

# 3<sup>rd</sup> COAST MUSIC

DAYNA KURTZ

#92/181 SEPTEMBER 2004



JOHN THE REVEALATOR  
CHARLES EARLE's B-Sides  
FAR #61

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

NELS ANDREWS

•  
THE ARMSTRONG TWINS

•  
ASYLUM STREET SPANKERS

•  
CLARENCE 'GATEMOUTH' BROWN

•  
JOHNNY BUSH

•  
MELONIE CANNON

•  
JOE ELY

•  
CHRISSY FLATT

•  
ROBERT JOHNSON

•  
*LIVING LIFE WITHOUT  
LOVING THE BEATLES*

•  
HE PABST

•  
POR VIDA  
A Tribute To The Songs Of  
Alejandro Escovedo

•  
JENNY REYNOLDS

•  
THE RIZDALES

•  
BIG MAMA THORNTON

•  
TRES CHICAS



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*"Dayna Kurtz's voice is a deep-hued garnet of lifeblood and beauty, and on her third full-length CD, 'Beautiful Yesterday', she places the great big gem in settings that further enhance it."*

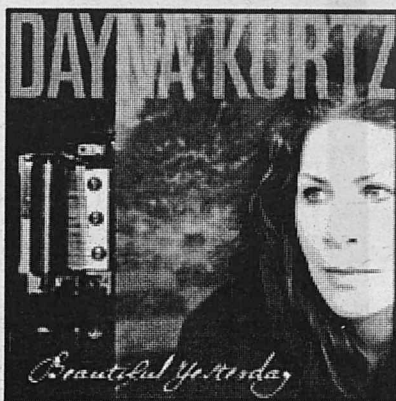
*— Pamela Murray Winters, Washington Post*

*"What makes 'Beautiful Yesterday' so inspiring isn't just the vast range of material. Nor is it her uncommonly distinctive voice, which cuts straight to the heart with a deep, soulful melancholy... her precious gift is how she deftly puts her own stamp on almost anyone else's song."*

*— Wayne Robins, Billboard*

*"Kurtz has an instantly recognizable voice, an almost hoarse whisper full of weary passion that sounds both comforting and dangerous, a voice on the edge of enlightenment or madness."*

*— J-Poet, Harp*



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## #1 VA: Touch My Heart; Tribute To Johnny Paycheck

- (Sugar Hill) \*AB/\*KD/\*KF/\*MA/\*RC/\*QB/\*SF/\*SH/\*T&L/\*TA  
 2 The Hoyle Brothers: Back To The Door (Loose Roots) \*BR/\*DB/\*FM/\*KC/\*MF/\*MT/\*RH/\*S&D  
 3 Steve Earle: The Revolution Starts Now (Artemis) \*DL/\*DY/\*EB/\*JP/\*N&T/\*SC/\*SG/\*WR  
 4 Drive-By Truckers: Dirty South (New West) \*AN/\*JQB/\*MY/\*ST/\*T&C/\*3RC/\*TW/\*UC  
 5= Jon Dee Graham: The Great Battle (New West) \*DF/\*DT/\*JB  
 Floyd Tillman: The Influence (Heart Of Texas) \*DC/\*JH/\*TS  
 6 Bill Passalacqua: Long Way Home (Reckless Pedestrian) \*MD/\*GS  
 7 VA: Por Vida; Tribute To The Songs Of Alejandro Escovedo (Or) \*HG/\*JS  
 8 Kieran Kane & Kevin Welch: You Can't Save Everybody (Compass) \*R&H  
 9 I See Hawks In L.A.: Grapevine (Western Seeds) \*DO/\*HT  
 10 Nora O'Connor: 'Til The Dawn (Bloodshot) \*BF/\*TJ  
 11 Geraint Watkins: Dial 'W' For Watkins (Yep Roc) \*BB/\*JF  
 12= Todd Snider: East Nashville Skyline (Oh Boy!) \*LW/\*RU  
 VA: Unbroken Circle (Dualtone) \*CL/\*DA  
 13 The Meat Purveyors: Pain By Numbers (Bloodshot) \*RMS/\*XR  
 14 Dave Alvin: Ashgrove (Yep Roc) \*DWT  
 15= Ruthie Foster: Stages (Blue Corn) \*ND  
 The Rizzales: Bar & Lounge (Willyboy) \*BP/\*DWB/\*FS  
 16 Eleven Hundred Springs: Bandwagon (Palo Duro) \*DS/\*TG  
 17 James Talley: Journey (Cimarron) \*BL/\*RJ  
 18 Jason Wilber: King For A Day (Wilbertone) \*MO  
 19 VA: Stay All Night; Buddy Holly's Country Roots (West Texas Roots) \*CP/\*JT  
 20= Elizabeth Cook: This Side Of The Moon (Hog County) \*LB  
 Dave Van Ronk: and the tin pan bended (Smithsonian Folkways) \*DJ/\*MR  
 21= Bobby Flores: Festival Favorites (Yellow Rose) \*RM  
 The Notorious Cherry Bombs (UniversalSouth) \*KR  
 22= Nathan: Jimson Weed (Nettwerk) \*JR/\*SR  
 The Sadies: Favourite Colors (Yep Roc) \*JM  
 23 Junior Brown: Down Home Chrome (Telarc) \*NA  
 24 Jason Ringenberg Empire Builders (Yep Roc) \*DN  
 25= Nels Andrews: Sunday Shoes (Little Kiss) \*JCS  
 Otis Gibbs: One Day Our Whispers (Benchmark)  
 Terri Hendrix: The Art of Removing Wallpaper (Wilory) \*TT  
 26 Dale Watson: Dreamland (Audium) \*RR  
 27= Kate Campbell: Portable Kate Campbell (Compadre) \*AR  
 Dr John: N'Awlinz Dis Dat or D'Udda (Blue Note) \*MB  
 28= Cowboy Jack Clement: Guess Things Happen That Way (Dualtone) \*TF  
 29= Laura Love: You Ain't Got No Easter Clothes (Koch) \*PP  
 Slim Cessna's Auto Club: The Bloudy Tenant Truth Peace  
 (Alternative Tentacles) \*R78  
 Jesse Sykes & The Sweet Hereafter: Oh, My Girl (Barsuk) \*DP  
 30= Steve Bice: Sixty Minutes Of Sin (SinCitizen) \*MP  
 Kathy Bloom: Changed Forever (Nash) \*RW  
 Patrick Brickel: (Songs From The) Pink Sofa (Trailer) \*TO  
 Bobby Huckaby: Just Me (self) \*EW  
 Dayna Kurtz: Beautiful Yesterday (Kismet) \*CD  
 Li'l Bit & The Customatics, Movin On (self) \*BC  
 Graham Parker: Your Country (Bloodshot) \*BS  
 Pierce Pettis: Great Big World (Compass) \*FW  
 Tom Phillips: High Flyer (self) \*RA  
 Rod Picott: Girl From Arkansas (Welding Rod) \*KM  
 Harvey Reid & Joyce Andersen: Kindling The Fire (Woodpecker) \*SMJ  
 Billy Joe Shaver: Billy And The Kid (Compadre) \*GM  
 The Tarbox Ramblers (Rounder) \*BW  
 VA: Medicine Show Volume 3 (Acadiana Arts Council) \*HP  
 Kenny White: Symphony in 16 Bars (self) \*SM



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**\*XX = DJ's ALBUM OF THE MONTH**

Freeform American Roots is compiled from reports provided by 139 freeform DJs in the US, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Uruguay. More information can be found at [www.accd.edu/tcmn/far](http://www.accd.edu/tcmn/far)

# JOHNNY BUSH • HONKY TONIC

(BGM \*\*\*.5)

**B**otox?! As you know, Bush's promising national career as 'The Country Caruso' was scuppered by Spastic Dysphonia, a neurological condition that affects the vocals chords, obviously no asset to a singer. Over the years, voice building techniques helped him recover about 70% of his vocal range and he established himself as a regional star, but recently he's been having Botox treatments on his larynx, and the results are little short of miraculous—coming up for 70 years old, he sounds as good as he did 30 years ago. One can't really call this a comeback album as he never stopped recording, but it does rather yank the rug from under his post-1974 catalog. Presumably for marketing reasons, BGM teamed him up on three songs with Texas Music youngsters, of which one, a duet of Clay Blaker's *Some People Just Get Lucky*, with Stephanie Urbina Jones, is quite charming, and another, *Ol' What's Her Name*, with the dreadful Kevin Fowler, is surprisingly inoffensive, but the third, Willie Nelson's *Gotta Get Drunk*, with the utterly worthless Cooder Graw and Willie himself, is a total disaster, a truly rancid good old frat boys turd. It's no coincidence that this tasteless mess is the only track that doesn't feature the otherwise omnipresent Bobby Flores (fiddle, electric and rhythm guitars, mandolin and string arrangements). #12 aside though, from the first unmistakable notes of Flores' fiddle intro to *What Made Milwaukee Famous* to Johnny & Willie's well-seasoned closing duet of *Whiskey River*, a tune they both know pretty well, you're in the hands of a resurgent giant. Even the tracks that smack a little of filler come across well, and when Bush has something solid he can really sink his teeth into, notably Becky Hobbs' *Jones On The Jukebox* (with Tommy Alverson), Ray Price's *I'll Be There* and *Each Time*, and Dallas Frazier's *Did We Have To Come This Far To Say Goodbye*, you can hear how enormous he could have been. Of course, nothing can give him back those years of stardom he missed out on, but it must be an enormous satisfaction to him to have his voice back the way it was, and it sure is an enormous satisfaction to hear the great honker tonker the way he used to be. **JC**

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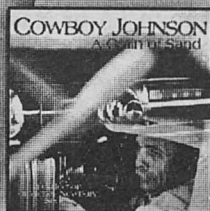
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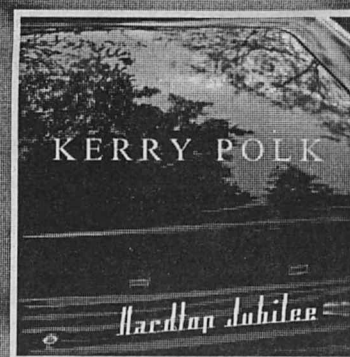
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# CULT

## THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF SINGER-SONGWRITERS BECOME A LEGEND IN YOUR SPARE TIME

CONCEPT & DESIGN BY JOHN CONVERT, PO Box 000, GRAPEVINE, TX

**O**K, I really fucked up. I could have sworn I had eight pages of copy but when I came to paste up, there were only seven and I have to be at the printers tomorrow. So this is recycled crap or historic Conquestiana, depending how you look at it, from *Music City Texas* #20 (April 1991).

### OBJECT

Descending into a subterranean world of folk cellars and basement clubs, your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to become a Living Legend, famous everywhere in the world except LA, New York and Nashville. As a singer-songwriter, armed only with a guitar, a loose-leaf notebook, your native wits and, of course, your Talent, you set out to win cult points (Kudos), combat Monsters (agents, managers, promoters, record company executives, publishers, lawyers, etc.), evade Traps (covers, contracts, co-writing, concerts, etc.) and build a small but fanatical clique of Cultie

### RULES

Rule One: there are no rules. You make them up as you go along. However, certain proven strategies may help you in your quest,

### BORN TO LOSE

Kudos are lost for every mile between your birthplace and Lubbock, TX. Avoid being born in New York or Southern California if at all possible. Other locations also pose serious credibility problems (e.g. Dallas), some have hidden traps (e.g. Oklahoma Attitude). Kudos are gained for any Local Hero in the family, but a famous or filthy rich parent is a crippling liability.

### SECRET IDENTITY

A nickname, or even an alias, can be a wise long term investment. Creative toggling between it and your real name will make you hard to track down and can be used to disarm various Traps (see Covers and Co-Writing below).

### CLASS DISTINCTIONS

Start writing, playing and, best of all, recording, while in High School. Dropping out is optional as college will provide the venue(s) and audience for opening gambits, but shun big name, jock, denominational and Mickey Mouse institutions. Never join a fraternity or sorority, under no circumstances study music and be wary of scholastic or athletic distinctions, all of these can come to haunt you. Above all, do not graduate, least of all in any remotely useful subject. CULT™ is best played without a safety net.

### LOST HIGHWAYS

The more rambling the better. Thirdhand Cadillacs are best, but any gas guzzler large enough to sleep in will do (custom vans unacceptable). Bonus Kudos for time spent in New Mexico (except Taos, see Penalties), Colorado, Montana, Northern California, Louisiana, Amsterdam and/or London (but only if you live in a squat), Paris and Mexico. Kudos for each month spent without electricity and/or sleeping on couches, beaches or pool tables.

### TAKE THIS JOB

CULT™ players should try to survive on their Art, but Kudos can be won by working on farms, ranches, oil fields and construction sites, carpentry, cooking, bar tending or truck driving (bonus for White Freight liners). Virtually all salaried or white-collar positions are extremely risky. In BARDS & BARS™, the 1st edition of CULT™, Kudos were awarded for being a Vietnam draft-dodger. These now go to Vietnam vets (combat units only).

### LOCAL HERO

By mid-game, you should have established a home base, developed a following and rented a PO Box. Austin, TX, carries the largest bonus, but you may prefer to sacrifice a few points to avoid competing with other established players, some of whom may have even progressed to ADVANCED CULT™. Moving to LA or Nashville is an extremely radical strategy, sharply increasing the risk of accidental Discovery, and not recommended except for experienced players.

### PASS THE HAT

Become a house 'star,' with bonus Kudos for every place you play that goes out of business. Not showing up for gigs, or being too wasted to play, will endear you to hard-core Cultie. The ultimate goal is to fill any room, anywhere, and still know everyone in the audience by their first names. Eventually your quest must take you into uncharted territory, potentially swarming with 10%ers. House concerts and playing abroad will help shield you from Discovery.

### MAKING TRACKS

Records must be self-released and the masters should be lost, stolen or otherwise disappear after the first and only pressing. Kudos for having your own label, doing your own artwork, duplication and assembly. Ideally your album(s) should not be available anywhere, even at your gigs. Eccentric and marginal indie stores are acceptable but only if you never go back to check on your consignment.

### THE RACE IS OFF

Never enter a songwriting competition. You might lose. Worse still, you might win. Why take chances?

### STOP PRESS

Avoid all but small, dedicated Cultie magazines (bonus Kudos for every use of "genius"). Most entertainment journalists are easy to confuse, or gross out, and some fancy footwork should convince them you're an unsuitable case for treatment. Not being on a label, will ensure that your music is only played, if at all, on college and community stations. As for TV, if it isn't access, forget it.

### HERE BE MONSTERS

#### WHO NEEDS ENEMIES?

Inevitably, some misguided fan will want to 'help' your 'career.' Effective counter strategies are smoking grass (useful short term memory loss), real or feigned lunacy, or heavy alcohol or drug abuse. Any of these will allow you to make empty promises while enhancing your reputation as a 'character.'

### PIECE OF YOUR HEART

Sensing commercial potential, professional agents, managers etc, are more tenacious than the amateurs. Max out your evasion techniques—CULT™ players must never keep appointments, give anyone their real address or return calls—and arrange to meet next day.

### WARTS AND ALL

Previous defenses can be counterproductive against indie labels, which will consider your eccentricities, so carefully calculated to make you commercially repellent, as assets. Make outrageous demands but grab any reasonable foreign deal (big Kudos).

### DESIGNING LABELS

Though they have the attention span and life expectancy of gnats, major label A&R men can be very dangerous. Their deadliest weapon, destroyer of many a promising CULT™ player, is CACK

(Complete Artistic Control, Kid). You can make one album, preferably solo, for a major label and retain CULT™ status, but, unless you're lucky enough to be dropped right away, your only hope is to leave the country and hide until your record is a collector's item.

### SNARES & PITFALLS

#### DOTTED LINES

Confronted with any kind of contract, simply remember the Golden Rule of CULT™:

NEVER SIGN ANYTHING

### HASN'T DIANE GOT ANYTHING?

A recording artists with good taste may stumble across your work, no matter how diligent you are, but, fortunately, such are very rare, and usually overruled. The first stage of this Trap, the Option, will normally fizzle out if you ignore it long enough, while the remote danger that a song of yours may actually be covered can be virtually eliminated by refusing to give up any part of the publishing. If worst comes to worst, this will at least ensure that your song is not released as a single or promoted for airplay, while a nickname/alias, see above, will prove invaluable—just make sure the credit is your given name,

### DOUBLE JEOPARDY

Co-writing undermines your credibility with Culties, calling your unique Talent into question (did Keats and Shelley co-write odes? I think not). It offends against a basic CULT™ principle by weakening your control. However experienced, your writing partner may succumb to a Monster or Trap and take you down too.

### You Don't Know Me

As a Local Hero, you may be asked to support visiting Pseudo-Cult artists or groups, or even to tour with them. This may seem risky, but few Monsters bother with the opening act, so the danger is minimal and outweighed by the exposure to potential Culties.

### SPITBALLS

Remember, these are not rules but general guidelines, and many players have achieved great success with reverse strategies that contradict them. Some demi-vierges have managed to survive for decades in the twilight fringes of major labels, while others have achieved critical and/or financial success in unrelated fields, making them immune to Monsters and Traps.

### EMERGENCY EXITS

Even when your CULT™ status seems hopelessly compromised, the most desperate situations can be remedied by death. Suicide is, of course, the easy way out, but whatever the circumstances, your termination should be as ambiguous as possible. Truly great CULT™ players can create the impression of being stone dead while actually alive—and vice versa.

### ADVANCED CULT™

Apparent weaknesses can be turned into strengths and seemingly sound positions can be subverted by a simple twist of fate, the wrong person chancing into a recondite club, a well-meaning fan putting your tape into enemy hands. As your CULT™ status develops, your quest becomes ever more perilous; the price of obscurity is eternal vigilance. For further insights into successful play, you should study the game plans of the Grandmasters of CULT™, such as Butch Hancock's *Crazy Like A Fox*.



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## TRES CHICAS • SWEETWATER

(Yep Roc \*\*\*\*.5)

Five years ago, when they played a sensational 3CM NotSXSW show at Threadgill's, I figured I'd soon and often be addressing the subject of Albuquerque's Hazeline and, more specifically, Tonya Lamm, who wrote or cowrote the best material and, playing the old roadie game Spot The Guv'nor, I figured to be the group's ramrod, the dynamo that kept it running. However, perhaps because Polydor declined to release their fourth album in the US, making it, like their earlier raved about German CDs, all but unavailable outside Europe, the group not only dissolved but dispersed. Lamm wound up in North Carolina and teamed up with Caitlin Cary, whose post-Whiskeytown solo career has had trouble getting off the ground, and Lynn Blakey of Glory Fountain, whoever they are. Named by a clubowner who needed something that would fit on the marquee, Tres Chicas are three lead singers who mesh together perfectly on harmonies and though ten tracks seems a bit on the thin side for a group that's been performing for five years, there's no faulting the vocals. Things get off to a slightly rocky start when producer Chris Stamey, who also plays bass, with Cary's husband Skillet Gilmore drums and Jen Gunderman piano, accordion and organs, crowds the singers on Blakey's title track, but thereafter his tendency to overproduce is more muted than usual—as all three Chicas have been on Stamey produced albums before, they may have been cracking the whip over him, or maybe he's overcoming his penchant for pop jangle. With three covers, Loretta Lynn's *Deep As Your Pocket*, unconvincing and awkward, Lucinda Williams' *Am I Too Blue?* and George Jones' *Take The Devil Out Of Me*, the originals include Hazeldine's *When You Sleep*, which appeared on *Doubleback*, and Lamm & Barton's *Foot Of The Bed*. While I think Lamm and Blakey's acoustic guitars and Cary's violin would have been enough, and the other backing is redundant, this is still, for the most part, gorgeous stuff. **JC**

## THE RIZDALES • BAR AND LOUNGE

(Willyboy \*\*\*\*.5)

Yes, these Canadian barroom honky tonkers offend against Conquest's First Law of Division of Musical Labor—don't piss around, give the fucking songs to the best singer—but in their case it's more a Class C misdemeanor than the aggravated felony committed by so many groups. Tom Dunphy is good enough that, if he didn't have any competition, you'd be OK, maybe not bowled over by his growling vocals but certainly not reaching for the Eject button. It's when Tara Dunphy steps up to the mike after Tom's opening *Sing Right Out Loud* and launches into *I Could Tell You Lies* that you realize this group is a bit special and start thinking you could spend many happy hours with them, preferably in a joint where it's OK to smoke and drink too much, if such places still exist. What Tara, who also plays fiddle and cowrote all 13 songs with Tom, does is emphasize that this isn't just hardcore country music, but exceptionally well done hardcore country music. You have to wonder what the hell's going on when an outfit out of London, Ontario, is infinitely better than the group voted Best Country Band by *Austin Chronicle* readers, The Kevin Foulterhancrosscanadianragweed Band, but, as I've said before, in these end times, you have to take your country music where you find it, and that's just as likely, if anything more likely, to be Chicago, Boston, Burlington or Canada than Texas. **JC**

## ASYLUM STREET SPANKERS SIDESHOW FEZ

(Spanks A Lot, DVD \*\*\*\*.5)

Shoot footage of a local band and you have a video that hardly anyone wants to air, shoot enough and you have a DVD that maybe enough people will want to buy. The key factor is, of course, visual appeal, whether it's the singer's tits, the guitarist's cheekbones or maybe even some unique musical schtick. To be honest, there are many acts I like to go out and hear but would never dream of watching at home, because, while they may play superbly, very few put on a show. Which is where the Spankers score, because they do. Filmed during a sold out gig at the Fez Ballroom, Portland, OR, in August 2003, this is the group post the departure of founder members Pops Bayless and Mysterious John, now of Shorty Long, and pre the embracing of the demon electricity with amplification (a move, I may say, popular with club owners). The Spankers' strengths and weaknesses are both accentuated on DVD. The simple fact is if you took out Christina Marrs and Stan Smith (and God love those Oregonians for giving Smith the only standing ovation during the introductions), there wouldn't be much left. If there are fans of performance poet Wammo, they sure don't move in my social circles, and he's even more irritating on film than he is on CD, but, by the same token, Marrs and Smith are larger than life and more than twice as natural, there's plenty of both of them, and, thanks to the miracle of Skip, you can take what you want and leave the rest. Marrs' numbers, including a bravura instrumental on musical saw, are, as always, sensational, and while this may be all too predictable, I see no reason to break the habit of a lifetime and not ask the age-old question—where's my Christina Marrs album? **JC**

## CLARENCE 'GATEMOUTH' BROWN

### TIMELESS

(Hightone \*\*\*\*.5)

Brown truly is an avatar, roots music made flesh, and if, having turned 80 last April, he's in failing health, you wouldn't know it from *Timeless*, recorded earlier this year. On it, the man whose live set can, in so many numbers, encompass jump blues, jazz, country, swing, Cajun, bluegrass, R&B and calypso, sounds as vital and creative as when he exploded onto the Houston blues scene in the late 40s. Wielding his two trademark instruments, electric guitar and fiddle, Brown, with a powerhouse Louisiana ensemble, featuring piano, trumpet, tenor sax and baritone sax on most racks, covers some old ground, *For Now So Long* was a 50s Peacock single, Jay McShann's *Jumpin' The Blues* was on *American Music, Texas Style* (1999), *Unchained Melody*, here a seven minute showstopper instrumental, was on 1995's *Man*, he's recorded *The Drifter* several times since 1975 and the soulful *Dark End Of The Highway* is on his classic album *Black Jack*, but he balances them with new material, Fletcher Henderson's *Soft Wind* [sic, this should be *Soft Winds*], Bobby Charles' melancholy *Tennessee Blues*, Duke Ellington's *Satin Doll*, Joe Zawinul's *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy* and his own Cajun(ish) instrumental *Six Levels Below Plant Life*. Looking at the current AMA chart, I'm seeing an almost unbroken bloc of not very exciting (and in the case of The Notorious Cherry Bombs, at least, downright awful) career albums by established artists, and along comes a man who's decades older than any of them and who simply dusts them all. I just hope I'm still as full of piss and vinegar when I get to Brown's age. **JC**

## JENNY REYNOLDS • BET ON THE WIND

(Pretty Okay \*\*\*\*)

First listening to Reynolds' album, which she brought with her when she relocated from Somerville, MA, to Austin, one track in particular, *The Better Of Me*, was remarkable but it reminded me of someone, and I just couldn't think who. Coming back to it, fresh from hearing Barb Donovan, I realized it wasn't just the resemblance to Donovan's sinuous and sensuous melodic lines that was nagging at me but the way Donovan and Reynolds, and not all that many other singers, Anna Fermin, Danya Kurtz, Barbara Clark and Kerry Polk come to mind, have a kind of protective barrier round their voices, no matter what's going on around them. You could say it's just good projection, but it's rare enough that when it's part of a folk-Americana package that includes maturely controlled vocals, romantic songwriting, elegant acoustic guitar picking and sympathetic production, featuring Duke Levine on electric guitars and mandolin, well, after hearing way too many flabby singer-songwriter albums, it's a relief to come across one with some muscle tone. Shame about the Peter Gabriel cover (*Mercy Street*) though. **JC**

## VA • POR VIDA; A TRIBUTE TO THE SONGS OF ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO

(Or, double CD \*\*\*\*.5)

Catching the twilight of The True Believers, I was a big supporter of Alejandro Escovedo's Orchestra, featured on the cover of *Music City Texas* #9, and, even if it sometimes outnumbered the audience, I still regard the lack of any recording of that amazing acoustic ensemble as one of the great lacunae of Austin music. We fell out over his mid-90s Watermelon albums and weren't on speaking terms until the late 90s when his board tapes masterpiece, *More Miles Than Money*, reconciled us. Last year, Escovedo was diagnosed with Hepatitis C and, like most musicians, has little or no health coverage, but if his fame and influence, respectively as a punk (The Nunns), cowpunk (Rank & File), rock & roller (The True Believers), folk-rocker (The Make Believers), glam rocker (Buick McKane) and singer-songwriter, can be overstated and certainly didn't translate into financial security, he has so many admirers among his peers, including Lucinda Williams, Steve Earle and John Cale, that a benefit album ended up as a 32 track double CD, with marvelously OTT liner notes by Dave Marsh and microscopic credits that will surely baffle most of his demographic. The problem, of course, is that a full analysis would be immensely long and ballsachingly tedious, suffice to say you might well end up burning a single CD-ROM of the tracks you actually like. **JC**

## H E PABST • DADDY'S SONGS

(self \*\*\*\*.5)

Dedicated to his three sons, this debut, which Pabst, a master carpenter in Essex County, NJ, self-deprecatingly calls "The First 30 Years," is the purest example of grassroots music I've encountered since Thomas Fraser. Pabst has had a lifetime romance with music without trying to make a living at it. An Air Force brat, born in Germany, he started on accordion at six, switched to trumpet when he was ten, got hooked on the guitar at 12, was in a succession of high school garage rock & roll bands, then joined the US Navy, playing trumpet in an orchestral ensemble and guitar with service rock and folk acts. Since 1975, he's been recording sporadically, at home and in a local studio he designed and built (judging by the pics of Taylor Made, Caldwell, NJ, he's one hell of a carpenter), and put out a couple of singles, one of which, 1981's *Melody Man/Loving You And Remembering*, apparently did well on Canadian radio. Otherwise these ten songs, which, though Pabst is not exactly married to one style, can loosely be called country/folk-rock, are homegrown music, and it's somehow very comforting to know that there are people like Herbie still out there making music for its own sake. **JC**



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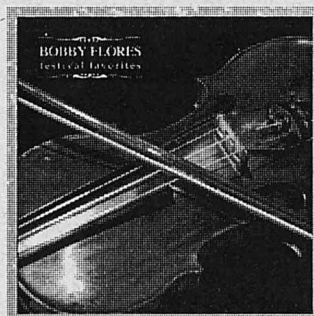
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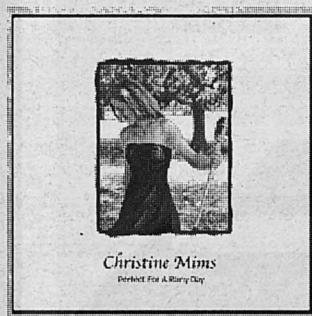
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## BIG MAMA THORNTON WITH THE MUDDY WATERS BLUES BAND—1966 BALL N' CHAIN

(Arhoolie \*\*\*\*/\*\*\*\*.5)

Despite her 1953 hit with *Hound Dog*, for which she got paid \$500 (it was on Don Robey's Peacock label, nuff said), the great blues/R&B belter had trouble keeping a good band together, but then even Muddy Waters, with one of the great blues combos, Otis Spann piano, James Cotton harmonica, Sammy Lawhorn guitar, Luther Johnson bass and Francis Clay drums, was always looking for work. Putting them together might seem like a no-brainer but Willie Mae Thornton was based in the Bay area and Waters was, of course, working out of Chicago, so it took a well connected visionary like Chris Strachwitz to make it happen. With no rehearsal, the one day (4/25/66) session had some chaotic moments and, as we all know, an all-star cast doesn't necessarily equate to a four star album, but Waters and his band helped cement Thornton's reputation, Ralph Gleason remarking of the original LP, **Big Mama & The Chicago Blues Band**, "pound for pound the best woman blues singer alive today." Eight tracks, including alternate takes of *Black Rat*, *Gimme A Penny* and a faster version of *I'm Feeling Alright*, have been added to the LP's eleven. However, six of them are also on Arhoolie's marvellous **Ball N' Chain**, along with eight from 1965, on five of which Thornton is backed by Buddy Guy and his All Stars, two featuring Walter Horton on harmonica, one on which she also plays harmonica and drums, two with Fred McDowell on acoustic slide guitar, and two backed by Bee Houston, including her original 1968 recording of the title track. A tough call, but the variety of **Ball N' Chain** makes it very appealing. Still, either one will make you wonder what on earth makes suburban white girls think they can go up against Big Mama. **JC**

## THE ARMSTRONG TWINS MANDOLIN BOOGIE

(Arhoolie \*\*\*\*.5)

Until Jane Bond covered their *8.30 Special* on her latest album, I hadn't thought of Frank & Lloyd Armstrong in some 25 years, but then along comes their first CD. Born in DeWitt, AK, in 1930, the Armstrongs were taught close harmony by their mother and started performing on Little Rock radio when they were five, hosting their own show when they were nine. Moving to LA in 1947, they were regulars on Cliffie Stone's popular radio and TV shows, then relocated in Odessa, TX, where they had their own TV show, appeared on the Louisiana Hayride and toured with Johnny Horton before moving back to Arkansas and quitting music. In 1979, Chris Strachwitz released ten 1948-49 recordings as **Hillbilly Mandolin**, which led to a new album, **Just Country Boys**, and renewed performing, curtailed in the late 80s by Lloyd's health. Influenced by the Bolick, Dixon and Bailes brothers, Frank (guitar) and Lloyd (mandolin) were one of the last of the great harmony duets to carry on traditional 30s and 40s country music, and their postwar popularity on the West Coast, in the heyday of honkytonk and Western Swing, is testimony to their talent, and to the lingering power of that tradition. Both their long out of print LPs are included on this CD. Pure hillbilly. **JC**

## CHRISSY FLATT • WALK WITH KINGS MELONIE CANNON

(self/Skaggs Family \*\*\*\*/\*)

Fond as I am of her, I have to say that Flatt has fallen into the second album trap. **Wings Of A Butterfly** may have had a rather dippy title, but on that debut she stayed inside her vocal comfort range and sequenced it like a live set, with enough folk/country/pop variety in pace and texture to keep the audience engaged. This time, she's ambitiously trying to hit notes that are only just within her reach, or, most obviously and unfortunately on the opening *Further Away*, where the "away" in the refrain consistently eludes her, a little outside it, and the 10 originals, plus The Kinks' *I'm Not Like Everybody Else* and *She Ain't Waiting For You* by Eric Hisaw, who produced and plays lead acoustic and electric guitars, while individually well-written, start to mush together. Someone once said to me, "I like Chrissy, but how often can you rewrite *Will The Wolf Survive?*" and I have to admit he has a point. However, Flatt's shortcomings are put into perspective by the schlock bluegrass/acoustic country debut of Melonie Cannon, daughter of producer Buddy Cannon, the subtext of whose bio is "I've failed at everything else, let's see if Daddy can make me a country star." George Jones, Vern Gosdin and Shania Twain are on hand to laud her voice and she certainly hits every note. Whether or not she can do it outside the studio is another matter. The fact that the credits for the people who did her makeup, hair and wardrobe are several point sizes larger than those for musicians like Jerry Douglas lead me to infer that she's just another ProTools-dependent Nashville bimbo, but even if she isn't, a clutch of "top-shelf songwriters" tie ten leaden weights round her neck (there are no originals). The difference between Flatt and Cannon is the difference between genuine home grown tomatoes and those perfectly round, waxy, bright red balls of water that look like they'd glow in the dark. With Cannon, that's all there is and there ain't no more, while Flatt has barely got started. **JC**

## GARY HALL LIVING LIFE WITHOUT LOVING THE BEATLES

(Free Speech Books, paperback \*\*\*\*)

Blame American Forces Network if you will, but I shunted myself off the pop culture mainline in the early 60s by buying, among other 45s, The Isley Brothers' *Twist And Shout*, Arthur Alexander's *Anna (Go To Him)*, Barrett Strong's *Money (That's What I Want)* and Chuck Berry's *Roll Over Beethoven*. When The Beatles covered these songs, I thought they were the limpest fucking crap ever—but then I heard their originals. Over the last 40 years, I have made no secret of, nor compromised in any way, my utter contempt for the mop-tops but I must admit that, compared to Hall, himself a Scouser (US translation: from Liverpool), I've had it easy. His life seems to have been an endless series of desperate confrontations with incredulous Beatles fans and, grading them into various categories, he's developed a series of strategies for trying to raise these unfortunates out of the musical basement, what he calls "having the talk." Frankly, he's got far more patience than I have, I say the hell with them, but if you have no use for The Beatles, or are wavering in your faith or just want a really funny read, Hall's trenchant and merciless analysis of *Maxwell's Silver Hammer* ("I'm not saying worse songs don't exist, just that I've never heard one") alone is worth the price of admission. **JC**

## NELS ANDREWS • SUNDAY SHOES

(Little Kiss/Catamount \*\*\*\*)

Keeping track of all the 'guy' albums ain't easy, I really need a magic marker and coding system to tag the ones I've listened to and remind myself whether they're worth a shit or not. In this crowd, Andrews stood out just by being the only Nels, that and having had tracks on both the first two HUAC compilations. Being "Albuquerque's smartest singer/songwriter" doesn't seem to be enough for Andrews who's aiming to be the first big thing out of Duke City since Hazeldine with a sneaky ten track album of somber, gritty High Desert short story songs, backed by the subtle folk-rock of El Paso Eyepatch, featuring ethereal harmonies by Michelle Collins and sparkling guitars and banjo work by Jeffrey Richards. I say sneaky because it didn't grab me by the throat right away, but I suddenly realized that I'd been playing it over and over and it didn't just sound better every time round, it no longer even sounded like the mildly interesting album I thought was worth another spin. Of course, all those other guys may well claim to be able to work the same kind of alchemy, but if you're as baffled by this year's monster crop of Craigs, Marks, Matts, Johns, Rons and Adams, this one stands out from the pack, not just because it's the Best 2004 Album By Someone Called Nels but because it's a real keeper. **JC**

## JOE ELY • SETTLE FOR LOVE

(Hightone \*\*\*\*)

Not by name perhaps, but on first setting foot in Austin, I found I was locally famous for an heretical line in a *Time Out* review of Ely's first UK tour with his second lineup: "If David Grissom was twice as good as he thinks he is, he'd be half as good as Jesse Taylor." While it may not have offended the label's aesthetic sensibilities the way it did those of his fans, MCA responded to the disastrous sales of 1984's **Hi-Res** (the only Ely album never reissued on CD, what does this tell you?), by casting him into the outer darkness, where he wound up making two albums for Hightone. Getting Taylor, Lloyd Maines & Ponty Bone back after their abrupt dismissal probably wasn't an option and it would be futile to pretend that the Hightone albums don't suffer by comparison with the 1977-81 MCA releases, but, heavily influenced by Springsteen and Mellencamp, they rehabilitated Ely's reputation enough for MCA to take him back in 1990. With six tracks from **Lord Of The Highway** (1987), four from **Dig All Night** (1988), originals apart from Butch Hancock's *Lord Of The Highway*, plus Merle Haggard's *White Line Fever* from **Tulare Dust** and a duet with Rosie Flores of *Love And Danger* (Flores/Ringenberg) from her **Once More With Feeling**, all remastered by the splendid Bob Stone, this sounds much better than I remember, probably because I don't have to watch Grissom's 'genius is pain' arena rock antics, which went down so badly in London clubs when Ely was originally touring this material. **JC**

## ROBERT JOHNSON KING OF THE DELTA BLUES SINGERS VOL 2

(Columbia/Legacy \*\*\*\*)

Considering that Johnson only recorded 29 songs plus 12 alternate takes, this discography is staggering—this is the 16th Johnson title to appear this millennium, the *fifth* in 2004. However, there seems no reason not to stick with Columbia/Legacy, which has a long and honorable history in this field, from the groundbreaking 1966 and 1970 **King Of The Delta Blues Singers** LPs to **The Complete Recording**. The CD reissue (1998) of **Vol 1** offered an alternate take that somehow didn't make it onto **The Complete Recordings**, while **Vol 2** only adds one of *Ramblin' On My Mind*, but though the sound quality of the box set was hailed in 1990, "the fidelity of the recordings is the best it ever has been or ever will be," one writer gushed, that was a lifetime ago in mastering technology, and, leave us face it, the off-brand labels hawking Johnson albums simply can't match Sony's technical resources. **JC**



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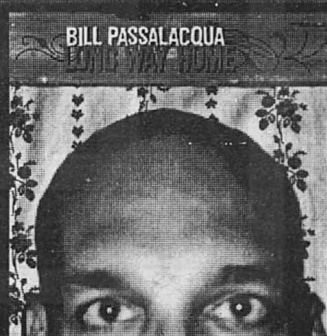
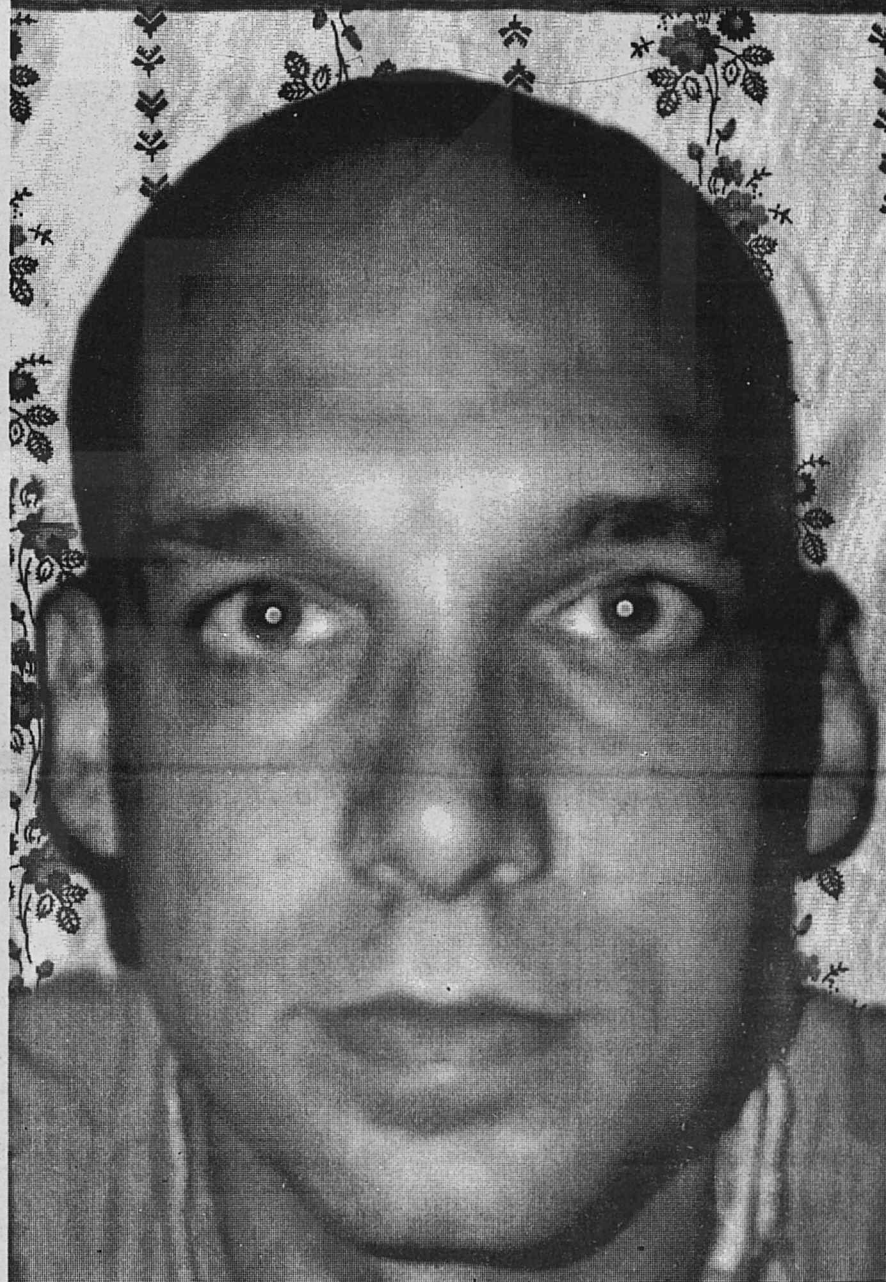
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## AND THE NOMINEES ARE... CMA Taps Mix of Veterans and Newcomers

**L**et me start with a big hello to all of my 3CM readers. It's been a couple of months since I have had new material for you. And those months have been fairly eventful in Nashville, with the culmination of a busy summer coming on August 30 when the Country Music Association announced the nominees for its 38th Annual Awards.

Things were certain to look a little different this year on CMA night, with Vince Gill opting out of his usual hosting duties for the first time in more than a decade so that he can concentrate on his career. Finally revealing a poorly kept secret, the folks at the CMA announced that award winning duo Brooks & Dunn would take over Gill's spot. (And of course I am now hopeful that the heavy demands of their hosting duties will prevent them from performing.)

The differences in this year's show don't begin and end with the hosts. Thanks to the absence of previous winners Shania Twain and Faith Hill from the list, newcomer Gretchen Wilson leads all female performers, bringing home five nominations. With the blissful absence of the diva contingent, I am thrilled to see Wilson topping the list of ladies. She is the real thing. Born to a 16-year-old mother in a hayseed hog farming town in Illinois, Wilson comes from the sort of roots that have produced many a great country singer. She may try a bit too hard with her lyrics to let us know that she is white trash. But I'd much rather hear her pedal steel drenched songs than anything Shania has ever been involved with.

There are a host of other new names on the list, including Julie Roberts, Josh Turner, Big & Rich, and Blue County just to name a few. Because of all of these fresh faces, the Horizon Award (aka Best New Artist) may be the most interesting category to watch. I had made fun of Big & Rich on this page back in the spring for their dorky name. So naturally they went out and sold a buttload of records over the summer. They will face off against Wilson, Roberts, Turner and Dierks Bentley for the Horizon. In previous years, casting a vote for this award was like picking the lesser of five evils. The artists often either sucked or were so forgettable that they stood no chance of having a lasting career. But I don't have too much problem with this group. I'm still not a fan of Big & Rich, and their plan to bring hip-hop sensibilities to country music. But the rest of the group is not bad, and Wilson will most likely win.

Leading all nominees with seven nods from the CMA is Alan Jackson. Once again, here is a situation that I have no problem with. I like Jackson. He is a genuine country singer, which is something that you couldn't say about a lot of people who have been nominated over the last 10 years. What amazes me most about Jackson is how he has managed to maintain his level of success in a country music industry that has seen so many dramatic changes since he had his first hit 13 years ago. Look at a list of CMA nominees from the early 90s, when Jackson first became an annual presence on the show, and you won't see too many other names that are still having hits. And thankfully, he hasn't had to change his style to stick around.

Aside from Wilson and Jackson, there will be a handful of interesting story lines to follow on November 9th, when the awards are handed out on CBS. Here is a sampling of those:

## CHARLES EARLE's B-Sides

**Vocal Duo of the Year:** This has been the Brooks & Dunn category for the last decade or so, other than one year when Montgomery Gentry snuck in to steal the trophy away. And frankly, I think most folks on Music Row really want to vote for somebody else just to have a little variety. As a result, I think many folks will be casting ballots for Big & Rich. Because of the constant presence of their hit *Save a Horse (Ride a Cowboy)* as the theme song of ESPN's mind-numbing coverage of poker tournaments, Big & Rich are simply getting the most exposure right now. On a sad note, the presence of a few new duos in country music means that The Bellamy Brothers were finally bumped from their annual nomination. Two genuinely nice guys who haven't had a chart hit or a major label deal in more than 15 years, the Bellamys always made the list because there just weren't enough duos. Some folks on the Row had been joking in recent years about rallying enough votes for them to win the award just once. But it appears that isn't going to happen.

**Musical Event of the Year:** With names like Jimmy Buffet, James Taylor and Norah Jones listed alongside their country collaborators, this category looks more like the summer performance schedule at a major amphitheatre than something from the CMA Awards. Throw in Uncle Kracker's duet with Kenny Chesney, and things look even weirder.

**Entertainer of the Year:** This group of usual suspects is getting painfully familiar. Brooks & Dunn, Tim McGraw, Toby Keith, Kenny Chesney and Alan Jackson. In looking at the monopoly these artists seem to have in the top category of country awards, two things stand out to me. First off, even though there are a handful of interesting new artists out there, none of them seems able to rise into an elite status in the minds of voters. Secondly, this is yet another year where women are completely absent from this list.

**Male Vocalist of the Year:** After winning the Horizon Award a few years back, Keith Urban is now playing with the big boys in this category. I don't know that his chances are that great against Jackson, Keith, Chesney and George Strait. But he did have a hit with respected Nashville songwriter Radney Foster's *Raining On Sunday*, and his chart topper *You'll Think of Me* was regarded very highly by industry folks.

**Hall of Fame:** CMA night is the time each year when the industry formally inducts one of its own into the Country Music Hall of Fame, but the inductees are always announced along with the nominations so that they have a few months to savor the honor. This year, Kris Kristofferson will take his place among the greats of the genre. I have admired the man for many years and had the pleasure of meeting him backstage at the Ryman Auditorium during a Johnny Cash tribute concert a few years back. Kristofferson told me about his early days as a writer in Nashville, when he had literally been paid to sweep the floors backstage where we were standing. He then went onstage and performed his brilliant cut *Sunday Morning Coming Down*. Halfway through a very ill Cash, who had a huge hit with the song years before, joined Kristofferson on stage to sing with him. Kristofferson finished the song in tears. When he is inducted, I'll be thinking back to that night.

So that's a little info about this year's CMA Awards. Check back in November for my annual predictions.

## BONNAROO

**O**ne of the biggest music-related stories in Tennessee this summer was the death of two people who attended the Bonnaroo music festival. In case you haven't heard about it, Bonnaroo is a massive three-day event that takes place in the town

of Manchester, just an hour southeast of Nashville. The lineup of acts featured really cool folks like Neko Case, Wilco, Patti Smith, Bob Dylan and Los Lobos. Also present was pretty much every shitty, boring jam band on the face of the earth, so the crowd is heavily populated with the patchouli and Birkenstock set. This was the third year for Bonnaroo, and the event has proved to be a huge, if somewhat smelly, success.

But it should be mentioned that attracting 90,000 hippies into a town with a population of about 8,300 people has certainly produced some difficulties. For starters, the relatively small city of Manchester doesn't have the physical infrastructure to properly accommodate so many vehicles. This has resulted in attendees being stranded for hours on the interstate as county officials have tried to deal with the massive flow of traffic into a small town. There are also manpower problems when a small number of fast food joints and convenience stores are completely overwhelmed by multitudes of people.

And as you can imagine, this sparsely populated county doesn't have enough law enforcement to deal with a crowd of 90,000 people. Much extra security was brought in, but there is just so much that can be done when you have such a crowd. As often happens at such enormous gatherings, the cops basically kept their arrests to either those who were causing harm to others or those who were so ridiculously obvious with their illegal activities that there was no other choice. When a three day gathering of 90,000 rock & roll fans results in only 27 arrests, you can bet that the guys with the badges were pretty often looking the other way during activities that would normally land a person behind bars.

This kind of situation isn't really big news when it happens in upstate New York. But when you have a monstrous crowd of folks running around naked and high as a kite right in the middle of the Bible Belt, that ruffles some feathers. To the credit of the folks in Manchester, there was some complaining in previous years, but nothing too harsh. However, when two people died at this year's Bonnaroo, the chorus of disapproval got much louder.

I've followed the story all summer waiting to see if festival officials or law enforcement officers had any negligence in the deaths, or if it was simply a couple of kids got way too high. In August, toxicology reports came out indicating that a 22-year-old female from Kentucky was juiced up on combination of the general anesthetic Ketamine ("special K"), cocaine, Valium, Oxycodone and marijuana when she died at Bonnaroo. Also, a 20-year-old male from Michigan was loaded on cocaine, Xanax and Oxycodone at the time of his death. While I was suddenly curious why Rush Limbaugh wasn't at the festival, it was ridiculously obvious that the kids had died from their own overindulgence and not much could have been done to save them.

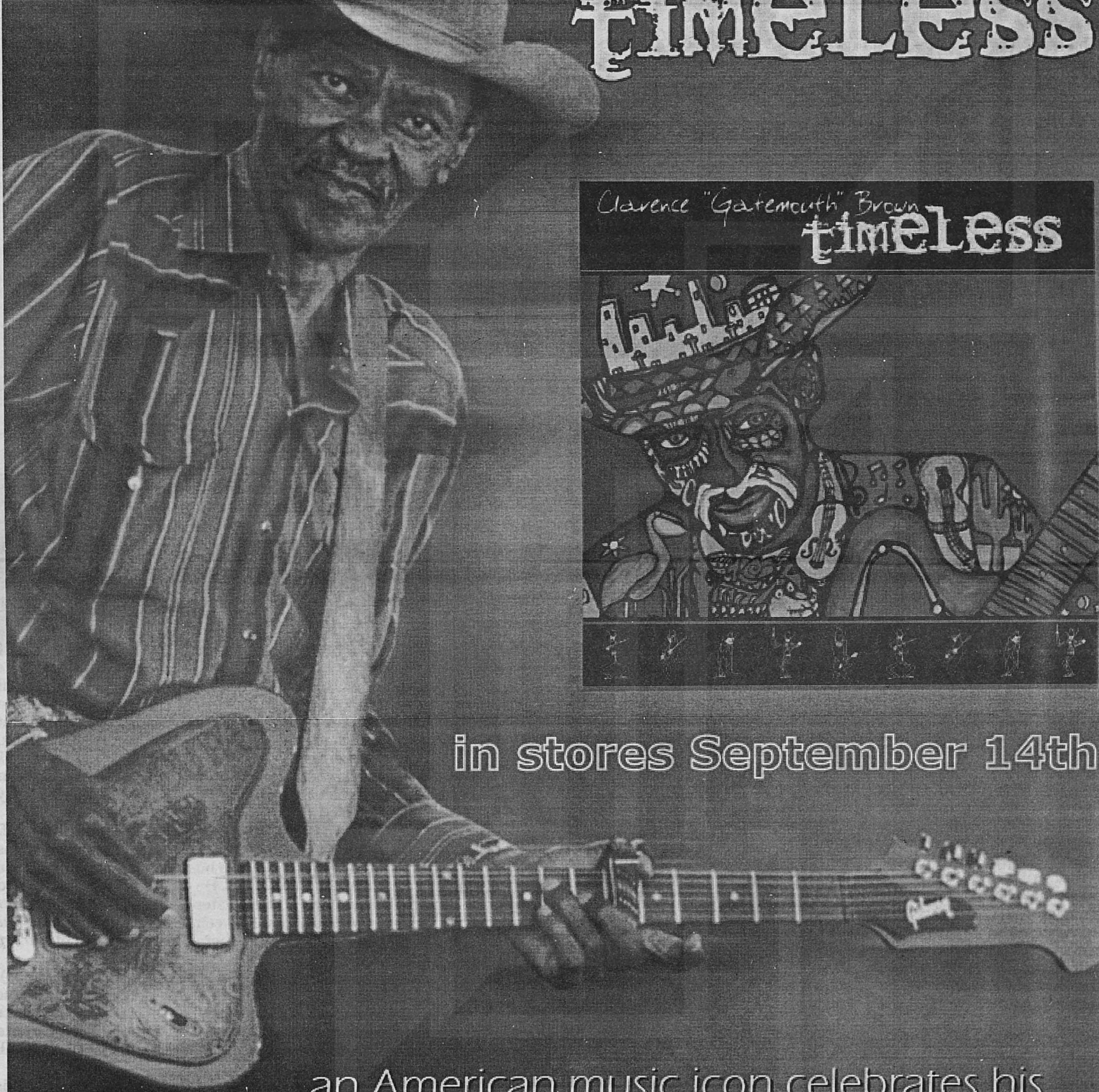
The two deaths were the focus of most of the post-festival coverage in area papers and news broadcasts. What had previously seemed to be a peaceful, if somewhat decadent, gathering was now an event responsible for the loss of two lives. Grieving families expressed shock. Local officials questioned whether the event should take place next year.

But in the end, Bonnaroo will most likely return. There is simply too much money at stake, with so many people paying in the neighborhood of \$100 per ticket. Festival officials and law enforcement will say they are committed to an event that is free from heavy drug use, knowing all the while that 90,000 people will ultimately find a way to bring in their party supplies.



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# JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Seems I owe **Robbie Fulks** an apology. Billed as the producer, he supervised the recordings on the Johnny Paycheck tribute **Touch My Heart**, with a house band featuring Lloyd Green, who played steel on the Little Darlin' singles, but the various artists picked the songs they wanted to contribute. However, this still begs the question. Even leaving aside (*Pardon Me*) *I've Got Someone To Kill*, which has been covered (Jon Langford, Andre Williams), surely he could have found people who wanted to cut killer songs such as (*Like Me*) *You'll Recover In Time*, A-11 and (*He's In A Hurry*) *To Get Home To My Wife*, or, come to that, *Slide Off Your Satin Sheets* and *Barstool Mountain*, which no one else has ever recorded (OK, Moe Bandy did *Barstool Mountain*, but who gives a shit?). Liz Shepard, cohost of *Barstool Mountain*, Voice of Vashon, Vashon, WA ("I'm probably the biggest Paycheck fan there is"), tells me she doesn't miss any of the songs I mentioned last month, "That's what **The Real Mr Heartache** (or better still, the Little Darlin' vinyl) is for." However, this assumes that tributes are stepping stones to the original work, which is not something about which I'm persuaded, even if I'd like to believe it, and I still think going for broke would have been a better policy.

◆ At the same time, Liz pointed me to a true roots music heroine. Before Paycheck's death, she was chatting about his illness with a fellow fan on a message board (gotta love the Internet!), who not only came up with the idea of a tribute, "which would be like a huge get well card," but financed its making before Sugar Hill picked it up, and is donating her royalties to The Performers Benefit Fund, a charity that helped with Paycheck's hospital bills. No matter what, I unreservedly applaud **Fran Liscio**.

◆ As a sidebar to the cover feature, I thought 'post-millennial cabaret' was a rather nifty description of **Dayna Kurtz's** music but I've discovered that cabaret means very different things in Europe and America. What I had in mind was the intimate, freewheeling, avant-garde London scene, which I covered, as *Time Out's* Cabaret Editor, for several years in the 80s, and was very much in the prewar German (Lotte Lenya, Brecht & Weill) and postwar French (Jacques Brel, Juliette Gréco, Georges Brassens) traditions, and into which she would have fitted perfectly. However, as she's thinking of the far more formal, glamorized, Broadway showtune heavy supper shows Americans call cabaret, I can see why she doesn't much care to be associated with the word. Yet another example of two countries divided by a common language, and in this case a real pity because the word itself is French for any establishment that sells alcohol, which, like honky tonk or, come to that, speakeasy, which seems to have been as close as America ever got to the European model, presupposes an adult audience. In fact, virtually all the London cabaret venues were in pubs.

◆ Another person who'd have done well on London's cabaret circuit is **Christina Marrs**, who once had a band called The Speakeasies. I was reminded of that wonderful, if short-lived combo (with both Stan and Kevin Smith) when she introduced *No Song Sad Enough* on the Asylum Street Spankers' DVD (see reviews): "I've discovered that if I sing it sitting down it's a ballad, standing up it's a torch song." The audience went overwhelmingly for torch song.

◆ Thinking of the first time I saw Dayna Kurtz beings back warm memories of a once favorite venue. In my, admittedly limited, experience, there are two kinds of lesbian bars, the ones where, unless, of course, you are of the sisterhood, the most courteous, not to say safest, course, is to back out the door as soon as you realize your mistake, and **Chances**, which, for no obvious reason, extended a warm welcome to persons of the male and straight persuasions, including myself and Ms Kurtz.

◆ One thing that sticks in my mind about **Chances** is that the toilet featured the most literate graffiti I've ever seen, an entire **Philip Larkin** poem, *This Be The Verse* ("They fuck you up your mum and dad. They may not mean to, but they do . . ."). At one time, I had quite a neat little collection of Austin graffiti; "Why do mandolin players spend half the time tuning and the other half playing out of tune?" (Maggie Mae's), "It's a pretty useless musician who can't find his wife a decent paying job" (Black Cat Lounge), "No matter how beautiful she is, someone, somewhere, is sick of her shit" (The Hole In The Wall, I'm told the gender equivalent was in the ladies' room), "UT degrees. Please take one" (Cactus Cafe, by the toilet roll). A favorite, but I can't remember where I saw it, was on a paper towel dispenser, below the Spanish injunction to Wash Your Hands, Lavease Los Manos, was written "And His Big Band Sound." Of course, the most memorable will always be "I dreamed I went to Heaven. It wasn't as good as Henry's" (guess where).

◆ And the target market would be . . . ? Properly reviewing two newish albums would mean I'd actually have to listen to the buggers, which I'm not really feeling up to, and when I describe them, I think you'll see why. First, I offer you Vanguard's **Upstairs At Larry's; Lawrence Welk Uncorked**, 15 Welk standards "remixed by some of today's hottest DJs." Their names may mean more to you than me, frankly that wouldn't be hard because they mean nothing to me whatsoever. To be fair to Vanguard, *You Are My Sunshine* has cracked the *Billboard* Dance Chart Top 50, making it Welk's first hit in decades. From bizarre to barf, next up is Rounder's **Moody Bluegrass; A Nashville Tribute To The Moody Blues**. I'm almost tempted to ask for a promo copy just so I can sink it in the toilet and piss on it.

◆ Here's a depressing thought for any of you who think of yourselves as professional musicians; according to *Mother Jones*, Senator **Orrin Hatch** has earned \$65,986 as a Christian recording artist.

◆ During August, Minnesota's Republican Governor **Tim Pawlenty** said on his weekly radio show that he was "heartbroken" that **Bruce Springsteen**, one of his musical idols, was campaigning against Shrub with concerts in nine states, including one in St Paul, MN. "I really appreciate his music, but I wish he wouldn't interject his music with politics," said Pawlenty. As Pawlenty prefaced his remarks by playing *Born To Run*, I emailed him to say I wish he wouldn't interject his politics with music, but so far he hasn't got back to me.

◆ While we have sort of a theme going, how's this for the lineup from hell? According to the *New York Times*, "among those scheduled for performances at exclusive parties [at the Republican Convention] are **Faith Hill, Jerry Jeff Walker, ZZ Top, Martina McBride, Marshall Tucker Band, Charlie Daniels Band, Dickie Betts** and **.38 Special**. The *NYT* report compared this lineup to that of the Democratic convention, citing an appearance by the Black-Eyed Peas as if that was a good thing, but at least, as DL pointed out, they haven't been over the hill for decades like most of the Republican faves. I've been tinkering with an editorial piece on music and politics for the November issue, but, given such compelling evidence, this seems like an ideal time to preview one of the points I hope to make, that while it may, possibly, be going too far to say that Republicans don't have souls, one thing's for certain—they don't have soul.

◆ Being cramped for space last month, I couldn't fit in mention of the passing of **Ersel Hickey**. Ersel who? Rockabilly fan may be familiar with Hickey's original version of *Bluebirds Over The Mountain*, which, though better known from covers by Ritchie Valens and The Beach Boys, he also wrote, along with Jackie Wilson's *The Millionaire* and LaVern Baker's

*A Little Bird Told Me So*. However, anyone who's ever cracked a copy of **The Rolling Stone Illustrated History Of Rock & Roll** has seen his 1958 publicity still, of which Peter Guralnick observed, "Take a look at the improbably sculpted helmet of hair, the Tommy-gun guitar stance, the pleated pants, cocked leg, patent leather casual footwear and turned up collar . . . guitar pick poised, background airbrushed out, every fold of clothing carefully arranged . . . trapped in a limbo where his cheekbones will forever be accentuated, his thoughts inscrutable, his respectability in doubt . . . what volumes is speaks of aspiration and style fate and fantasy, revelation in artifice. It is in effect a self-portrait of rock & roll." Born in Brighton, NY, June 27th, 1934, Hickey died on July 12th.



## LOOSE DIAMONDS A DJ'S PRIVATE STASH #7 STEVE TERRELL

By day, a mild mannered reporter for *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, father of two wonderful children and "a washed up musician, whose album **Picnic Time For Potatoheads** was a favorite at the long lamented KFAT in Gilroy, CA," since 1993, Steve has hosted *The Santa Fe Opry* and *Terrell's Sound World*, KSFR. His writings and play lists can be found at [steveterrell.blogspot.com](http://steveterrell.blogspot.com), and his tacky music at [soundclick.com/stephenwterrell](http://soundclick.com/stephenwterrell).

**Chipper Thompson: Strange Lullabies** (self, 1997) When the Taos singer/songwriter brought this CD to my office I was busy and brushed him off. He thought I was a jerk. He was right. When I listened to it several weeks later I was amazed. *Rainwater Bottle* is a cross between *Copperhead Road* and *The Wicker Man*. And there's a raga version of *Barbry Allen*.

**Acie Cargill: Country Songs** (Cobwebs, 2001). Acie is a true diamond in the rough and this is true folk music, unadorned, honest and addictive. I like most of his albums, include his new bluesy **Coyote Kick Band**, but this, the first one I heard, is still my favorite.

**Gary Heffern: Painful Days** (Y, 1996) This Seattle singer-songwriter has a gruff voice that fits his gritty tunes. Guest stars on the album include Eddie Vedder, Victoria Williams and others, but Heffern is the star.

**Kell Robertson: Cool And Dark Inside** (A Desperado, 2002) He's a poet, he's a picker, he's a prophet, he's a pendejo. 75 years old and still full of piss and vinegar, not to mention Budweiser. I profiled Kell in a recent issue of *No Depression*. This is my favorite of his two albums.

**Simon Stokes: Honky** (Uppercut, 2002) Talk about tough old birds . . . This is roots rock with a biker-gang punch.





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## JUST BE NICE

**H**ad it been limited to Texas jocks, the result would have been predictable enough, but when I ran an informal, unscientific poll of all the Freeform American Roots DJs, across the States and round the world, to see which acts and artists had, in their experience, shown most, or indeed any, appreciation for the airplay they'd been given, the hands down winner was still Terri Hendrix. Several FARsters added words to the effect that she's in a class of her own.

Still, while listening to Chrissy Flatt's **Walk With Kings** (see reviews), I got to thinking that while she and her companion, Eric Hisaw, may not rival her for attention to detail, both subscribe to a basic tenet of Hendrix's school of thought—you can never have too many friends in the music business. Not that I think for a moment there's any calculation involved, it's just the way they (and many other musicians) naturally are, but they've built up a considerable store of affection among writers, DJs, clubowners, barkeeps, waitstaff, other musicians and folks who come out to hear them play, in fact pretty much everyone they meet, or, more to the point, go out of their way to meet.

A crude, but effective, and very easy, way of classifying musicians is between those who disappear during breaks and those who work the room, those who are gone as fast as they can load out their gear and those who stick around after the show. The former may be businesslike, but the latter are taking care of business. In this context, I'm irresistibly reminded of the woman who blew off a club owner, two music writers, four DJs and a number of would-be fans and will be remembered, if at all, in San Antonio, and probably many other places, as that dummy from Seattle who took her dogs with her on a national tour.

Another, though much less accessible, category is of musicians who've managed to get themselves on people's shit lists. Now, you'd think that pissing off club owners is really not a good idea, but I guarantee any one of them, if you can get them to open up, would tell you about acts they never want to deal with again, no matter how well they draw. Ticking off writers and DJs is no big thing, but again, most hacks and jocks have certain people to whom they will no longer give ink or airtime. However, these tactical errors fade into insignificance compared to the amazingly common practice of being rude or dismissive to members of the audience.

Thing is, ambitious musicians can't really help themselves. It's not that they're simply jerks, but that a monster ego is pretty much an essential survival tool. However delusional, to them, we're all bit players in the epic drama of their careers and they'd trample over us, and new born kittens, to get next to a *Rolling Stone* or MTV intern.

The big question is, how much does the experience, or even perception, of an artist's personality affect evaluation of his or her talent? For instance, is my distaste for Reba McEntire's music colored by, or even a consequence of, the fact that I happen to know she's a real piece of work. Contrariwise, do I cut some people too much slack because I like them? Who knows? I'm as human as the next guy, if not more so. One thing for sure, DL and I always prefer to spend our entertainment dollars on artists we feel good about, come to think, the lineups of my Quinceañera parties last month were all people I feel good about.

There's a sticker on the door of the Texicalli Grille that all musicians should take to heart, even if they know for certain they're going to make it big. They may think they don't have to bother with the little people on their way up, but, if up ever actually materializes, they'll wish they'd listened to Danny Young when they're on their way down—"Just Be Nice."

JC

## DAYNA KURTZ BEAUTIFUL YESTERDAY

(Kismet \*\*\*\*\*)

**D**ecember 4th, 1993, Chances, 900 Red River, Austin, TX. I'll admit it took hell's own digging through back issues to come up with the specifics, but, in a period which offered memorable nights on a fairly regular basis, that one was particularly noteworthy. Well, up to a point. Of the headliners, Mrs Fun, an 'electra-acid-jazz' duo, I remember nothing at all, but the opening act, ah, now that's another matter altogether. Dayna Kurtz, who was described, rather resistably, by promoter Kathy Korniloff, of Two Nice Girls, as "Tuck & Patti-meets-Indigo Girls," set the hook with a quote in the press release: "They play these songs that are like 'I love you, I love everything, you're beautiful,' and my songs are more like 'You lied to me, you hurt me, fuck you,'" ie my kind of singer-songwriter (incidentally, for old times sake, the cover pic is the one that came with the 1993 press kit, she hasn't changed that much).

However I wasn't expecting to hear the kind of artist who teaches us ink-stained wretches to be very economical with words like 'mesmerizing,' 'riveting' and 'spellbinding,' rather to save them for the rare occasions when we really need them to mean something. Kurtz is, quite simply, the most consistently compelling performer I've ever seen. From Matawan, NJ, she may have got off to a grimly mundane start, playing James Taylor covers in Atlantic shore bars, but by 1993 she was already more than merely promising, already a singer with wonderfully distinctive vocal shadings and smoky nuances, a gripping songwriter, an exceptional interpreter of other people's songs and an accomplished acoustic guitarist. Over the last decade, those elements have only become even more developed and mature.

Since that first encounter, I've covered all of Kurtz's recordings, but each time with a slight uneasy twinge because I wasn't sure she really fit in with 3CM's mission. Whatever that is, if indeed there is such a thing and this isn't just the pulpit of a demented **Wise Blood** preacher, The Church of Real Music Without Major Record Labels, which would make you, dearly beloved, fringe weirdos who've rejected the teachings of the established music denominations and seek spiritual guidance, comfort and fellowship in a bizarre little cult, though I imagine you long ago figured that out for yourselves.

But I digress. When *The Boston Globe's* James Reed says "There's no logical reason why [Kurtz] is not a full-blown star," I appreciate what he's saying, as indeed would anybody who's ever seen her, and that's the problem. When Troy Campbell and I let her run way over her time slot at our 2003 NotSXSW Threadgill's show it was because a transfixed audience was simply eating her up. The point being, if you could get enough people in front of her, she would indeed become a full-blown star, but a couple of things get in the way, neither of which she can do much about.

One is that Kurtz has, as she acknowledges, "classification problems." In Germany, she tours the jazz circuit; in Holland, she's Americana; in Spain, she's country (and has an award from the Spanish CMA to prove it!); she plays blues festivals, folk clubs, you name it. In *All Music Guide*, she's listed as 'Women's,' a throwback to her early days when the support of the Northampton, MA, lesbian community helped jumpstart her career. I've described her as 'postmillennial cabaret,' which she thinks implies too much theatricality. What she will settle for is simply 'singer-songwriter,' but the fact is, she's the kind of marketing challenge the music business usually shuns or screws up.

The other obstacle is that, like many other musicians, she's simply a victim of the corporate synergy that constricts and dumbs down American culture (as I say, not something she can do much about). In Europe, where media access is far more open and the media is, as a direct consequence, much more influential, her career is flourishing. For instance, thanks to widespread coverage, her stunning DVD, **Postcards From Amsterdam**, is selling well in Europe, but, so far, has been reviewed just once in the US (3CM #88/177).

On her third CD, heavy on interpretations, with only three originals among the 12 cuts, Kurtz displays the kind of range that makes her singer-songwriter tag seem a little disingenuous, covering an obscure early 60s pop single by Wendy Huber (*I Belong To The Wind*), Billie Holiday (*Left Alone*), Prince (*Joy In Repetition*), Mary Hopkin (*Those Were the Days*), Leonard Cohen (*Everybody Knows*), Eszter Balint (*Amsterdam Crown*), Duke Ellington (*I Got It Bad*, an unconvincing duet with Snorah), Sam Cooke (*Lost And Lookin'*) and the Juliette Gréco standard *Parlez-Moi D'Amour*. Not your average set list.

Is this Kurtz's best album? Tricky question. Coproduced by Kurtz herself and drummer Randy Crofton, **Beautiful Yesterday** sounds much better than 2002's **Postcards From Downtown**, but even though that album was overproduced, its ten songs were all originals, making this a very tough call. However, both of them are studio albums, and listening to Kurtz in the studio is rather like listening to Olympics gymnastics coverage on the radio. Even if the fabulous live album **Otherwise Luscious Life** wasn't out of print, I would still recommend **Postcards From Amsterdam**, recorded live at the Paradiso and required viewing for all would-be singer-songwriters. Like those gymnasts, Kurtz does things that, even when you see them with your own two eyes, you don't quite believe are humanly possible.

Exuding an almost tangible aura of intelligence, focus and intensity, Kurtz is the anti-Jessica Simpson. If only there was any mileage, outside Europe, in not being a ditz blonde easy to market bimbo.

JC



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 ----- Charlie Robison • 1964 Houston, TX  
 2nd -- Johnny Lee Wills • 1912 Limestone Co, TX  
 ----- Jimmy Clanton • 1938 Golden Meadow, LA  
 3rd -- Americo Paredes • 1915 Brownsville, TX  
 ----- Lefty Perkins • 1917 Clarksville, TX  
 ----- Hank Thompson • 1925 Waco, TX  
 ----- Freddie King • 1934 Gilmer, TX  
 ----- Terrance Simien • 1965 Eunice, LA  
 ----- Knocky Parker † 1986  
 4th -- Danny Gatton • 1945 Washington, DC  
 ----- Blackie White • 1951 San Angelo, TX  
 6th -- Jimmy Reed • 1925 Dunleith, MS  
 ----- Ernest Tubb † 1984  
 7th -- Buddy Holly • 1936 Lubbock, TX  
 8th -- Jimmie Rodgers • 1897 Meridian, MS  
 ----- Milton Brown • 1903 Stephenville, TX  
 ----- Harlan Howard • 1929 Lexington, KY  
 ----- Patsy Cline • 1932 Winchester, VA  
 ----- Sunny Ozuna • 1943 San Antonio, TX  
 ----- Zachary Richard • 1950 Lafayette, LA  
 ----- Neko Case • 1970 Alexandria, VA  
 9th -- Adam Landreneaux • 1910 Mamou, LA  
 ----- Joe Clay • 1938 Harvey, LA  
 ----- Otis Redding • 1941 Dawson, GA  
 ----- Tex Owens † 1962  
 10th -- Roy Brown • 1925 New Orleans, LA  
 ----- Rosie Flores • 1950 San Antonio, TX  
 ----- Cary Swinney • 1960 Lubbock, TX  
 11th -- Jimmie Davis • 1902 Beech Springs, LA  
 ----- Roger Wallace • 1971 Knoxville, TN  
 ----- Leon Payne † 1969  
 ----- Curtis Jones † 1971  
 12th -- Kenneth Threadgill • 1909 Baytown, TX  
 ----- Armando Marroquin • 1912 Alice, TX  
 ----- George Jones • 1931 Saratoga, TX  
 ----- Christine Albert • 1955 Rome, NY  
 ----- Johnny Cash † 2003  
 13th -- Bill Monroe • 1911 Rosine, KY  
 14th -- Malcolm Yelvington • 1918 Covington, TN  
 ----- Don Walser • 1934 Brownfield, TX  
 15th -- Roy Acuff • 1903 Maynardsville, TN  
 ----- Billy Joe Shaver • 1939 Corsicana, TX  
 ----- Jimmy Gilmer • 1940 Chicago, IL  
 ----- Beaver Nelson • 1971 Norman, OK  
 ----- Vernon Dalhart † 1948  
 16th -- BB King • 1925 Itta Bena, MS  
 ----- Ralph Mooney • 1928 Duncan, OK  
 ----- Little Willie Littlefield • 1931 Houston, TX  
 17th -- Hank Williams • 1923 Georgiana, AL  
 ----- Bill Black • 1926 Memphis, TN  
 ----- John DeLafose † 1994  
 18th -- Jimi Hendrix † 1970  
 ----- Lefty Perkins † 1984  
 19th -- Bill Neely • 1916 McKinney, TX  
 ----- Red Foley † 1968  
 ----- Gram Parsons † 1973

- 20th -- Karl Marx Farr † 1961  
 21st -- Ted Daffan • 1912 Beauregarde, LA  
 ----- Jesse Ed Davis • 1944 Norman, OK  
 22nd -- Willis Prudhomme • 1931 Kinder, LA  
 ----- Jimmy Bryant † 1980  
 23rd -- Ray Charles • 1930 Albany, GA  
 ----- Roy Buchanan • 1939 Ozark, TN  
 ----- Jimmy Wakely † 1982  
 25th -- Eric Taylor • 1949 Atlanta, GA  
 26th -- Marty Robbins • 1925 Glendale, AZ  
 ----- Julie London • 1926 Santa Rosa, CA  
 ----- Dolores Keane  
 ----- • 1953 Caherlistrane, Ireland  
 ----- Bessie Smith † 1937  
 27th -- Jim Boyd • 1914 Fannin Co, TX  
 ----- Jackie Caillier • 1952 Orange, TX  
 28th -- Joe Falcon • 1900 Rayne, LA  
 ----- Tommy Collins • 1930 Bethany, OK  
 ----- Country Johnny Mathis • 1933 Maud, TX  
 ----- Willie 'Jitterbug' Webb  
 ----- • 1941 San Antonio, TX  
 ----- CJ Chenier • 1957 Port Arthur, TX  
 29th -- Gene Autry • 1907 Tioga, TX  
 ----- Bill Boyd • 1910 Fannin Co, TX  
 ----- Jerry Lee Lewis • 1935 Ferriday, LA  
 ----- Alvin Crow • 1950 Oklahoma City, OK  
 ----- Mickey Newbury † 2002  
 30th -- Pearl Butler • 1927 Nashville, TN  
 ----- Ronnie Dawson † 2003

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