

Through and the laid back regret of *Catch the Wind*. Then there's the other one, who's something of a frustrated 1970s stadium rocker, and who affirms: 'I still love my rock and roll,' on *Never Been To Memphis* and brings the power harmonies on *Change In the Circle* and the spandex solo on *Believe In You*. Then, lurking in the background, is the reflective talking bluesman of *Time Still Knocking*, who: 'left a weekly gig on Blecker Street and a woman who was bleaker still,' and find himself playing in a hotel bar for tourists who want to hear *Just Like A Woman* but is at peace with himself though, only too aware of the passing of time and the onset of regret.

With players like these it is of course taken for granted that the playing and the singing will be first rate, and so it is, but what makes it worthwhile is Postell, who, to again quote *Never Been To Memphis*, 'knows he's got soul' and he's right. TIME STILL KNOCKING, though classy and literate, feels like something of a throwback, possibly even a guilty pleasure at times, but that doesn't really matter. JS  
www.stevepostell.com

**Tawnya Reynolds**  
**CARNIVAL**  
Wright of  
Center Music  
884501114219

★★★★★  
Classy traditional  
and old-style  
country with a modern twist

Tawnya Reynolds is a new voice in the world of country music. The first signing to Wright of Center Music, she is a fine singer-songwriter bursting



with talent. Her influences include the legendary Merle Haggard and Texas singer Kelly Willis. Tawnya's music is classed as traditional and old-style country—listening to this fantastic album it is easy to see why. She opens off with *Worse Things Than Being Alone*, a song whose lyrics suggest that just because you are with someone doesn't mean you are happy. Tawnya is known to be a warm, friendly person with great convictions; she effortlessly brings these qualities to life in her music. Her voice is warming and infectious—easy to fall in love with. *I'm Over You* is a more modern song yet it still retains an old fashioned country sound and style. Tawnya's vocals bring to mind acclaimed singers such as Patty Loveless and the Judds. *Whiskey Kinda Way* follows on in the same vein. Again this is a highly polished song and Tawnya's vocals are full of emotion.

*Carnival* is a charming song with great backing and splendid lyrics making this a fine choice of title song. *Is It Okay To Cry Now* is a slow emotional number bursting with quality, there are hints of Tanya Tucker in Tawnya's vocals on this evocative number. *Train Without A Whistle* feels more modern than some of the other songs on the album. In this song Tawnya compares a man to a train without a whistle. *Let's Burn It Down* has a rich feel to it, another song packed full of emotion and sensitive lyrics. *Moment Of Weakness* is a catchier number with traditional backing. *Stay Here* sees the listener slip back in time. Suddenly all the colour is gone and has been replaced by a world of black and white. This

is a really sophisticated song that showcases Tawnya's amazing vocals. The album ends with two rather surprising yet also amazing hidden songs—I'll Be Your Whiskey and *Standing By The Rambler*. The latter is a thoroughly modern country song completely different from anything else on the album. Fast paced and rocky, this more suited to fans of a more modern and perhaps rowdy country sound. I'll Be Your Whiskey is again very modern in sound but it is also a shining highlight on this tremendous album. Tawnya's voice is definitely suited to slow, emotive songs infused with a rich traditional backing yet songs such as *Standing By The Rambler* show that Tawnya can also raise her game and really belt out a number. With songs like this she could easily give the likes of Miranda Lambert a run for her money any day. I have fallen in love with Tawnya's vocals and this outstanding album. I am sure many other fans of fine country music will as well. SH

**The Dixons**  
**STILL YOUR FOOL**  
Cow Island Music  
★★★★★

Wondrous debut  
from Brooklyn—  
a modern by  
word for Bakersfield and beyond

Fresh outta Brooklyn's bedevilled pastures sway these heartworn, hard-wearing honky-tonkers with a debut that's an authentic hark back to auld Bakersfield. Nope, honestly, hold your horses. Sure, authentic is a word all corralled up with pastiche in some parlours, but this set of wistful



shuffles, bad luck ballad-monging and fiddle and steel incitements to raise a wry glass such as the title track and *Broken Hearted, Lovesick And Blue* (replete with brilliant angry-bull guitar bruising solo) is a masterclass in demon-toasting. But it's no hunched-shouldered subdued bar bound with hangdog eyes and wringing hands but, with the exception of a beautifully desolate cover of Ernest Tubbs's *Thanks A Lot*, a delightful design to dance your blues away, none more so than the errant nights' entreaty *Please Baby Don't Go*. Jeff Mowrer has a voice that's a perfect partner for such fooled halls of blame as these, with no trace of the irritating vocal hick-tics that clutter up too much country as compensation for the absence of real direct feel that it once conveyed as a matter of course. Gentle, graceful and laden with several gallons of smoke-aged gravitas and traditions be damned, tarnished and tethered to a loose post too, for his writing generally surpasses the quality of the luminaries like Buck Owens and Merle Haggard (be sure to find yours Study on Steve Earle's coffee table in several pairs of cowboy boots and three hats...). Similarly the sublime playing and manner in which this album conducts itself never stifles the genuine article being scripted here. This is a wonderfully evocative half-hour of eleven tracks that moisten your tastebuds for the trip to the twelfth bar and beyond and one of those rare records that is so rightly of its ilk that it resembles what you always thought such records would sound like—but rarely actually do. SG  
www.cowislandmusic.com

**Slaid Cleaves**  
**EVERYTHING YOU LOVE WILL BE TAKEN AWAY**  
Music Road Records  
★★★★★

Probably Cleaves finest song collection yet...

Five years have elapsed since WISHBONES, Slaid's last collection of self-penned material; 2006's UNSUNG having been a collection of covers. EVERYTHING YOU LOVE WILL BE TAKEN AWAY is the third recording issued by Austin based music co-operative, Music Road Records, the brain child of the estimable and talented Jimmy LaFave, and his partners Fred Remmert and Kelcy Warren. Most of this album was produced by Gurf Morlix—their fourth collaboration—while a few tracks were completed, in Virginia, by Slaid's long-time guitarist Charles Arthur.

Austin based singer-songwriter/producer Billy Harvey helped Slaid cut the album opener *Cry*—it took the Mainer four attempts to capture the definitive version. The lyric furnishes the album title, and another facet of the main theme—our journey through life—resurfaces in the closing cut. Written with Adam Carroll, a Springsteen backbeat propels the blue collar *Hard To Believe*. Therein the narrator questions what he's still doing in Milwaukee on Christmas Eve, while delivering numerous stinging couplets—sic: 'Here comes another blown kid from over there, Makin' the whole world safe for the millionaires.' Slowing to ballad pace *Beyond Love*, co-written with Rod Picott, finds the pair focusing on the aftermath of: 'young love's foolish game.' An undeniable Lennon/McCartney feel permeates the chorus—'Days fade into night shades, beyond love'—while Oliver Steck's trumpet adds some neat melancholic touches. Co-written with David Farnsworth, an old Maine performing buddy, the lone fiddle heard throughout *Green Mountains And Me Beautiful Thing* adds a rustic flavour. In fact it comes close to sounding like an old-time Appalachian folk song. Tending to their young son, the narrator bids the love of his life—'You're on the other side of the world tonight, But under the same cold stars'—to return home. Without revealing the outcome, let's just add that she went away to serve her country.

Throwing yet another musical switch, *Run Jolee Run* finds Slaid in blues mode. Ray Bonneville penned this tale of an abused woman, and it's followed by a couple of Picott co-writes *Dreams* and *Black T Shirt*. Both are engaging character portraits, the former being down on his luck in life and love, while the latter stars an awkward and unruly teen. Ron Coy and Michael O'Connor assisted Cleaves with *Tumbleweed Stew*, a cowboy-themed composition. While the cowboy in the latter may be a few years older, he appears no wiser and may once have owned a black T-shirt! Penned with Austin based musician Eric Blakely, *Twistin'* recalls a once regular social event in the town's calendar—hanging day. Cleaves closes his seventh solo album with two tunes penned on his own. The focus of *Beautiful Thing* is 21<sup>st</sup> century politics and capitalism. In his liner notes author Stephen King—also Maine bred—tags the latter as being: 'reluctantly optimistic,' while *Temporary* finds the narrator reflect that no one gets out of this life alive. The adage—enjoy it while you can.

Relative to what has gone before, this latest album finds Cleaves' style of writing change tack marginally, embracing in the process even more maturity. It's probably his best song collection so far. There I said it! AW  
www.slaid.com



**Thom Landt**  
**BORDER-TOWN**  
Golden Vizsla  
Music  
★★★☆☆

San Diego  
country-rocker  
breathes new life into a dying art form  
with a mouth-watering debut

Thom Landt is a veteran of the San Diego, Southern Californian music scene. As a young man seminal outfits like the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, Stephen Stills' Manassas, the Allman Brothers, Joe Walsh's Barnstorm and Poco inspired him. A multi-instrumentalist Thom was befriended by Poco's Paul Cotton; becoming an integral part of Paul's solo projects FIREBIRD and WHEN THE COAST IS CLEAR. He also carried off the mantle of right hand man in the Paul Cotton Band. This brush with one of his main inspirers has rubbed off on Mr Landt. Despite making home demos of his songs for years, and playing dates with his group the Telegraph Canyon Band, it has taken Thom until now to make his music publicly available. One wonders why? Beautifully packaged, the music herein conjures up cinematic visions of hot dusty, desert highways and a yearning nostalgia for simpler, innocent times. Landt offers lived in soulful vocals throughout, stinging guitar and slide work topped off with some tasty pedal steel playing.

