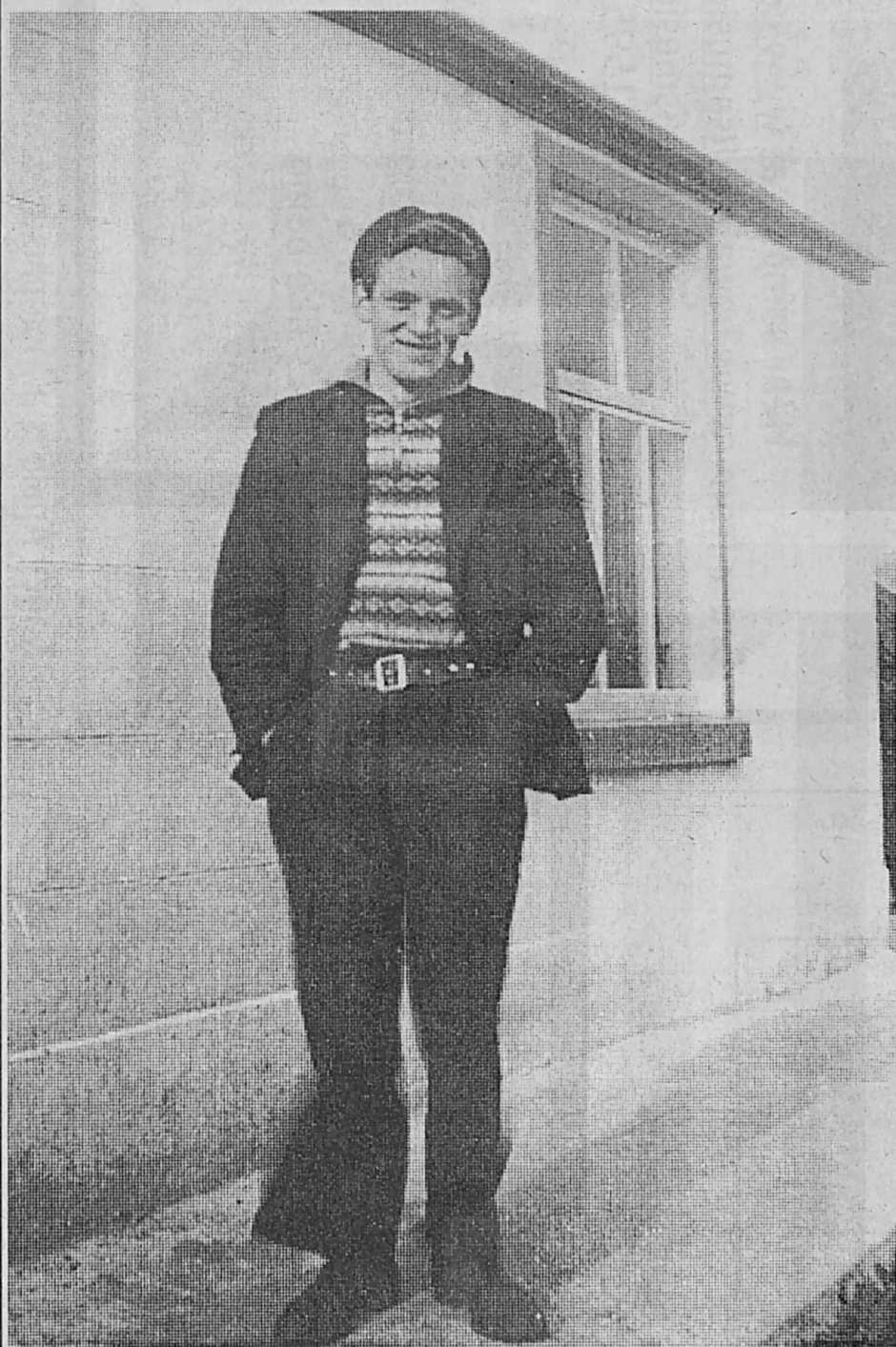


3rd COAST MUSIC

THOMAS FRASER

#79/168 AUGUST 2003



REVIEWS

(or not)

Nancy Apple

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Big Al Downing

•

Wayne Hancock

•

Howard Kalish

The 100 Greatest Songs Of
REAL Country Music

JOHN THE REVEALATOR

FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #48

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REAL MUSIC PLAYED FOR REAL PEOPLE BY REAL DJs DURING JULY 2003

1 Halden Wofford & The Hi-Beams

(Hi-Beams) *BF/*DB/*KF/*KG/*GS/*MP/*RB

- 2 Dwight Yoakam: Population Me (Audium/Electrodisc) *EW/*FM/*JZ/*NA/*S&D
- 3 Ronny Elliott: Hep (Blue Heart) *BW/*DT/*JP/*PP/*RS/*ST
- 4 Pine Valley Cosmonauts: The Executioner's Last Songs #2 & 3 (Bloodshot) *BL/*CZ/*JT/*SF/*TG
- 5 Howard Kalish: What The Hey (Behemoth) *DC/*LB/*RR/*TF
- 6 Tim O'Brien: Traveler (Sugar Hill) *BR/*MF/*RJ
- 7= Joe Ely: Streets Of Sin (Rounder) *CM/*CP/*DY/*WR
- Chris Smither: Train Home (Hightone) *GJ/*MD/*SMJ
- 8 Big Sandy & The Fly-Rite Boys: It's Time! (Yep Roc) *3RC
- 9 Drive By Truckers: Decoration Day (New West) *SG/*T&L/*TW
- 10 Gillian Welch: Soul Journey (Acony) *B&C/*MA
- 11 Cornell Hurd Band: Live At Jovita's (Behemoth) *KD/*RT/*TS
- 12 Scott Miller & The Commonwealth: Upside Downside (Sugar Hill) *SKG
- 13 Elizabeth McQueen & The Firebrands: The Fresh Up Club (Gravitrone) *DF
- 14 Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson & Ricky Skaggs: The Three Pickers (Rounder) *MR
- 15 Alison Moorer: Show (Universal South) *TH/*TO
- 16 The Waybacks: Way Live (Fiddling Crick) *CD
- 17 Kevin Deal: The Lawless (Blind Nello)
- 18 VA: Shout, Sister, Shout! A Tribute to Sister Rosetta Tharpe (MC) *SC
- 19= Reckless Kelly: Under The Table & Above the Sun (Sugar Hill)
- Tom Russell: Modern Art (HighTone)
- Steve Wynn & The Miracle Three: Static Transmission (Down There)
- 20= Chatham County Line (Bonfire) *DA
- David Grisman: Life of Sorrow (Acoustic Disc) *CL
- Joel Melton: John Bricker's Journey 1791-1836 (TBD) *JCS
- 21 Stacey Earle & Mark Stuart: Never Gonna Let You Go (Evolver) *AR
- 22 Fred Eaglesmith & The Flathead Noodlers: Balin (AML)
- 23= Big Al Downing: One of a Kind (Hayden's Ferry) *JF
- David Olney: The Wheel (Loudhouse) *DJ
- VA: Songs Of Fred Eaglesmith (Twang Off) *R&B
- Deanna Varagona Trio: The Goodbyes Have All Been Taken. Hello (Gadfly) *TJ
- 24= Jay Farrar: Terroir Blues (Act/Resist)
- Retta & The Smart Fellas: They Took The Stars Out Of Heaven (Retta)
- Greg Trooper: Floating (Sugar Hill)
- 25= Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir: Saint Hubert *DP
- The Avett Brothers: A Carolina Jubilee (Ramseur) *RC
- Jack Baymoore & The Bandits: Diggin Out (Tail) *RMS
- Haley Bonar ...the size of planets (Chairkickers' Music) *OS
- Johnny Cash: Mystery Of Life (Mercury) *DO
- Buddy Greene: Rufus (Rufus Music) *LG
- Merle Haggard: Live! (Acrobat) *KC
- John Hammond: Ready For Love (Back Porch) *EGB
- The Iguanas: Plastic Silver 9-Volt Heart (Yep Roc) *SM
- Damien Jurardo: Where Shall You Take Me (Secretly Canadian) *HG
- Natalie Merchant: The House Carpenter's Daughter (Myth America) *R&H
- Willie Nelson & Ray Price: Run That By Me One More Time (Lost Highway) *JM
- Red Hot Poker Dots: Thirty Mile Square (Playsome) *BC
- Billy Lee Riley: Hillbilly Rockin' Man (Reba) *RH
- Sisters Morales: Para Gloria (Luna) *FW
- Carl T Sprague: Cowtrails, Longhorns & Tight Saddles (Bear Family) *JH
- Suzy Thompson: No Mockingbird (Native & Fine) *EB
- Niall Toner Band: There's A Better Way (Avalon) *RW
- Uncle Tupelo: Still Feel Gone (Columbia/Legacy) *VP
- Randy Weeks: Sold Out At The Cinema (self) *JS
- Kim Wilson: Lookin' For Trouble (MC) *RCS
- Tommy Womack: Washington, DC (self) *MY

HOWARD KALISH • WHAT THE HEY

(Behemoth ****)

Hands up everyone who remembers Howard Kalish & The Rightsiders. Thought so, but then you'd have had to be working the Austin country scene pretty thoroughly to catch the band before Kalish folded it to concentrate on sideman gigs. Ethyl & Methyl flourished for a while, but Kalish became a familiar figure in the 90s as fiddler and ramrod of The Pure Texas Band. As Don Walser's health declined, and the two men fell out briefly, Kalish has been seen more often with The Cornell Hurd Band (Hurdanistas will have noted that this album is on Cornell's label), but in reverting to frontman status, he's relied heavily on The Pure Texas Band and its auxiliary members. Kalish, fiddle, 5-string electric mandolin, electric guitar and vocals, Scott Walls pedal steel and Floyd Domino piano are the only fixtures, with Rick McRae playing lead and rhythm guitar on ten of the 15 tracks, Dave Biller rhythm guitar on the other five, Skinny Don Keeling bass on nine tracks, Lynn Daniel the rest, Philip Farjado, Timmy Campbell and Ernie Durawa splitting drum duty three ways, while Justin Treviño sings harmonies on six songs and Big Don himself sings lead on three, including Moon Mullican's *I Was Sorta Wonderin'* and Mel Tillis' *Too Lonely Too Long*. With seven original songs and instrumentals, including the long time PTB standard *I Wanna Be A Cajun*, and a song by Kathleen Kalish, *I Can't Stand My World Without You*, sung by Walser, Kalish offers his takes on Milton Brown's *Texas Hambone Blues*, Hurd & Joe Dickens' *Dark All Over the World*, a twin fiddle swing instrumental version of *Cattle Call* and Red Foley's *If You're Cheating On Your Baby*. Like Keeling's fine but little-known **Texas Reunion** album, this could be seen as a footnote to Walser's recordings, but equally as a pointed, and stinging, riposte to the producers who so shabbily rewarded Kalish and Keeling's loyalty by excluding them from the studios when Walser was in his prime. **JC**

NANCY APPLE • SHOULDA LIED ABOUT THAT

(Ringo ****)

Considering its role in American roots music, you don't hear much about Memphis any more, apart from people bitching about the lily-white Disneyfication of Beale Street. In fact, if it wasn't for the tireless activism of Nancy Apple (in the interests of full disclosure, with a roots show on WEVL, she's a FAR reporter), I, for one, wouldn't know for sure there was any music, apart from watered-down blues, still being played there. However, if its glory days as the home of Sun, Stax and Dewey Phillips are in the past, Memphis, of course, like any major city, does support a roots scene, in which the local press has dubbed Apple the reigning 'Queen of Country Music.' This is also the title of one of ten originals (of which *Fruit Of The Vine* is offered in two versions) on her third album, in which she aligns herself with "all the Susie Salley's of the world" to whom the song is dedicated, when she sings "She could care less about Nashville, Tennessee." This time round, Apple's sound is less hillbilly and more Americana, indeed on one track she sounds like a female Fred Eaglesmith (Lamar Sorrento's *Same Old Thing*) and on another like Mary Gauthier (*Have Mercy*). Mostly, however, she sounds like Nancy Apple whose down to earth urban cowgirl wit, most obvious on the "Redneck Luv Poem" *My Boyfriend* ("He's got all his teeth and I'm so proud"), and sensibilities, which shine on *Mama's Stories* and the title track, have endeared her to small but growing audience outside Memphis, to which this album can only add. **JC**

WAYNE HANCOCK • SWING TIME

(Bloodshot ****)

Cut at the Continental just before this year's SXSW, with Paul Skelton and Dave Biller on guitars, Eddie Rivera lap steel, Rick Ramirez upright bass, and produced by Lloyd Maines, this mainly offers excellent live versions of Hancock standards, with only four songs he hasn't cut before, Ernest Tubb's *Lose Your Mind*, the original *Big City Good Time Gal*, Bobby Troup's *Route 66* and Webb Pierce's (*I'm Walkin' The Dog* (incidentally written by Tex & Cliff Grimsley and not 'Trad, PD')). Another odd thing in the credits is that Rebecca Snow is billed as vocals on *Summertime*, which doesn't appear on the track listing. It is, in fact, 'hidden,' perhaps because it's a sloppy, self-indulgent seven minute mess that reflects little credit on Hancock and even less on Snow, though Bob Stafford's trombone is OK. **JC**

BIG AL DOWNING • ONE OF A KIND

(Platinum Express/Hayden's Ferry ****)

First off, let me say that I have no prejudice when it comes to patriotic songs, I loathe and despise them all, from *America The Beautiful* to *Blessed Be The Land Of Zimbabwe*, and Downing's *Hometown America* illustrates why. Substitute a few place names and voila! *Hometown Albania* or *Hometown Armenia* with perfect scansion. Unfortunately it's the opening track, but after you fight your way past it, things pick up fast—track #2 is *A Cigarette, A Bottle And A Jukebox!* Singer/songwriter/pianist Downing has spent 40 years on the fringes of rockabilly (he played on Wanda Jackson's Capitol Tower sessions), rock & roll, country (which he sang long before Charley Pride) and R&B, always admired without ever hitting the big time. While he has classic but far from overfamiliar, original material that he could well have revisited, *Down On The Farm, Just Around The Corner, Mr Jones, Mama Was A Preacher, Georgia Slop*, his first album in seven years is all original, mainly country, and crackles with exuberant energy. **JC**



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CEDRYL BALLOU. PHOTO: VALENTINO MAURICIO

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JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Amazing how many people noticed that there wasn't a July issue. Well, of course, there was, but I forgot to change up the cover, so it looked as if there were two June issues. By odd coincidence, the only other time this happened, in 1996, the two issues involved were also June and July. Anyway, management regrets any inconvenience etc etc.

♦ Last month's competition was a bit of a dud. The only person who recognized 'Memory and Desire' as being what I thought was very snazzy and appropriate quote from **TS Eliot's** *The Wasteland* ("Memory and desire, stirring dull roots with spring rain") was **Tom 'Dilly' Dillingham** of Dallas.

♦ In early July, Brenda Barnes, GM of **KUSC**, announced that she was outsourcing the LA college radio station's underwriting program to—wait for it—**Clear Channel Communications!** There is, of course, no danger that its ad salespeople will give priority to the Evil Empire's eight LA area stations. Both parties are hailing this as an innovative partnership in which commercial radio helps ensure the future of public radio, but some people don't seem convinced. Doug Young, KRCL, Salt Lake City, snarled, "Next week, Barnes announces that her PD and MD don't have time to review music and effectively decide on airplay. To gain more listeners, she is outsourcing those functions to Clear Channel as well."

♦ One boobytrap KUSC has laid in its own path is, of course, how to deal with the issue of media ownership. If it takes one side or tries to be objective, it'll piss off its new partner, if it takes the other, or tries to ignore the issue, it'll piss off its listeners. Much the same problem awaits **National Public Radio** which, in late July, debuted *Day To Day*, a midday Monday-to-Friday program produced in collaboration with the online magazine, *Slate*, the first time in the network's 33-year history that it's joined forces with a commercial entity to create a program. The problem here is that *Slate* is published by the Even More Evil Empire, **Microsoft**. What we're seeing here, of course, is public radio being co-opted by monopolistic corporations, at little cost to the latter, and what I'd tell both KUSC and NPR is that if you lie down with dogs, you'll get up with fleas.

♦ The job of publicists is to take lemons and make lemonade, and I don't hold it against them, but how's this for lip-puckering? "Douglas Introduced To Prestigious Montréal Jazz Festival By Norah Jones." The press release goes on to say, "**Jerry Douglas**, Dobro's 'matchless contemporary master' (*New York Times*), made his debut appearance at the Montréal Jazz Festival last evening, by special invitation from **Norah Jones**." In other words, those Canadian jazz wankers know who Jones is and booked her, but they have to have a flavor of the monthette tell them who Douglas is. Do me a favor. And if you're thinking, be fair, Douglas isn't a jazz player, well, neither is Jones.

♦ So, last month I was sounding off about **Country Music Television's** godawful 100 Greatest Songs In Country Music, and threatening to put together a list of the 100 Greatest Songs in REAL Country Music. Well, here it is. I have to thank my volunteer 'panel of experts,' who turned in lists any one of which would have made a truly great radio show. Unlike CMT, I'm going to tell you who they are: Tom Ayres (WRUV), Dave Bryce (Fresh, New Zealand), Kay Clements (KWMR), Rick Cornell (WXDU), Denise DeLeon (KNMX), Kirsty Fitzsimons (Radio Anna Livia, Ireland), Kathy Gatcliffe (KVCU), Thomas Greener (KVMR), Jamie Hoover (KUGS), Suzanne Jameson (KXCI), David John (KTRU), Craig Lammers (WBGU), Billy Lee (NEAR/Caroline, Ireland), Doug Neal (WDBM), Joe Pareres (KSYM), Matt Schuyler (WFCS), Richard Schwartz (KZMU), Steve Scott (KNMX), JC Shepard (KRFC), Rob Silverberg

(WCUW), Jack Sparks (WEZU), Gerd Stassen (Radio Ems-Vechte-Welle, Germany), Raúl Tejeiro (Cabildo-Mas, Uruguay), Steve Terrell (KSFR), Chad Williams (WCBN), Rein Wortelboer (Radio Venray, Holland) and Jonathan Strong (Ripsaw Records).

I've no idea how CMT put their list together, and frankly I'd rather not know, but this one was pretty simple, I just tallied the individual lists. What you see here are the songs on which there was some degree of consensus—hundreds more were nominated.

The CMT's list included the name of whoever had the big hit with the song, but though I started off asking people which version they liked best, I realized partway through that this was about the songs rather than the stars, so, even though performance is a considerable part of what makes a song memorable, I went with the songwriter's recorded version when I knew of one (names in **bold**), otherwise with a definitive performance (names in roman).

This resulted in a few gaucheries, no one, I think, would claim that Harlan Howard's version of *Heartaches By The Number* is better than Ray Price's, or Hank Cochran's of *A-11* than Johnny Paycheck's, but mostly it worked out OK. One thing that should be noted is that Jimmy Heap & The Melody Masters get credit for *The Wild Side Of Life* because the band's pianist, Arleigh Carter, wrote the music. Also, Harlan Howard and Hank Cochran cowrote *I Fall To Pieces* and both men have recorded it. Finally, I think **JD Miller** should be singled out for special mention—he wrote our #1.

I'm sure you'll all be horrified that certain songs aren't here, believe me, I know the feeling—about half my own choices didn't make it. Still, you gotta admit this is a shit load better than what CMT came up with.

THE 100 GREATEST SONGS IN REAL COUNTRY MUSIC

- 1 *It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels* Kitty Wells
- 2 *Your Cheatin' Heart* **Hank Williams**
- 3 *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry* **Hank Williams**
- 4 *There Stands The Glass* Webb Pierce
- 5 *Crazy* **Willie Nelson**
- 6 *Faded Love* **Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys**
- 7 *Walkin' The Floor Over You* **Ernest Tubb**
- 8 *He Stopped Loving Her Today* George Jones
- 9 *Pancho & Lefty* **Townes Van Zandt**
- 10 *Long Black Veil* Lefty Frizzell
- 11 *Together Again* **Buck Owens**
- 12 *Heartaches By The Number* **Harlan Howard**
- 13 *The Wild Side Of Life* **Jimmy Heap & The Melody Masters**
- 14 *Ring Of Fire* Johnny Cash
- 15 *Honky Tonk Man* **Johnny Horton**
- 16 *Mama Tried* **Merle Haggard**
- 17 *She Thinks I Still Care* **Dickey Lee**
- 18 *Folsom Prison Blues* **Johnny Cash**
- 19 *You Win Again* **Hank Williams**
- 20 *Dallas* **Jimmie Dale Gilmore**
- 21 *Blue Moon Of Kentucky* **Bill Monroe**
- 22 *Streets Of Bakersfield* **Buck Owens**
- 23 *Blue Yodel #4* **Jimmie Rodgers**
- 24 *Dim Light, Thick Smoke And Loud, Loud Music* **Joe & Rose Lee Maphis**
- 25 *I Still Miss Someone* **Johnny Cash**
- 26 *D-I-V-O-R-C-E* Tammy Wynette
- 27 *Sing Me Back Home* **Merle Haggard**
- 28 *Return Of The Grievous Angel* **Gram Parsons**
- 29 *A-11* **Hank Cochran**

- 30 *I Walk The Line* **Johnny Cash**
- 31 *Pardon Me (I've Got Someone to Kill)* **Johnny Paycheck**
- 32 *Smoke, Smoke, Smoke That Cigarette* **Merle Travis**
- 33 *Stand By Your Man* Tammy Wynette
- 34 *Hello Walls* **Willie Nelson**
- 35 *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* **Carter Family**
- 36 *That's How I Got To Memphis* **Tom T Hall**
- 37 *Love's Gonna Live Here* **Buck Owens**
- 38 *Waltz Across Texas* **Ernest Tubb**
- 39 *Sin City* **Flying Burrito Brothers**
- 40 *Desperados Waitin' For a Train* **Guy Clark**
- 41 *Always Late (With Your Kisses)* **Lefty Frizzell**
- 42 *Lost Highway* **Leon Payne**
- 43 *Willin'* **Little Feat**
- 44 *The Bottle Let Me Down* **Merle Haggard**
- 45 *Sixteen Tons* **Merle Travis**
- 46 *Crazy Arms* **Ralph Mooney**
- 47 *Up Against The Wall, Redneck Mother* **Ray Wylie Hubbard**
- 48 *Back Street Affair* Webb Pierce
- 49 *Coal Miner's Daughter* **Loretta Lynn**
- 50 *Help Me Make It Throught The Night* **Kris Kristofferson**
- 51 *I Fall To Pieces* **Hank Cochran/Harlan Howard**
- 52 *Please Help Me I'm Falling* Hank Locklin
- 53 *Sweet Dreams* **Don Gibson**
- 54 *Waitin' For A Train* **Jimmie Rodgers**
- 55 *You're Running Wild* Louvin Brothers
- 56 *Thunderstorms And Neon Signs* **Wayne Hancock**
- 57 *You Are My Sunshine* **Jimmy Davis**
- 58 *Tennessee Waltz* **Pee Wee King**
- 59 *Streets Of Baltimore* **Tompall Glaser**
- 60 *Loving Her Was Easier Than Anything I'll Ever Do Again* **Kris Kristofferson**
- 61 *If You've Got The Money (I've Got The Time)* **Lefty Frizzell**
- 62 *King Of The Road* **Roger Miller**
- 63 *Guitars Cadillacs* **Dwight Yoakam**
- 64 *El Paso* **Marty Robbins**
- 65 *Coat Of Many Colors* **Dolly Parton**
- 66 *Four Strong Winds* **Ian Tyson**
- 67 *Wolfman Of Del Rio* **Terry Allen**
- 68 *Wine Me Up* **Faron Young**
- 69 *She's Got You* **Hank Cochran** (as *He's Got You*)
- 70 *Mama's Hungry Eyes* **Merle Haggard**
- 71 *I Never Go Around Mirrors* **Lefty Frizzell**
- 72 *Hell Yes, I Cheated* Patty Booker
- 73 *Every Night About This Time* **Dave Alvin**
- 74 *Big City* **Merle Haggard**
- 75 *Amarillo Highway* **Terry Allen**
- 76 *Blue Eyes Cryin' In The Rain* Willie Nelson
- 77 *Jackson* Johnny Cash & June Carter
- 78 *Man Of Constant Sorrow* **Stanley Brothers**
- 79 *Is Anybody Going To San Antone* Doug Sahm
- 80 *Don't Come Home A Drinkin' (With Lovin' On Your Mind)* **Loretta Lynn**
- 81 *I Feel Like Going Home* **Charlie Rich**
- 82 *I'm Movin' On* **Hank Snow**
- 83 *Boxcars* **Butch Hancock**
- 84 *I Can't Stop Loving You* **Don Gibson**
- 85 *When Rita Leaves* **Delbert McClinton**
- 86 *Born To Lose* **Ted Daffan**
- 87 *Knoxville Girl* Louvin Brothers
- 88 *(Now And Then There's A) Fool Such As I* Hank Snow
- 89 *The Cold Hard Facts Of Life* Porter Wagoner
- 90 *Time Changes Everything* **Tommy Duncan**
- 91 *Pick Me Up On Your Way Down* **Harlan Howard**
- 92 *I Want To Be A Cowboy's Sweetheart* **Patsy Montana**
- 93 *I Don't Hurt Anymore* Hank Snow
- 94 *Ellis Unit One* **Steve Earle**
- 95 *Broken Moon* **John Lilly**
- 96 *He'll Have To Go* Jim Reeves
- 97 *Fist City* Loretta Lynn
- 98 *She Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye* **Mickey Newbury**
- 99 *I Heard Mama Callin'* **James Hand**
- 100 *Country Music Hall Of Pain* **Rattlesnake Annie**

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REVIEWS CODE

***** Killer
***** What's not to like?
**** Must try harder
*** Why did they bother?
** Piss on this noise
? I don't get it

TEXAS FOLKLIFE RESOURCES

You see the word 'Benefit' and you know someone's in trouble, and the round of fundraisers for Texas Folklife Resources, in Austin, Houston and Fort Worth, this month are, unfortunately, a public acknowledgment that the private, nonprofit best known for showcasing Texas' wealth of ethnic musics is in a state of financial crisis and needs all its friends to rally round.

I will not pretend I have always cast a kindly eye on TFR. Its policy of putting on high dollar, big name, formal events at the money pit Paramount Theatre in downtown Austin has been an unmitigated disaster, taking both the "folk" and the "life" out of Folklife. The one that especially pissed me off was a Woody Guthrie Tribute—sponsored by a fucking bank! What does this tell you? The blindingly obvious miscalculation in the Paramount strategy is thinking that patrons of the arts, whether old money or dot commers, give a shit about Conjunto, Polka, Cajun, Zydeco, Texas Country, Western Swing, Woody Guthrie, Cindy Walker or Freddy Fender. Going broke will, hopefully, bring TFR back to earth.

On the other hand, the same people stage the marvellous Accordion Kings festivals, of which the first was perhaps the single most remarkable event I've ever attended, and if the second International Accordion Festival in San Antonio was somewhat of an alienating shambles, the first was ultra-cool (incidentally, TFR is no longer associated with IAF, and no one seems to know if there'll be another one this year). TFR also puts on many great shows that *don't* revolve round the accordion and sponsors an admirable apprenticeship program in which experienced masters pass on their knowledge to young students.

TFR's underlying problem is that on the pursestrings level, Texas, particularly Republican Texas, has little interest in music, much less in ethnic music. An irony of the Paramount events is that liberal Austin, where TFR is based, has always been far less hospitable than Houston, or even goddamn *Round Rock*, which ponied up enough money to host Accordion Kings for three years when the City of Austin wouldn't part with one thin dime. For all the lip service paid to Texas music, now that, thanks to ex-Governor Shrub, the state is broke, even the token trickles of funding are drying up.

In Louisiana, the parking lots of Acadiana music venues have to be large enough to accommodate tour buses because Cajun and Zydeco are an accepted part of the deal—tourists *expect* to hear local music. In Texas, they don't. San Antonio is the state's #1 tourist destination, but I doubt one visitor in a thousand has even heard of Conjunto, and they're sure not going to be exposed to any. It's not about language, you think any of those Ohioans in Mulate's actually understand French, let alone Cajun French? In Louisiana, to the benefit of many great musicians if also a bunch of useless hacks, folklife is a basic component of the experience, just like the food.

If much of Louisiana's cultural pride is informed by self-interest, it's because they grasp the economic impact of being different from anyplace else, so music is valued if only because it's valuable. Texas Bullshit includes bragging that Texas Music is bigger and better and more plentiful than anywhere else, but in practice, well try finding Texas Cajun, Conjunto, Country, Polka, Swing or Zydeco and see where it gets you. For the last 15 years, Texas Folklife Resources has been primarily responsible for presenting the autochthonous musics of Texas outside their own communities and for this they should be supported.

JC

THOMAS FRASER LONG GONE LONESOME BLUES

(Nel Music*****.5)

Recently, I observed that no roots performer in his or her right mind would be boycotting France or Germany this, or any other, summer, and if you were able to check trans-Atlantic flights during the May-September European festival season, you'd spot a whole bunch of familiar faces. The Continent has long been an important, even essential, market for indie American roots artists, and even if, as often happens, they only click in one specific country, many have found touring Europe far more rewarding, not just for the bank account but also for morale, than touring the States.

Explaining why Europe is so disproportionately significant to the American roots market is far too ambitious an undertaking for this space, but there are a couple three really gross generalizations I think are worth making, though, of course, things may have changed radically in the 15 years I've been gone. One is that Europeans tend to like their music a little rawer/purer than Americans, another is that they tend to be more loyal, as witness the fact that rockabilly never had to be revived in Europe, yet another is that European music fans tend to be competitive. This last is, or anyway was, particularly true of music writers, who in my day would rather be the first to write up an unknown act than trade blow jobs with a chart-topping pop diva, but one-upping your friends and turning them on to someone they didn't know about is, or anyway was, at least half the fun of record buying.

Finally, European music fans tend to be very dedicated. They subscribe to obscure little magazines, comb liner notes and credits, doggedly follow up on references. For instance, when Butch Hancock first came over, he already has a substantial audience simply because of the song credits on Joe Ely's albums. When Terry Allen and Townes Van Zandt came to London, staggering numbers of people brought along complete sets of LPs to be signed, albums that, long before the Internet, were difficult enough to find in America, let alone Europe.

However, while I've dealt with many people who've dedicated enormous amounts of time, energy and money to their love of American music, indeed quite a few who've dedicated their lives to it, I've recently discovered the über-fan, the Perfect Master before whom the rest of us can only kneel in homage. Thomas Fraser, who was born in 1927 and died in 1978, didn't just love the music, he absorbed it so completely that he could make it almost as well as the artists he admired and far better than most all of their American disciples and imitators.

On the face of it, his album seems utterly unlikely. A fisherman-crofter in the Shetland Islands acquires a taste for American music from the radio, buys records, guitars and tape recorders and makes some of the greatest recordings of American music you will ever hear. It's hard to convey just how remote the Shetlands are, 150 miles north of the already desolate north coast of Scotland, past the Orkney Islands and closer to Norway than England, they were, in fact, once Danish. The closest American parallel with Fraser's location would be to imagine an artist of Bill Neely's stature emerging not merely from the Aleutians but the Near Islands beyond them.

How Fraser's passion originated is not known, most likely from listening to the US Forces Network out of Frankfurt, Germany, long the only station in Europe which broadcast hillbilly and 'race' music, or possibly to Mexican border stations (XERF's Paul Kallinger once told me he got mail from British listeners). Amazingly, with not much more than 20,000 people, the Shetlands did have a record store, though everything Fraser wanted had to be special ordered from the mainland (the family still has most of those 78s). What is known is that in 1953, shortly after electricity first came to the Shetlands, he bought a top of the line Grundig reel-to-reel, then advanced technology, and a series of guitars, culminating, in 1961, with a Levin Goliath, a Swedish instrument described by *Guitarist* as "the best kept secret of the guitar world," major financial investments for a man in a precarious occupation.

With them, and his extraordinary talent, he recorded his unique versions of songs by Hank Williams, the Mills and Delmore Brothers, Hank Snow, Carl Smith, Tex Ritter, Nat 'King' Cole, Eddie Dean, Wilf Carter, Big Bill Broonzy, The Inkspots and, his particular favorite, Jimmie Rodgers (after hearing him for the first time, Fraser ordered a copy of every available record). Fraser was painfully shy and, though locally famous—like many isolated communities, the Shetlands have a long tradition of and appreciation for homemade music—he performed very rarely, under great pressure from friends and family, at Burra village hall, never coming out from behind the curtain, but he recorded thousands of songs in the privacy of his home.

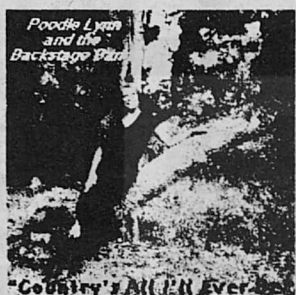
A couple of lo-fi cassettes of Fraser's music were released in the 80s, but in the late 90s, Karl Simpson undertook the daunting task of transferring 600 surviving songs from 50 year old tapes to CD and with the help of a BBC sound engineer (not to mention the meticulous care with which Fraser had balanced his vocals and guitar) ended up with a superb testimonial to his grandfather's native genius. With 25 tracks, this album barely scratches the surface of Fraser's legacy (even more tapes have surfaced since this project was launched), and a second CD is already planned for late 2003. Made for Fraser's own satisfaction, and to his own exacting standards, this is music in its purest form, utterly untainted not simply by commerce but even showmanship.

JC

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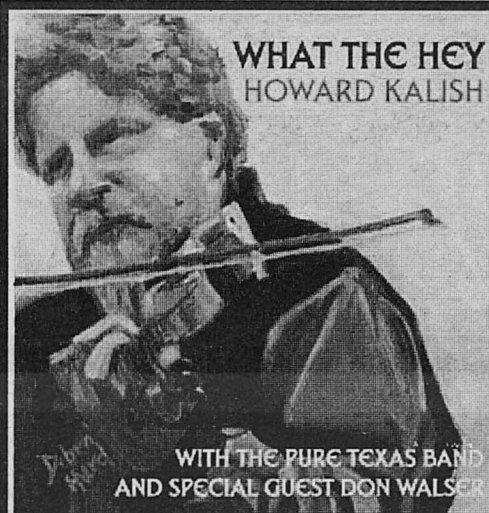
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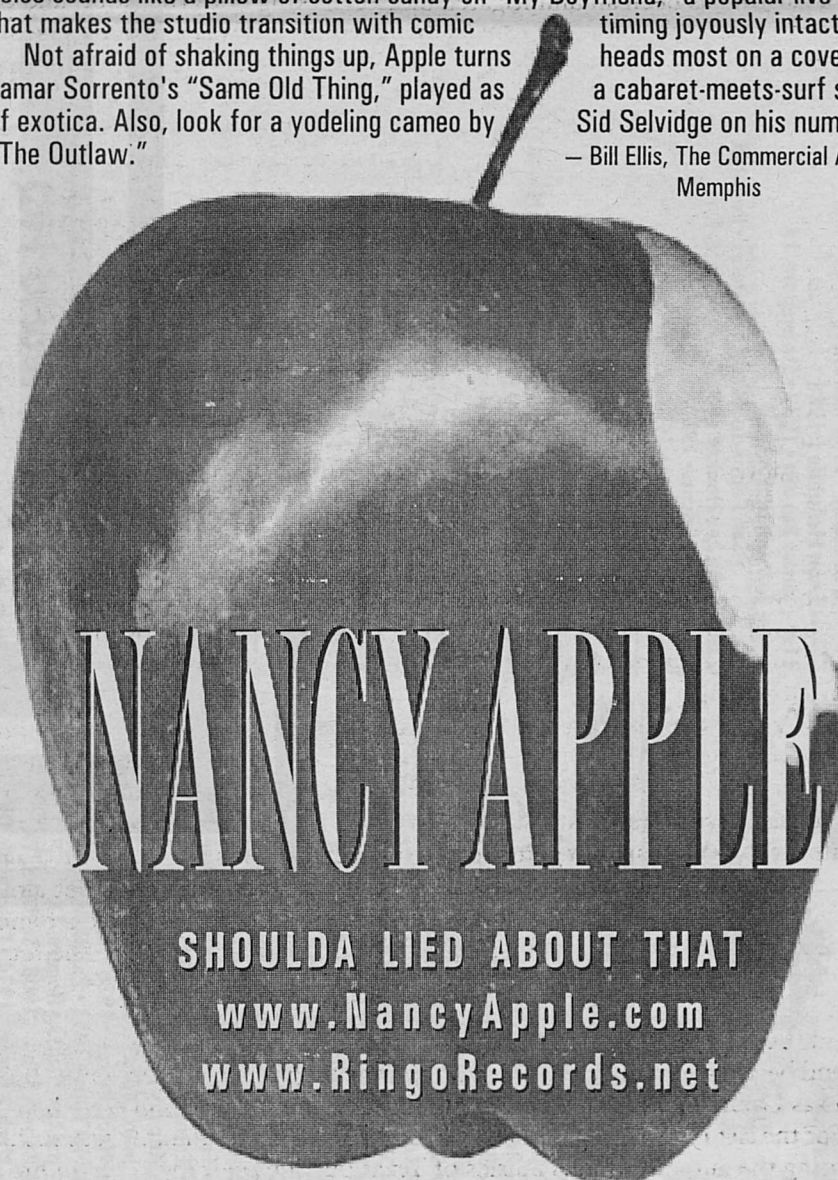
Cornell Hurd

Nancy Apple is a Memphis treasure who lends both humor and poignancy to
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honky-tonk world.

She rolls out "The Kind to Break a Heart" like a female Buddy Holly while her
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 ----- Piano Red † 1985
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 ----- Hank Cochran • 1935 • Isola, MS
 ----- Betty Jack Davis † 1953
 ----- Leo Soileau † 1980
 3rd -- Shelton Dunaway • 1934 • Monroe, LA
 4th -- Lee Martin • 1929 • Golden Meadow, LA
 ----- Frankie Ford • 1939 • Gretna, LA
 ----- Mark O'Connor • 1962 • Seattle, WA
 5th -- Tuts Washington † 1984
 6th -- TK Hulin • 1943 • St Martinville, LA
 ----- Memphis Minnie † 1973
 7th -- Felice Bryant • 1925 • Milwaukee, MN
 ----- Esther Phillips † 1984
 8th -- Knocky Parker • 1918 • Palmer, TX
 ----- Juan Lopez • 1922 • Jackson Co, TX
 ----- Webb Pierce • 1926 • West Monroe, LA
 ----- Mel Tillis • 1932 • Pahokee, FL
 ----- Joe Tex • 1933 • Rogers, TX
 9th -- Robert Shaw • 1908 • Stafford, TX
 ----- Merle Kilgore • 1934 • Chickasha, OK
 ----- Aldus Mouton • 1941 • Cankton, LA
 ----- Jesse Ashlock † 1976
 ----- Jerry Garcia † 1995
 10th -- Louise Massey • 1902 • Hart Co, TX
 ----- Leo Fender • 1907 • Buena Park, CA
 ----- Wanna Coffman • 1911 • Roanoke, TX
 ----- Jimmy Dean • 1928 • Plainview, TX
 ----- Lucille Bogan † 1948
 11th -- Clint West • 1938 • Vidrine, LA
 ----- Percy Mayfield † 1984
 12th -- Percy Mayfield • 1920 • Minden, LA
 ----- Buck Owens • 1929 • Sherman, TX
 ----- Porter Wagoner • 1930 • West Plains, MO
 ----- Ronnie Dawson • 1939 • Dallas, TX
 ----- Rod Bernard • 1940 • Opelousas, LA
 ----- Joe Tex † 1982
 13th -- King Curtis † 1971
 14th -- Johnny Burnette † 1964
 ----- Roy Buchanan † 1988
 15th -- Bobby Helms • 1935 • Bloomington, IN
 ----- Don Rich • 1941 • Olympia, WA
 ----- Big Bill Broonzy † 1958
 ----- Lawrence Walker † 1968
 16th -- Chuck Guillory • 1919 • Mamou, LA
 ----- Durwood Haddock • 1934 • Lamesco, TX
 ----- Hugh 'Cookie' Thierry • 1936 • Jennings, LA
 ----- Robert Johnson † 1938
 ----- Champ Hood • 1952 • Spartenburg, SC
 ----- Norman Petty † 1984
 17th -- Walter Brown • 1917 • Dallas, TX
 ----- Wayne Raney • 1921 • Wolf Bayou, AR
 ----- Jimmy Donley • 1929 • Gulfport, MS
 ----- Guitar Gable • 1937 • Bellevue, LA
 ----- Kevin Welch • 1955 • Long Beach, CA
 ----- Maria McKee • 1964 • Los Angeles, CA
 ----- Dorsey Burnette † 1979
 18th -- Curtis Jones • 1906 • Naples, TX
 ----- Hank Penny • 1918 • Birmingham, AL
 ----- Johnny Preston • 1939 • Port Arthur, TX
 ----- Mark Rubin • 1966 • Stillwater, OK

- 19th -- Al Ferrier • 1935 • Montgomery, LA
 ----- Johnny Nash • 1940 • Houston, TX
 20th -- Jim Reeves • 1924 • Carthage, TX
 ----- Don Leady • 1949 • Alton, IL
 ----- Leon McAuliffe † 1988
 21st -- James Burton • 1939 • Shreveport, LA
 ----- Joaquin Diaz • 1960
 ----- San Pedro de Macris, Dominican Republic
 22nd -- John Lee Hooker • 1917 • Clarksdale, MS
 ----- Marie Falcon • 1920 • Rayne, LA
 ----- Dale Hawkins • 1938 • Goldmine, LA
 ----- Marvin Denton • 1956 • Racine, WI
 ----- Hociel Thomas † 1952
 23rd -- Tex Williams • 1917 • Ramsey, IL
 ----- Hoyle Nix † 1985
 24th -- Big Boy Arthur Crudup • 1905 • Forest, MS
 ----- Wynonie Harris • 1915 • Omaha, NB
 ----- Carl Mann • 1942 • Huntingdon, TN
 ----- Nat Stuckey † 1988
 25th -- Chelo Silva • 1922 • Brownsville, TX
 ----- Elvis Costello • 1955 • London, UK
 ----- Cliff Bruner † 2000
 26th -- Rockin' Dopsie † 1993
 27th -- Wade Fruge • 1916 • Eunice, LA
 ----- Carter Stanley • 1925 • McClure, VA
 ----- Elroy Dietzel • 1927 • Seguin, TX
 ----- Charlene Hancock • 1938 • Morton, TX
 ----- Fernest Arceneaux • 1940 • Duralde, LA
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