his collection of local 45s that were originally issued in runs of 50 to 100 copies, ie ultra-rare even then (Kenny & The Kasuals' 1966 LP **Impact** goes for thousands of dollars). There is, incidentally, a picture of Buck on p78, shot, he says, when he was 40, and if you don't believe this, you can go to Antone's Record Shop and take it up with him. If you don't want hard information but love repetition, redundancy and inaccuracy, putative author Mark A Nobles is your man. A very common error, even in *The New York Times*, is 'Vaughn' for (Jimmy or Stevie Ray) Vaughan, but Nobles manages to get Jimmy's name wrong twice on the same page as a reproduction of a business card for his first band, The Pendulums, on which, oddly enough, it's spelled 'Vaughan' (I reserve egregious for the commemorative 'Stevie Ray Vaughn' T-shirt sold after his death by a long-defunct Austin magazine). There are many irritants in Nobles' text, but primo is "Rock and roll had let its hair down and broken its bonds with rockabilly roots and white-bread, 1950s sensibilities. Rock would defiantly get wilder and more rebellious." Do what? Inasmuch as this means anything at all, it's completely half-witted. Visually, this book, part of an 'Images Of America' series, is, well, actually a bit creepy, loaded with 50-year old photographs of kid bands whose members are now balding life insurance salesmen, car dealers or whatever the hell else people do for a living in Fort Worth, but also fascinating. Nobles, who has what I regard as an unhealthy obsession with Peter Noone of the ghastly Herman's Hermits, starts with The Beatles' appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in February 1964, which he claims saved rock & roll and inspired kids across America to start bands and grow their hair. I have a minor philosophical disagreement here, in my opinion The Beatles killed rock & roll, but this view raises the age-old question—if we in Britain, including The Beatles who covered all of them, were listening to Buddy Holly, The Isley Brothers, Arthur Alexander, Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins, Barrett Strong and The Shirelles, who the hell were American kids listening to? Pat Boone and all those goddamn Bobbys? No wonder they were so fucked up. Anyway, the day after the *Ed Sullivan Show*, apparently every other teenager in Fort Worth was suddenly in a band, so many that schools relaxed their long hair policy (though when I say "long," we're talking Texas in the 60s, when an inch could get you beaten up) for musicians, until the other kids demanded parity and the musos had to go back to wearing wigs. It does seem to have been a true phenomenon, with multiple Battles of the Bands at competing venues, all drawing large crowds on the same night. As a visual document, this book is rather amazing, but there's a slight shortage of beef. The only bands from this scene of whom you might have heard were Kenny & The Kasuals, who turned down the opening slot for The Beatles at Shea Stadium and have been avoiding interviews ever since, and The Five Americans, which, no disrespect to Cow Town, is a pretty thin showing for the launchpad of Milton Brown and Bob Wills. **JC**

TROUBADOUR BLUES

(Tom Weber Films, DVD **)

How do you feel about Peter Case? A crucial question because this film, ten years in the making, which bills itself as "the story of working musicians who ply their trade outside the media spotlight and far from the glitzy world of pop stardom," goes off message early on to concentrate on the fabulousness of Peter Case, so much so that two friends left before the end of an Austin screening because they were Petered out. This would be less of a problem if Case was rather more articulate and perceptive, though, to be fair, he does much better than a woman called Garrison Starr, who can barely form an intelligible sentence. Weber gets off to a promising start, with various musicians talking about their primary occupation being 'driver,' Mark Erelli waxing lyrical about the joys of playing two consecutive nights in the same town, but after that the film meanders about all over the shop, at one point becoming an extended tribute to the late Dave Carter. There are many aspects of the troubadour life that the other participants, Dave Alvin, Mary Gauthier, Gurf Morlix, Chris Smither, Slaid Cleaves and Amy Speace, could have all contributed, finances, record sales, treatment by clubs and audiences, family life disrupted by touring, bookers, managers, schedules, hopes, disappointments, triumphs, disasters. Instead we get Peter Case, and more Peter Case. I have nothing against him, but on the other hand, if full funding for Planned Parenthood was contingent on Peter Case never singing again, I could live with that. If Weber had picked a different star for his film, Gauthier or Morlix for choice, this, however unfocused, would have been a very different and much more interesting documentary. **JC**



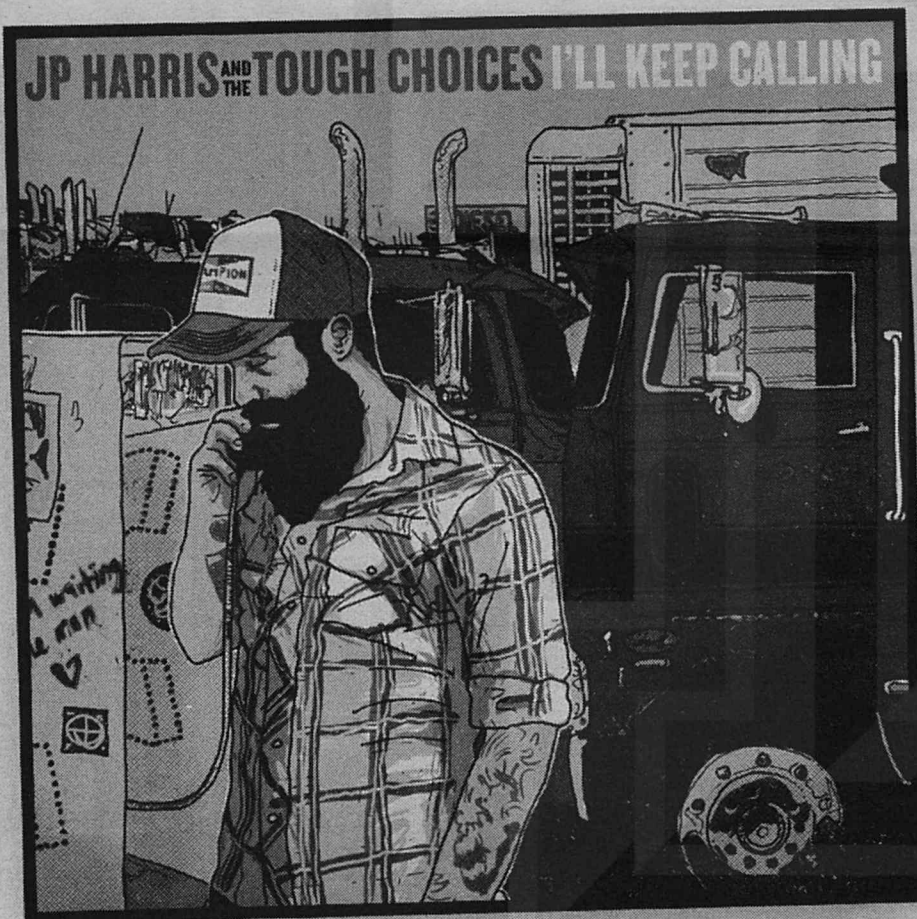
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MATT HARLAN & THE SENTIMENTALS

Bow And Be Simple

(Berklin ****)

Ending up a European tour promoting his well-received Rich Brotherton-produced **Tips & Compliments** (Berklin, 2010), Houston-based Harlan and his regular three-piece Danish backing band, plus Rachel Jones harmonizing and trading leads with Harlan, recorded eight of this essentially live album's tracks in one day, adding a ninth, also recorded in Denmark the previous year. The results can only add to his growing reputation as one of the brightest of an encouraging crop of young(er) Texas singer-songwriters. With the title track taken indirectly from an old Quaker hymn, Harlan covers a lot of social and existential ground, an abusive marriage (*The Ring*, not on her finger but around her eye, inspired by a Louisiana sunset), the rat race (*Elevator Ride*, "All day I'm chasing money like the cure for some disease"), hard times (*The Easy Road*), not being able to write a simple song ("I ended up just ramblin' the way I always do") and not having enough hours in the day (*Too Much Going On*), wrapping up with a touring musician's love song ("You're a ghost in every room that I sleep alone, smiling at the end of every long ride home"). The Danes, MC Hansen, who also wrote one of the songs, acoustic & electric guitars/lap steel, Nicolaj Wolf bass and Jacob Chano drums, are exceptionally sympathetic ("the songs we knew were whipped into shape one night in Sweden... We faked the rest because we could"), while Jones' vocals, on her recording debut, are outright gorgeous. Just one rabble-rouser might get Harlan to the next level of popularity, but right now he's appealing to admirers of subtle craftsmanship. **JC**

CORNELL HURD BAND

Drop In On My Dreams

(Behemoth ****)

Sixteen albums in from **Honky Tonk Mayhem** (Behemoth 1991), you may have deduced that I think well of The Cornell Hurd Band, but, of course, between departures, the sad deaths of guitarist Paul Skelton and the great Danny Young, who joined the band in 1992, and divorce, there have been a lot of changes over the last 21 years. In fact Hurd himself and fiddler Howard Kalish are the only members who've lasted the distance. What hasn't changed though is the mission, "Hardcore Texas Honky Tonk... We've got stories about temptation, lust and destructive alcoholism. Stories about leaving, stories about losing and some about wishing things had turned out differently. Stories about happiness and trouble and regret and redemption" (incidentally, for the younger among you, the liner notes' mention of Smithy and Paula refers to **Random Harvest**, James Hilton's 1941 novel and/or the 1942 Ronald Colman/Greer Garson movie). Anyway, in the current lineup, which includes T Jarrod Bonta piano, Scott Walls steel, Will Indian guitar and Basil McJagger organ/piano, much of the heavy lifting is done by Allen Crider guitars, vocals, sax and production. He also wrote an instrumental, as did Kalish, and gets co-credit on three songs, Hurd, as usual, being the main writer. Alternating pathos and country noir humor with a sprinkling of instrumentals, Hurd is a master of the set list and, of course, you don't last 20 years at The Broken Spoke if people aren't dancing. **JC**

JOE GOLDMARK

The Wham Of That Steel Man!

(Lo-Ball double CD ***)

Dedicated, as you might guess, to Lonnie Mack, with artwork reprising that of Mack's 1964 **The Wham Of That Memphis Man!**, San Francisco pedal steel guitarist Goldmark's ninth album (three vinyl, six on CD) was originally going, Mack style, to mix vocals and instrumentals. However, he decided to group the 11 tracks featuring show band singer Keta Bill on one CD and the 13 instrumentals on the other. Either way, Goldmark certainly thinks outside the steel guitar case. Bill's set is covers of CCR, Neil Young, Bobby Fuller, Brian Wilson, Teenage Fanclub, George Harrison, Dylan, Jeff Buckley, Vera Lynn, Dr Dog and Stevie Winwood, and while Joe's is mostly original, it also includes Lennon/McCartney's *Sexy Sadie*, Dimitri Tiomkin's *Guns Of Navarone*, Burt Bacharach's *Any Day Now* and a 1971 reggae hit, *Double Barrel* (one of the originals is *The Ska's The Limit*). While Bill has some admiring press, I got tired real fast of what apparently passes for 'soul' in San Francisco, but a friend who's a steel aficionado, with far more and hard-won experience in such matters, gave the second CD thumbs up for artistry, technique and "not sounding like crap the way most steel guitar instrumental albums do." If you're into steel, the album sells for the price of a regular CD, so you're not paying extra to get the good stuff, and hell, you might like Bill better than I do. **JC**

John Fullbright

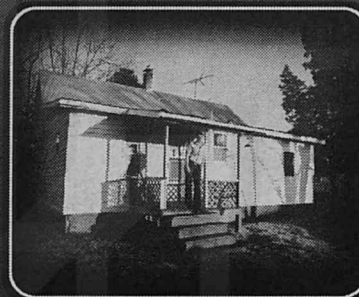
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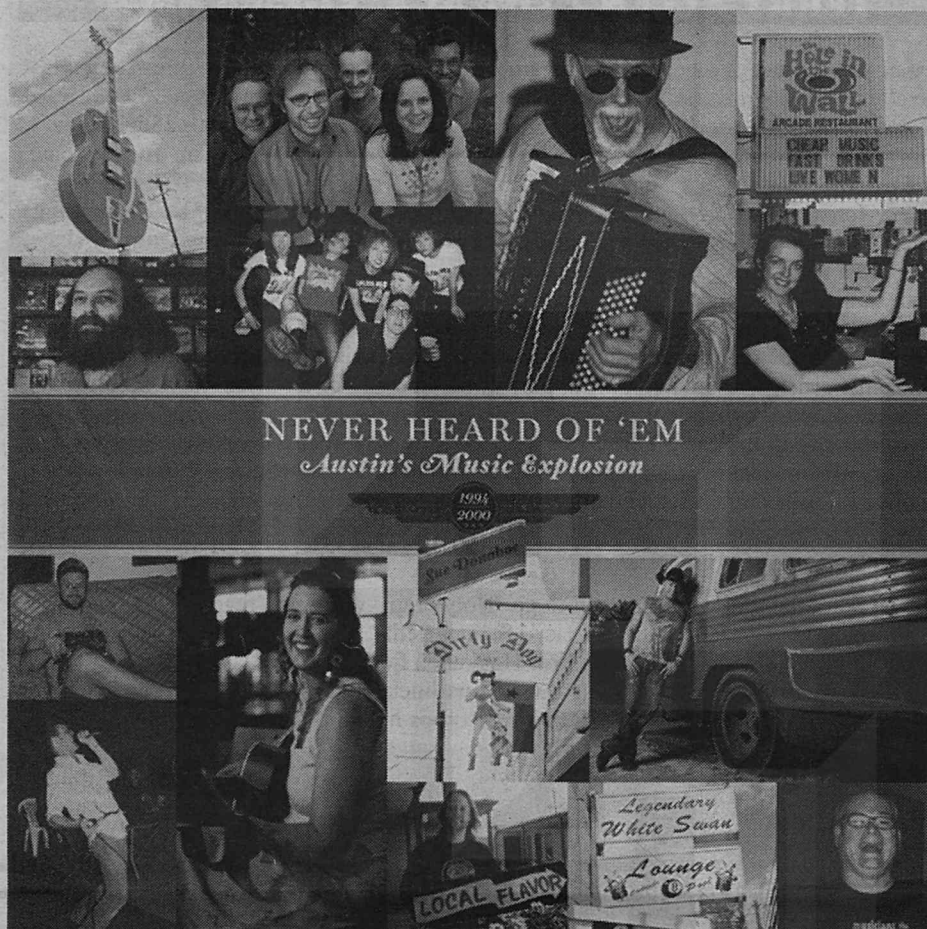
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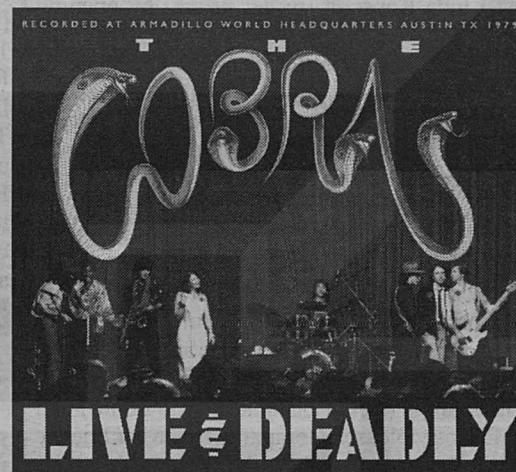
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ZOE MUTH & THE LOST HIGH ROLLERS • Old Gold PENNY NEY • The Hardest Truth

(Signature Sounds ****/One Blessed Penny ****.5)

Normally, I skip EPs (or whatever the right word is for short CDs), but, of course, I'll take more Zoe Muth anyway I can get it. Many, myself included, have raved about Muth's songwriting, but this, with only one original, is a showcase for her remarkable, soulful vocals as she pays tribute to artists who have influenced her, and it's a rather courageous mixed bag. She goes up against Linda Ronstadt (in her prime) by opening with Anna McGarrigle's *Heart Like A Wheel*, followed by Charlie Feathers' *I've Been Deceived*, John Prine's *Maureen Maureen*, Dock Boggs' *Country Blues* and Howard Tate's *Get It While You Can* (she may have got it from Janis Joplin, but then her version was very close to Tate's original). Helped by instrumentation, particularly Ethan Lawton's mandolin, Muth's "tweaking," as she puts it, of phrasing and chord progressions doesn't try to reinvent these songs but does imbue them with her own personality, and, of course, anything by her is always welcome.

When Johnson City, TX, singer-songwriter Penny Ney opens her five originals with the fabulous accordion of Carlos Alvarez, she's got me hooked. Ney goes back to early Armadillo World HQ days, opening for people like Delbert McClinton and singing background vocals on Jerry Jeff Walker and Lost Gonzo Band albums, but moved out to the boonies to raise a family and manage a ranch. Divorce and an horrific car accident turned her attention back to making music and, with the help of Alvarez, Ron & Ray Flynt, Walt & Tina Mitchell Wilkins, Kim Deshamps (stellar pedal steel and dobro) and others, she's knocked out a fine, if short, Hill Country pleaser. Compared to the confidence with which she belts out the upbeat honky tonk closer, *Saturday Night*, she sounds a little tentative on the other, slower, songs, but then she is coming off a very long break. **JC**

JASON EADY • AM Country Heaven

(Underground Sound *****)

His first three Americana-ish albums didn't do a lot for me, but when his fourth got some action in the FAR chart, I figured I'd better check it out, and I'm sure glad I did. Eady's website says it started out as side project with (producer) Kevin Welch, "The plan was to lay down some old school authentic country music out of sheer self-indulgence and as a labor of love," with Eady quoted as saying, "There has always been pop music, but country music was always the avenue out of adolescence and into the grown up world with grown up issues like responsibilities and family. Someone's got to keep it alive, to preserve that kind of sound. That was our aim with this record." His success can in part be measured by reviews and comments that hail his classic country themes as innovative, which, obviously, was not his intent, but, hell, if he's putting some benighted souls on the path of righteousness, more power to him. Not just classic themes, but a classic sound, Eady's fine baritone is out in front of a sympathetic lineup that includes Heybale (Redd Volkaert, Earl Poole Ball, Kevin Smith and Tom Lewis), Lloyd Maines and Cody Braun, with Patty Loveless guesting on a rather unsuccessful duet and Walt Wilkins, Cary Ann Hearst and Jamie Wilson (Trishas) singing harmonies. For some reason, this album keeps reminding me of Waylon Jennings' 1970 *Singer Of Sad Songs*, perhaps because it's a spiritual heir of that bedrock album. **JC**

The Best Of THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS Early Birds Special

(Benchmark ****.5)

Putting some air between myself and total Blues Nazis, I remarked a while back that I loved the early T-Birds, along with Dave & Joanne Kelly and a few others. When I say "early," I am, of course, talking about the original lineup, Jimmy Vaughan, Kim Wilson, Mike Buck and Keith Ferguson. Buck left in 1981, Ferguson in 1985, so I'd have called it a day after the eponymous debut (1979, reissued in 2001 as *Girls Go Wild*), *What's The Word* (1980), *Butt Rockin'* (1981) and *T-Bird Rhythm* (1982), but Benchmark rope in three tracks from the breakthrough *Tuff Enuff* (1987) and one from the crappy *Powerful Stuff* (1989), after which Vaughan quit. However, they also draw on *Different Tacos* (Country Town, 1996), early live recordings and outtakes from the first four albums, for five tracks, more than from any other album. Quite why I have no idea, but while the 18 tracks start with two from the first album and end with *Powerful Stuff*, there's no chronological order in between, in fact *She's Tuff*, from 1979, is followed by *Tuff Enuff* from 1987, a not particularly felicitous pairing. With eight tracks in common, this competes with Benchmark's own *Tacos Deluxe* (2003), which limited itself to the 1979-1982 period and included a sensational, and otherwise unreleased, live version of Willie Dixon's *I Can't Quit You Baby* which alone is worth the price of admission. **JC**

TERRY ALLEN • Live At Al's Grand Hotel

(Orion Read, LP ****.5)

Can you believe it's been 13 years since *Salivation* (Sugar Hill, 1999), Allen's last album of new material? Indeed it's been six years since even a reissue, *Pedal Steel* (Sugar Hill, 2006) from 1985. This, recorded live on May 7th, 1971 (Allen's 28th birthday), is sort of in between, a mix of songs that subsequently appeared either on *Juarez* (Fate, 1975), *Juarez Device* aka *Texican Badman*, *Border Palace*, *Dogwood*, *Writing On The Rocks* (*Across The USA*) and *The Radio... And Real Life*, *Lubbock (On Everything)* (Fate, 1979), *Pink And Black Song* and *Truckload Of Art*, or *Smokin' The Dummy* (Fate, 1980), *Red Bird*, plus five songs he's never recorded. These, of course, are the come-on for any and all Allen completists, even on top of this being Allen's first recording and only live album, but there's catch—the vinyl-only release is in a limited edition of 500 copies. There's also a \$50 premium version signed by Allen and his host Al Ruppertsberg, seminal conceptual artist, who invited him to play at the opening of an installation/exhibition, a Hollywood house converted into a hotel with seven themed guest rooms/ When Allen toured the UK in the early 80s, I was staggered by how many people showed up with copies of albums that were near impossible to find in America, let alone Europe, so if you are one of those completists, you might want to move fast on this one. **JC**

HOT TEXAS SWING BAND

(self *****)

You don't have to live in Austin to go 'Holy crap!' when you read the credits—Rick McRae guitar, Dave Biller or Herb Steiner pedal steel guitar, Karen Biller drums, Danny Levin fiddle, piano and B3, Erik Hokkanen fiddle, Cindy Cashdollar steel guitar, Paul Glasse electric mandolin. This outrageous lineup is led by Alex Dormont, ex-Ace In the Hole Band and Jimmy Day Band, who drops his fiddle, which you may have seen him playing in *Lonesome Dove*, to play bass, arrange the 12 tracks and sing, sharing the vocals with Selena Rosenblum, raved about as Cline in *Always*, Patsy (Dormont played fiddle in that production). Dormont also wrote six of the songs and an instrumental, McRae contributing another instrumental, the balance made up by *My Window Faces The South*, originally recorded by Fats Waller but, of course, transformed into a Western Swing standard by Bob Wills, Johnny Gimble's *Somewhere South Of San Antone*, The Four Lads' *No Not Much* and Little Charlie & The Nightcats' instrumental *Gerontology*. There's some personnel overlap with Jake Langley's Bordertown Bootleggers but, looking at their respective gig lists, it's rather amazing, but very encouraging, to see that two such talented outfits, not to mention The Cornell Hurd Band, are finding plenty of work. **JC**

RACHEL HARRINGTON Makin' Our House A Honkytonk

(Skinny Dennis ****.5)

Just comparing the covers of her first three albums with that of her latest, you can tell that Harrington has made a major change of direction. I don't recall *Celilo Falls* (2007), maybe the horrible cover art repelled me, but on *City Of Refuge* (2008) she sounded like she was filling in for Gillian Welch during her eight year gap between albums, and doing a pretty job of it too. However, this is what she calls "a full-on country record" in which she attempts to combine "the songwriting tone of Loretta Lynn, the California country of Gram Parsons and Buck Owens, the backing vocals of Ray Charles' Raylettes, the grunge of the Northwest... Which was either ambitious or delusional, I'm still not sure." I imagine the enthusiastic five star reaction in Europe, where the album was first released to support a recent tour with her all-female Seattle band The Knockouts, may clarify this. Harrington is a great singer with bags of character, who writes sharp, ballsy songs, and The Knockouts are a rock solid country band, though guests steel guitarist Tommy Hannum, pianist Billy Stover and Tim Carroll on guitar help fill out the sound, while Mark Erelli duets the suggestive *I'll Show You Mine*, but I think the Euros have gone a bit overboard. As a born-again honky tonker, Harrington has a way to go before she catches up with the likes of Leslie Sloan, Eilen Jewell, Heather Myles or Teri Joyce, but she does sound like she's having much more fun than on her earlier albums. **JC**



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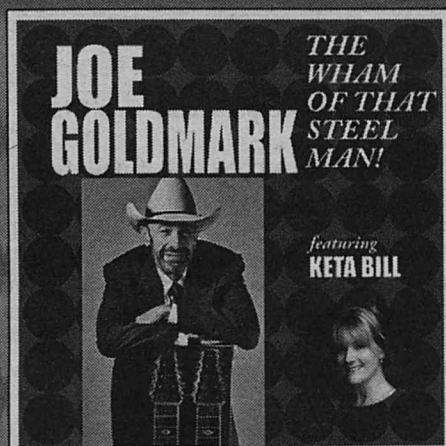
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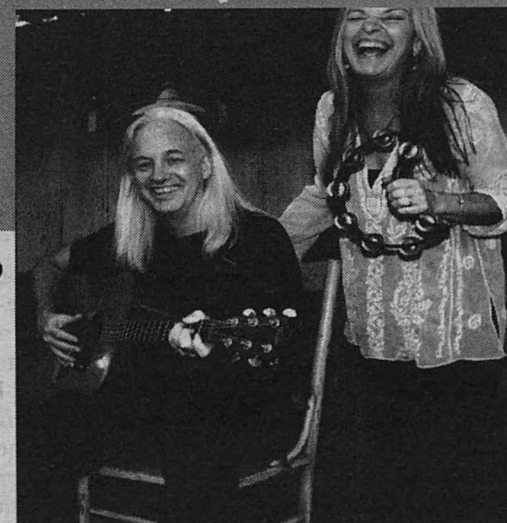


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JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Getting names right used to be one of my Things. When I ran club listings, several artists told me *Music City Texas* was the only source that always spelled their names properly. However, I seem to be losing my touch (or my mind). Last month, **Treasa Levasseur's** name was correct in the review but wrong (Lavasseur) on the cover. Worse yet, I had a total brain fart right in the middle of the review of the second edition of **The Handbook Of Texas Music**, and the estimable **Laurie Jasinski's** name came out as, of all things, Lewinski, for which my humble apologies. My all-time favorite name screw up was the work of the *Austin Chronicle*, which, in a Cactus Cafe ad, rendered Loudon Wainwright III as "Lou Don Wainwright III." As I remarked at the time, I knew his pappy, Junior Wainwright, and his grandpaw, Big LD they called him.

- Joining me in admiration of Jasinski is Nolan Porterfield, who writes, "Happy to see that you reviewed **The Handbook of Texas Music** 2nd Edition, although why you didn't single me out as the The Most Outstanding Contributor is beyond imagination! Seriously, **Laurie Jasinski** performed above and beyond the call of duty; she kept up with the 410 new entries and revisions to old ones, wrote or co-wrote many entries herself, and patiently held the trembling hands of contributors like me who really didn't know what the hell they were doing, shepherding us through what was often a long and arduous process."

- Porterfield adds, "I may be one of the few who have heard of **Tom Morrell**. Somewhere, buried in the chaos of our move, I have a Time Warp Tophands CD—dunno what number it is, but I recall plugging it in a review in the late *Journal of Country Music*, sometime around 2000. I also got no response from WR Records about other issues, and I don't expect to turn up any Tom Morrell locally. But he's not forgotten, certainly not by me, and you are to be commended for calling attention to him in **3CM**."

- Illustrating his thesis with Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*, possibly the world's Most Misunderstood Poem, Porterfield rather took issue with last month's editorial. "You assert that 'a great poem or song means whatever you think it means.' Well, that depends. What you have to say is more applicable to songs, and you offer telling examples. You are right that it is futile to ask the greatest living American poet or a rising young songwriter questions about their work, and ambiguity is indeed a (but not 'the') hallmark of great poems and songs, but don't promulgate the notion that a song or poem means 'whatever you think it means.' Tain't necessarily so."

- **Grant Peeples**, who, along with John Fullbright, got me started on that editorial, says, "I went and re-read [*The Instruction Manual*]. Which means I know less about it than I did yesterday." One thing I didn't work into my **John Fullbright** cover story is just how grounded he is for a young man getting the kind of feedback which might well turn a 23-year old's head. **Jim Patton**, who hosted Fullbright at this year's NotSXS Third Coast Songwriters Series showcase, remarked, "I don't think I've ever known someone his age who listens so well. When we finished our abbreviated 3 song set at G&S, I turned to John and said I was sorry it was so short, and he said: 'Hey, Jim, we had a gig! A cool gig! And they liked us!!! They liked us a lot!' Often when I'm talking to him, I forget who the adult is."

- Hal Davis up in Minneapolis comments, "I've loved **Chris Smither's** stuff since I heard **The Devil's Real**. His life trajectory reminds me of Ray Wylie Hubbard's. Both were journeyman musicians doing imitative stuff, then emerged from an alcoholic haze with phenomenal insight that infused their music with hypnotic power."

- As I started delivering copies of the mag to **Jovita's** the day it opened, December 11th, 1992, with David Rodriguez performing, I was so ticked off by a new manager giving me a hard time a couple of years ago that I stopped going by. This has kind of worked out because it means I'm not on any FBI surveillance footage. As you may have read, Mayo and others got busted for distributing heroin out of the cantina, which has been seized. As Don McLeese, former *Austin American-Statesman* music editor and Jovita's habitué, remarked, "But at least now we can speculate that it was more than love of Don Walser that drew Al Jourgensen there" (Jesse Sublett responded, "I would slap grandma to have written that line first"). Incidentally, the building's previous incarnation, Ben's Sandwich Shop, was an illegal betting parlor.

- I have nothing personal against **Kasey Chambers**, but an autobiography at 36? Seriously? Far as I can make out, the climax of **A Little Bird Told Me** is the revelation, which apparently "rocked" her family, friends and fans, that she suffered an eating disorder brought about by the stress of living up to her success. Oh for the good old days of infidelity and substance abuse.

- "Paul" at musicmachinery.com, using artist location data from The Echo Nest artist API, gathered up the top 50,000 or so US artists, found their city of origin and tallied the number of artists per city. From this, he calculated the number of artists per 1000 inhabitants in each city. According to his data, the **Top Ten music cities in America** are: #1 Beverly Hills, followed by San Francisco, Nashville, Boston, Atlanta, Charlottesville (VA), Washington (DC), Minneapolis, Portland (OR) and Burlington (VT). Austin came in at #14, New Orleans at #36, NYC at #37 and Detroit at #52 (dead last was Kansas City, KS). This caused a good deal of online frothing at the mouth among Austin boosters, many of whom jumped to the ludicrous conclusion that by 'origin 'Paul' meant place of birth, when, quite obviously, he meant current address. In any case, if you did go by place of birth, Austin would be truly fucked, crushed by Dallas, Houston and San Antonio for starters, as hardly any of its resident musicians were actually born here (or even in Texas come to that). However, when Austinite John Rees, Director of Economic Development for the Capital Area Council of Governments, ran the exact same data against metropolitan areas rather than cities, he came up with a very different result: #1 was Nashville, followed by San Francisco, Los Angeles, Austin, Bloomington (IN), Lawrence (KS), Athens (GA), Palm Bay (FL), Portland (OR) and Gainesville (FL).

- Like FARster Carolyn Delzoppo ("They've really bugged it up"), I'm not happy with the revamped **All Music Guide**. For instance, it no longer provides label and release date info for albums. Mind you, AMG did have a marked and very misleading tendency to list the latest (ie reissue) info rather than telling you when and by whom an album was originally released, but even with that weakness, it was still a valuable and much missed feature.

- Good story from Paul Barker of Barker House Concerts, who told me that at a recent event, a woman congratulated him on allowing a homeless person to attend the show. She was referring to **Ray Wylie Hubbard!**

- A recent press release invited me to "Join three of the most revered and talented songwriters in the industry, Kevin Welch, Eliza Gilkyson and Dustin Welch for a 3 day songwriter retreat in the majestic mountain town of Red River, New Mexico." I wish **Dustin Welch** a long and successful career, but "revered"? Well, as Meat Loaf told us, "Two out of three ain't bad."

- Much unhappiness among file-sharers about **Promedia**, a German company that uses individual trackers rather than automated scanning like US companies. They generate 150 to 200 lawsuits a day, and so far have racked up 3500 out of court settlements and 50 judgements against file sharers, with 15,000 cases still pending. Unlike the RIAA's legal campaign, Promedia's isn't generating negative publicity for the record labels, though like the RIAA's legal campaign, it's having little effect on file sharing, which apparently still accounts for 50 to 80% of all German internet traffic. Personally, I'm kind of a fundamentalist when it comes to file-sharing, I'd discourage people from stealing music by chopping off their hands so they can't use a keyboard, and ripping out their tongues so they can't use voice commands. On the other hand maybe just piercing their eardrums would be simpler, and more humane.

- A 20-year old NPR intern, **Emily White**, rather dropped herself in it with a blog admitting that she's didn't have to make the transition from physical to digital because "I never owned any music to begin with," her 11,000 downloads mostly ripped from a radio station library. This generated a lot of Internet buzz, some of it defending her, but I'm firmly with **David Lowery** (Camper Van Beethoven/Cracker) who, at thetrichordist.wordpress.com, asked these very pertinent questions:

"Why do we value the network and hardware that delivers music but not the music itself?

Why are we willing to pay for computers, iPods, smart phones, data plans and high speed internet access but not the music itself?

Why do we gladly give our money to some of the largest richest corporations in the world but not the companies and individuals who create and sell music?"

Lowery continues:

"Networks: Giant mega corporations. Cool! have some money!

Hardware: Giant mega corporations. Cool! have some money!

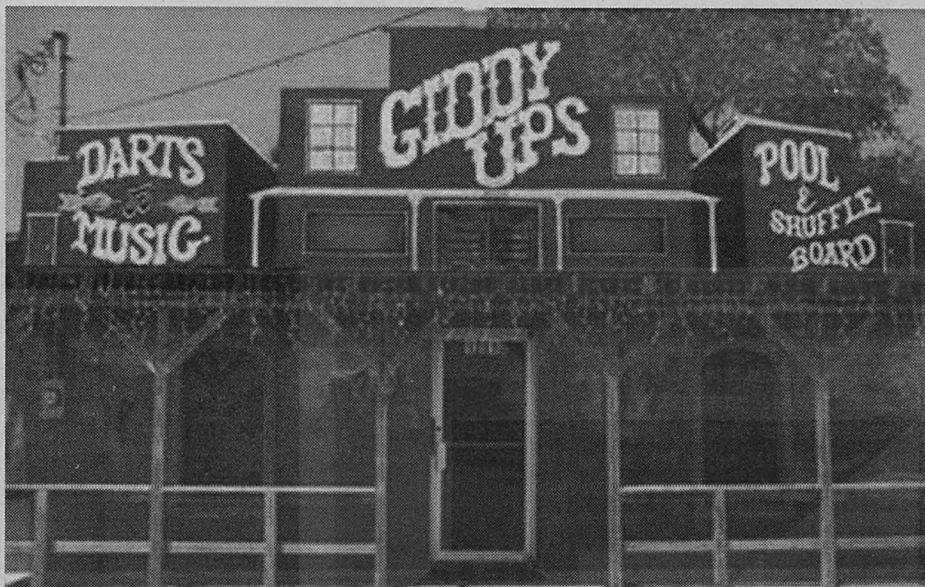
Artists: 99.9% lower middle class. Screw you, you greedy bastards!

Congratulations, your generation is the first generation in history to rebel by unsticking it to the man and instead sticking it to the weirdo freak musicians!

Ultimately there are three 'inconvenient' things that MUST happen for any legal service:

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So what you are really saying is that you won't do these three things. This is too inconvenient. And I would guess that the most inconvenient part is... step 3."



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*Reports to the Freeform American Roots (FAR) Chart



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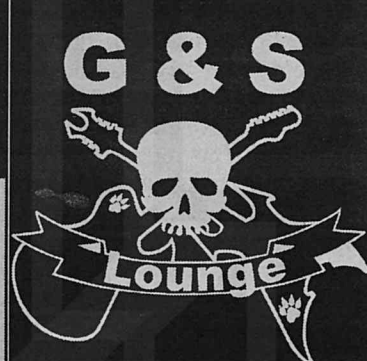
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***** Killer

***** What's not to like? *** Can do better
** Why did they bother? * Piss on this noise

EARS TO HEAR

Some years ago, a friend who once ran various record labels specializing in vintage Western Swing was rather annoyed to find that a British label was reissuing his LPs on CD. What irked him was not that his albums were being ripped off but that they were being ripped. "If they'd asked me, I'd given them the masters."

Without going into tedious detail about copyright laws, the crucial difference, in this context, is that Public Domain kicks in much earlier in Europe, so, even if their ethics were dubious, the British label's reissues were perfectly legal, at least back home. Technically they wouldn't have been able to sell them in America, but that ship sailed long ago, even before international e-trading (cautious reissue labels sell copies to distributors or mail order outlets, so where they end up after that is out of their hands).

Getting back to "ripped," what the Brits did, of course, not having access to the masters (in this case not even bothering to find out if they could get access) was create faux masters from LPs. The result was CDs that were so compressed that they were only marginally acceptable. Having pulled one out for a reality check, I take that back, they're actually painful to listen to, which was my friend's point. He'd rather have had decent sounding reissues of his albums even if he himself wasn't making anything out of them.

I am, by no means, knocking reissue labels, in fact by and large I love them. There are occasional problems, moral and acoustic, such as, say, Proper [UK]'s compressed budget Bob Wills compilation undercutting one from Columbia Legacy, which pays royalties and has high end processing facilities, but, for the most part, they make music available that would otherwise be very hard to find, and, for the most part, do it legitimately, or at least within the letter of the law.

However, even if one doesn't care about licenses that would make reissues kosher, master tapes are, if not absolutely essential, extremely useful, though Charly and Ace reps have told me stories about physically searching vaults for masters the very existence of which the current owners, after decades of mergers and acquisitions, weren't even aware. Obviously enough, when you have the original masters, as Part did for Ravenna & The Magnetics, the sound is going to be optimal, not as good as the original 45s or LPs, of course, but what you can you do? However, sometimes the masters no longer exist, or, as in the case of El Toro's Collectors Choice series, for instance, just tracking down the ownership, let alone the tapes, of singles put out by tiny, long defunct local and regional labels in the 40s and 50s would be a task beyond Herculean.

Just to complicate things, El Toro's stuff sounds excellent while every album I've ever heard put out by Collectables sounded like crap. El Toro's Carlos Diaz didn't get too technical, but told me, "1 - We take the music from the best available sources. 2 - We clean and re-master it as much as we can but stop before altering the original sound." Bottom line, the sonic quality of vintage reissues depends enormously on the ears of whoever OKs the project, but, on the other hand, that's equally true of albums recorded last week. JC

RAVENNA & THE MAGNETICS Rockabilly Fools /TEXAS TO TENNESSEE

(Part [Germany] *****)

During the late 90s, Hightone Records partnered with Ronny Weiser to reissue his Rollin' Rock LPs on CD, a deal that lasted for some 10 albums and three compilations, but fell apart (lousy sales) before they got to the two I was really anticipating, having been knocked out by Ravenna & The Magnetics when they came to London in 1981. They were **Rockabilly Fools** (Rollin' Rock, 1980) and **Tennessee & Texas** (Rondelet [UK], 1981), though the latter might not have qualified as it was recorded by Weiser at his LA studio, but only released by Rollin' Rock's British sister label.

Born a little too late for the Golden Age of Rockabilly, I caught the tail end—the second single I bought was *Somethin' Else* (I'd rather not talk about the first) and I saw Eddie Cochran at his last but one concert (casual mention of this made me a minor celebrity at a High Noon residency). Because of this timing, I was ambivalent about the Rockabilly Revival of the 70s and 80s. Unlike Britain's Teddy Boys and Girls, somewhat older and seriously invested in the original music, I didn't simply despise the revivalists out of hand. At the same time, I thought most revivalists were, still are come to that, quite clearly playacting. I never did get The Stray Cats at all, but, while admittedly more comfortable with rockabilly influenced acts like CCR, The Blasters and Rockpile, I did admire Robert Gordon, at least while Link Wray was with him (maybe the best live show I've ever heard), and, one of the very, very few women in the Revival, Freda Johnson, aka Ravenna Dumaine, the missing link between Janis Martin and Marti Brom.

Information on Johnson is extremely sparse. She died of an aneurism in 1996, age 42, so she must have been born around 1954 and been in her mid-20s when she joined The Magnetics in 1979. Whether she was from Seattle, the band's base, deponent sayeth not, but she took her stage name from Seattle's Ravenna Street and New Orleans' Dumaine Street (where the Zulu King meets the Zulu Queen), and stayed in Seattle after her (presumably ex) husband, guitarist Tom Berghan, dissolved the band in late 1982 and moved to New Orleans. According to the liner notes, she "sang occasionally in two more bands before she returned to her real interest: painting and drawing."

Brief as both her musical career and life may have been, Johnson was immortalized on vinyl, Part's marvellous release bringing together her two albums plus a Rollin' Rock 45 of non-album material, one side of which was Johnson singing Wanda Jackson's *Mean Mean Man*. However, when I say "her two albums," this is technically not true of **Rockabilly Fools** which was originally released as by The Magnetics, with Johnson singing lead on just six of the 14 tracks, various of the guys taking the rest. You may well wonder why, but, between you and me, rockabillics can tend to be just a tad misogynist.

Still, those six tracks, three originals, two co-credited to Berghan, two Janis Martin numbers, *Bang Bang* and *Good Love*, and Buddy Holly's *Changing All Those Changes*, are absolutely as good as anything the Rockabilly Revival ever produced. Johnson not only had a strong rocking voice, her personality shone through, making her Martin covers distinct from the original versions. What can I say? She had rockabilly attitude in spades.

With a different lineup, adding sax and piano (Richard Hogan, who wrote three of the songs including the outstanding *Baby That's Allright* which sounds like it was written specifically for Johnson), **Texas & Tennessee** has a different sound, more rock & roll than pure rockabilly, though four of the five covers are by early Sun artists, Charlie Rich (*Lonely Weekends*), Sonny Burgess (*Find My Baby For Me*), Carl Perkins (*6918 Peach Ave [706 Union]*) and Mack Self (*Vibrate*), along with Shirley & Lee's *Feel So Good*. This was Johnson's moment, singing lead on all 12 tracks, and brother did she shine.

The release histories of these two albums illustrate how much more Europeans value rockabilly than do Americans. Though Weiser operated in the US, he was a first generation German immigrant (like Arhoolie's Chris Strachwitz, only different). **Rockabilly Fools**, only ever a long out of print LP in the US, has, over the years, been released or reissued in the UK, Finland and Spain, while **Texas & Tennessee**, never released at all in the US, has been put out in the UK, France and Italy, with Ravenna tracks appearing on French and Dutch compilations. Part illustrate, yet again, that if you want quality rockabilly, you have to buy imports, and that includes Marti Brom, who's on a Finnish label. JC



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Bill Haley • 1925 Highland Park, MI
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Riley Puckett † 1946
- 14th Woody Guthrie • 1912 Okemah, OK
Lowman Pauling • 1926 Winston-Salem, NC
Vince Taylor • 1939 London, UK
Clarence White † 1973
- 15th Cowboy Copas • 1913 Blue Ridge, OH
Roky Erickson • 1947 Austin, TX
Steve James • 1950 New York City, NY
Jeff Hughes • 1964 Dallas, TX
Miss Leslie • 1970 Charleston, SC
Bill Justis † 1982
Hank Cochran † 2010
- 16th Gurf Morlix • 1951 Lackwanna, NY
Laura Cantrell • 1967 Nashville, TN
- 17th Red Sovine • 1918 Charleston, WV
Harry Choates † 1951
Billie Holiday † 1959
Don Rich † 1974
Roosevelt Sykes † 1983
Wynn Stewart † 1985
- 18th Screamin' Jay Hawkins • 1929
Cleveland, OH
Dion DiMucci • 1939 Bronx, NY

- Bobby Fuller † 1966
- 19th Commander Cody • 1944 Boise City, ID
Lefty Frizzell † 1975
Alan Lomax † 2002
- 20th JE Mainer • 1898 Weaversville, NC
Cindy Walker • 1925 Mart, TX
Sleepy LaBeef • 1935 Smackover, AR
Jo Ann Campbell • 1938 Jacksonville, FL
Jo Carol Pierce • 1944 Wellington, TX
Radney Foster • 1959 Del Rio, TX
- 21st Sara Carter • 1898 Flat Woods, VA
- 23rd Tony Joe White • 1943 Oak Grove, LA
Keith Ferguson • 1946 Houston, TX
BettySoo • 1978 New York, NY
- 24th Charlie Rich † 1995
- 25th Steve Goodman • 1948 Chicago, IL
Tommy Duncan † 1967
Big Mama Thornton † 1984
- 26th Dobie Gray • 1943 Brookshire, TX
- 27th Bobby Day † 1990
- 28th Floyd Domino • 1952 Berkley, CA
- 29th Charlie Christian • 1916 Bonham, TX
Ed Miller • 1945 Edinburgh, Scotland
Pete Drake † 1988
- 30th Buddy Guy • 1936 Lettsworth, LA
Sonny West • 1937 Lubbock Co, TX
RC Banks • 1950 Lubbock, TX
Sam Phillips † 2003
- 31st Roy Heinrich • 1953 Houston, TX
Carrie Luz Rodriguez • 1978 Houston, TX

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