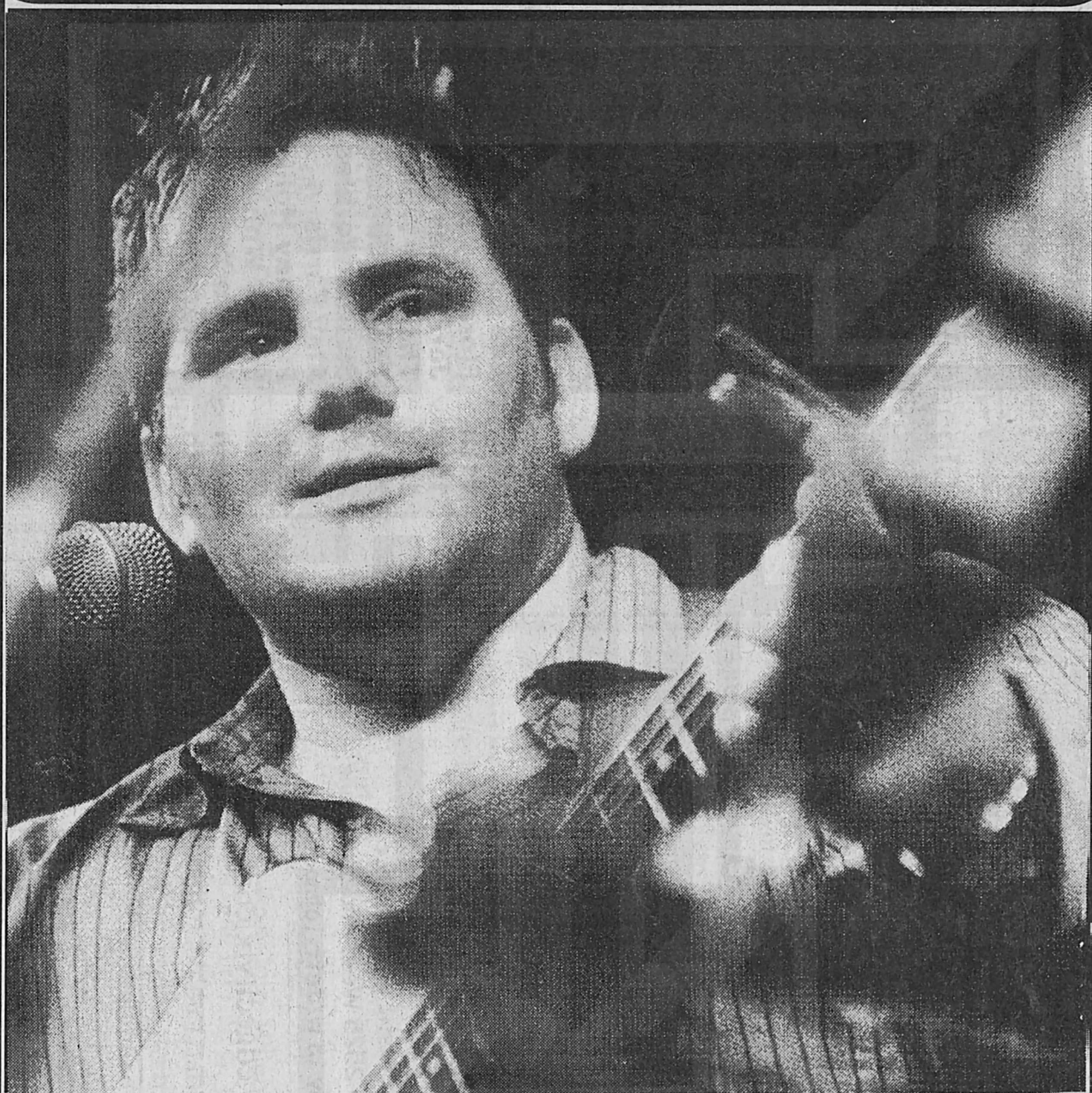


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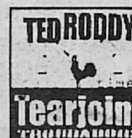
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(Lazy SOB) \*BL/\*JHo

- #2 Lucinda Williams: Essence (Lost Highway) \*LH/\*NA/\*RD/\*TA/\*TJ
- #3 Ray Wylie Hubbard: Eternal And Lowdown (Philo) \*DA/\*DY/\*JBe/\*RB
- #4 Karen Poston: Real Bad (Music Room) \*ChL/\*PP/\*SJ/\*TF
- #5 Tom Russell: Borderland (HighTone) \*DO/\*MM/\*MP
- #6 Roger Wallace: That Kind Of Lonely (Texas Round-Up) \*DB
- #7 Scott Miller & The Commonwealth: Thus Always To Tyrants (Sugar Hill) \*RC/\*SB/\*SG
- #8 Jim Lauderdale: The Other Sessions (Dual Tone) \*DC/\*DF
- #9 Rhonda Vincent: The Storm Rages On (Rounder) \*BWas/\*MA/\*R&HL
- #10 Cave Catt Sammy: Comin' On Strong (Big Bellied) \*LG/\*MT
- #11 Fred Eaglesmith: Ralph's Last Show (Signature Sounds) \*DwT
- #12 Shaver: The Earth Rolls On (New West)
- #13 The West Coast Pinups: Caution: Swinging Doors (Hard Eight) \*JZ
- #14 Whiskeytown: Pneumonia (Lost Highway) \*BF
- #15 Jerry Jeff Walker: Gonzo Stew (Tried & True) \*RJ
- #16 VA: Songcatcher (Vanguard)
- #17 Alejandro Escovedo: A Man Under The Influence (Bloodshot/Fargo)
- Terri Hendrix: Live In San Marcos (Wilory)
- Jimmy LaFave: Texoma (Bohemia Beat)
- VA: Texas Boogie (Hightone)
- #18 Paul Burch The Last of My Kind (Merge) \*KF
- Bobby Earl Smith: Rear View Mirror (Muleshoe) \*SS&DL
- VA: Truck Driver's Boogie (Diesel Only/Koch/Audium) \*JHa
- #19 VA: Avalon Blues: A Tribute to the Music of Mississippi John Hurt (Vanguard)
- #20 The Del McCoury Band: Del And The Boys (Ceili) \*KL
- Frog Holler: Idiots (Record Cellar) \*TH
- Charlie Robison: Step Right Up (Sony) \*WR
- Trailer Bride: High Seas (Bloodshot) \*JE
- Justin Trevino: Travelin' Singin' Man (Lone Star) \*JSn
- #21 BR5-49 This Is BR5-49 (Lucky Dog)
- VA: An Empty Glass (Hightone)
- #22 Cornell Hurd Band: A Stagecoach Named Desire (Behemoth) \*KD
- Lee Roy Parnell: Tell The Truth (Vanguard) \*KR
- #23 Greg Trooper: Straight Down Rain (Eminent)
- #24 The Very Best Of Asleep At The Wheel (Relentless) \*PR
- Ponty Bone: Fantasize (Loud House) \*TG
- Rusty Evans & Ring Of Fire (OSI) \*RH
- Paula Frazer: Indoor Universe (Birdman) \*AL
- Delbert McClinton: Nothing Personal (New West) \*RT
- #25 The Jenny Kerr Band: Itch (Jennyco)
- Patty Loveless Mountain Soul (Columbia)
- #26 Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys: Night Tide (Hightone) \*BC
- Big Smith: Big Rock (Big Smith) \*JBa
- The Buckaroos: Masters Were Devils (Outside [France]) \*JSp
- Darlin' And Rose (self) \*GS
- Jesse De Natale: Shangri La West (self) \*RP
- Mark Eitzel: The Invisible Man (Matador) \*CZ
- Diane Gentes: A Lifetime To Cry (DG) \*RW
- Roy Lanham & The Whippoorwills: Hard Life Blues (Soundies) \*SH
- The Meters: Kickback (Sundazed) \*PD
- Richmond Fontaine: Whiskey, Painkillers & Speed (Cryptophonic) \*JSm
- Will Sexton: Scenes From Nowhere \*GJ
- Max Stalling: Wide Afternoon (Blind Nello) \*EW
- Linda Tillery & The Cultural Heritage Choir: Say Yo' Business \*ST
- Ernest Tubb: Live New Year's Eve 1979 (Goldband) \*WH
- VA: Washington Square Memoirs (Rhino) \*MR
- VA: Duluth Does Dylan (Spinout) \*DJ
- VA: Greetings From Area Code 207 (Cornmeal) \*BR
- VA: 1000 Nadelstiche Country (Bear Family) \*BiW
- Eric Westbury: Walking Tracks (Barreltown) \*GW
- #27 Audrey: The Fallen (Reckless)
- Marcia Ball: Presumed Innocent (Alligator)
- Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer: Drum Huat Buddha (Signature Sounds)
- The Highwaymen: Live Texas Radio (3rd Coast Music)
- The Pawtuckets: Dogs Body Factotum (Mad Jack)

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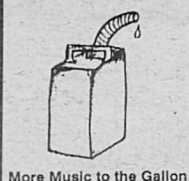
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## KAREN POSTON • REAL BAD

(The Music Room \*\*\*\*\*)

Poston arrived in Austin six years from Ohio, as half of a folk duo with an impossible name, but singing harmony with Dale Watson, The Derailers and Ted Roddy transformed her into a more than convincing honkytonk singer, and songwriter. Hitting the high spots, the credits include Bobby Snell, Terry Kirkendall, Boomer Norman, Gurf Morlix, Brad Fordham, Jane Gilman, Kelly Willis, Roger Wallace, Ted Roddy and Slaid Cleaves, but producer Jim Stringer never lets anyone get in Poston's way as she sensuously glides through twelve songs, ten of them originals, including *Lydia*, which Cleaves recorded on **Broke Down**, plus *It Only Hurts For A Little While* (which I know as a Jimmy Clanton number) and Liz Anderson's *Ride, Ride, Ride*, which Tex Ritter recorded. If you're looking to hear the current princess of Austin country, Poston just claimed the tiara. **JC**

## ALBERT & GAGE • BURNIN' MOONLIGHT

(Moon House \*\*\*\*\*)

Musicians in Austin can, by and large, be classified under three headings, those who have no choice but to be musicians (eg Jesse Taylor), those who believe they can become musicians by sheer willpower (eg Bob Schneider) and those who rationally assessed their talents and became career musicians (eg Christine Albert and Chris Gage). When they teamed up, personally and professionally, they combined Albert's glorious soprano, one of the greatest voices in Texas, with Gage's fine voice and prodigious talents as a multi-instrumentalist (guitars, piano, organ and accordion), and if they're a little shorter on grit than I usually care for, their appeal was well put by a friend who remarked recently, "One reason I really enjoy Christine and Chris is that they don't make any mistakes, which is such a relief." Colleagues like Brad Fordham, Glenn Kawamoto, Merel Brigante, Paul Percy Rob Gersoe aren't much for errors either. With eight originals and four covers, including Dan Hicks' *Up, Up, Up*, this is more than a tad MOR but still gives the pleasure one always derives from watching people at work who are superbly good at what they do. **JC**

## RAY WYLIE HUBBARD • ETERNAL AND LOWDOWN LUCINDA WILLIAMS • ESSENCE

(Philo \*\*\*\*\*/Lost Highway \*\*\*)

New albums by either of these two Americana heavyweights are, in certain circles at least, always going to events, but they've both reached the point in their recording careers when they're essentially competing against themselves, new additions pretty much demanding to be compared and contrasted with the existing canons. While I wouldn't rank either of these albums as being up there with their finest work, this is a process in which Hubbard fares a great deal better than Williams. Being Hubbard, it isn't, of course, quite that simple, but when he describes **Eternal And Lowdown** as his "blues album" he does provide a fundamental description and suggests its self-imposed limitations. There are, it should go without saying, wonderful songs, ten of them plus a new version, with gospel harmonies and Ian McLagan on B3/Leslie, of *Didn't Have A Prayer* from **Loco Gringo's Lament**, and wonderful playing by Hubbard (acoustic and resonator guitars and mandolin), producer Gurf Morlix (acoustic and electric guitars, bass, mandolin and "some old funky no-name organ") and Rick Richards drums and percussion, joined at various times by McLagan, fiddler Eamon McLoughlin and Dobro player Jeff Plankenhorn. Even so, the format does restrict Hubbard, who seems less masterful and fluid, indeed rather cautious, as he explores it. Of course, this is all relative, an album of Hubbard's throwaways would still be far better than most singer-songwriters could manage on their best day. When I first heard the title track on the radio, I thought **Essence** sounded like it might be a bit iffy, but it actually turned out to be pretty terrible. The basic problem, compounded by Charlie Sexton's monotonous production, is an acute shortage of worthwhile material, the occasional flashes of Williams' undoubted poetic genius failing to offset the crud that sounds awfully like she's let her **Car Wheels** press go to her head and really believes she can walk on water. Williams, not undeservedly, commands considerable adoration, but I defy her most rabid fan to tell me this compares favorably with **Lucinda Williams** or **Car Wheels**. **Eternal And Lowdown** is at least a keeper, albeit one I feel will find its place in people's medium-to-low rotation. If you're not minded to rush straight out and buy **Essence**, my bet is there'll be plenty of copies in the secondhand bins not too long from now. **JC**

## THE AUSTIN MUSIC SCENE 1965-1994 THROUGH THE LENS OF BURTON WILSON

(Eakin Press, paperback \*\*\*\*\*)

The oldest photo in this book, of Mance Lipscomb, was indeed taken in 1965, and the most recent, of the Armadillo Reunion, in 1994, but if you took out the years between 1968 and 1974, there'd be very little left. Warming up with several pages devoted to The Vulcan Gas Company, the main thrust of this collection is Wilson's work as the Armadillo World Headquarters' house photographer, whose subjects ranged from local bands to touring stars like Fats Domino, Gram Parsons, Jerry Lee Lewis, Clifton Chenier, the Dead, Frank Zappa, Ravi Shankar, Waylon Jennings (ultra-cool), Linda Ronstadt and many more. Much of the latter category is classic stuff, but for anyone with an interest in Austin music, the former is absolutely fascinating. Most of the bands are long gone and pretty much forgotten, one exception being the butt-ugly 1970 version of ZZ Top, but there are many familiar faces, give or take 25 some years and a bushel of hair. Now 82, Wilson's contribution to Austin music history has been added to but can never be rivalled. **JC**

## FROG HOLLER • IDIOTS

(Record Cellar \*\*\*\*\*/1/2)

For some reason, I thought Frog Holler was some sort of anti-Amish alt country entity when I first heard of them. Turns out the band's six members live on the Mennonite side of Pennsylvania Dutch country. What's the difference? Well, front man Darren Schlappish told me, "Mennonites have gray buggies, Amish have black buggies, other than that I'm not sure. I think Mennonites are a little more modern." I sure feel better now, but then he tossed in a bit of Dutch Country humor, "What's every Amish woman's dream? Two Mennonite." Well shit, I'll raise a Yuengling to that! So what of this band and their CD that's been a fixture in my bathroom boom box for going on a month now (next to Roger Wallace's)? Hearing a banjo in the down-home mix of songs on the band's third album might lead one to peg 'em as bluegrass, but they're really not. Label them instead a bunch of working class, flannel-wearing 30somethings for whom jamming acoustic over a few beers in the comfort of someone's living room is a favorite pastime. The songs, all from the head of lead singer and left-handed acoustic guitar player Schlappich, more than anything come off as a mirror image of small-town life, Shoemakersville to be exact. Inspiration comes from a mix of the rural surroundings, its people and faces. There's *Adams Hotel Road*, the leadoff track, which takes its title from a road on which Schlappich lived and where the band practiced. There's *Pennsylvania*, an old timey barndance romp on which Schlappich sings the hosannas of the home state upbringing and *Choose A Path*, another homey beer-drinkin' hoedown romp. There's characters too like the pierced, hippie girl of the gorgeous-sounding *Stray* who wears her hair in dreadlocks, follows the Dead, pops a pill here and there and obviously is just at a phase in her life. There's the small-town big cheese A-hole of *The Kingdom of Bocephus Klein*, and Schlappich singing about himself perhaps on the bittersweet *Thirty-One* and *Native Trout*, where chasing a girl and the lure of casting a line meet head-on. From the ragged-but-right melodies to the no-frills lyrics to the world-weary and soulful drawl of Schlappich on the vocals and barroom singalong backup, **Idiots** makes for a comfort food blend of insurgency that wears awfully well on the ears. In all, a compelling listen where the pluck of a banjo and the din of electric guitar coexist in rustic harmony. **Dan Ferguson**

## STARLINE RHYTHM BOYS BETTER LUCK IS A BARROOM AWAY

(Tin Town \*\*\*\*\*)

Vermont doesn't come readily to mind in the context of rockabilly and hillbilly music (other than Banjo Dan & The Midnight Plowboys and bluegrassier Dan Tyminski, I can't think of much anyone with Vermont roots). Yet on their wonderfully titled debut, the Starline Rhythm Boys do the Green Mountain State proud from the 'billy perspective. Produced by Sean Mencher of High Noon fame, a nimble collection of tunes moves smoothly between hard-charging, swing-your-partner, dance-ready numbers to straight-up juke joint honky tonk that evokes everything from Wayne Hancock on the modern front to the spirits of such long gone daddies as Hank Williams and Carl Perkins. Covering classics like Johnny Paycheck's *Apartment #9*, *I Need A Good Girl Bad*, Jimmie Logdon's *Where The Rio De Rosa Flows*, *I Cried Again* and Red Sovine's *Juke Joint Johnny*, it's obvious this trio is well-schooled in vintage hill and rockabilly. More importantly, they give each of those classics their just due. Featuring Danny Coane on lead vocals and guitar, Al Emery on lead guitar, and the rock-steady rhythm of Billy Bratcher pluckin' and slappin' on the string bass, the Boys also deliver a handful of fine originals, six of which come from Bratcher. With shining words from ex-Asleep at the Wheeler and current Vermonter Leroy Preston in the liner notes, this ably proves there's a whole lot more to Vermont than just cheddar cheese, maple syrup and Ben & Jerry's. **Dan Ferguson**



# CHARLES EARLE Chet Atkins/fan fair

## REMEMBERING CHET

**S**unday morning, I'd crawled out of bed uncharacteristically early to get started on my 3CM column. To get my mind processing the English language before noon on the weekend, I headed out and grabbed my morning paper. The plan was to write a long jab at Fan Fair, our annual gathering of performers and audiences that is considered a public nuisance by most locals. And then I saw the headline on that morning's copy of *The Tennessean*:

### 'Mr. Guitar' Chet Atkins Dies

It wasn't a complete shock. The 77-year-old Atkins had been in poor health for some time. But it was nonetheless an enormous loss not only for Nashville, but also music in general.

The Chet Atkins resume is certainly a thing to behold. Guitarists such as Mark Knopfler, George Harrison and Duane Eddy have praised him as a musical influence. I interviewed Dave Edmunds last year, and about half of the conversation ended up centered on the amazing finger picking style popularized by Atkins. This is a man who won nine CMA Musician of the Year trophies and 14 Grammys.

But Nashville owes perhaps the greatest debt to Atkins for the lasting impact he had on the business side of country music. As the head of RCA, he signed and/or produced artists such as Waylon Jennings, Hank Snow, Porter Wagoner, Jerry Reed, Skeeter Davis, Eddy Arnold, Dolly Parton and Charley Pride. He was also responsible for the construction of the famed RCA Studio B, which still stands on Music Row as a museum so visitors can get a feel for the hundreds of huge hits recorded there.

Having been a very successful artist himself, Atkins was committed to the performers he signed. I've never heard a soul in town utter a negative word about the man, and that's saying something for a guy who was the head of a record label. I was interviewed on a morning radio program two days after Atkins' death, and the main point I made was that, after having been around the man a bit, I felt that we sure could use someone as wise and decent as Chet on the Row these days.

My first brush with Mr Atkins came about 10 years ago when I had first moved to Nashville. I came to town looking to get into the business, and after a brief stint on the Row answering phones for a booking agency, went back to tending bar and waiting tables. I was working at a country club when Atkins stopped in on a few occasions with guests. Sitting among the stuffy, Republican, scotch-swilling golfers, friends of Chet's such as Mark Knopfler and legendary songwriter Harlan Howard definitely stood out.

I was in awe of the fact that such a man was among our members, but I was also desperate for a job. So I got his business address from our member directory and sent him a letter asking for his help looking for employment in the industry. I knew the letter might get me fired from the club, but there were certainly other jobs of that type in town. Besides, I figured his secretary would throw it in the trash.

Then a week or so later, my phone rang. It was Atkins himself. He remembered me and had a few folks that I could contact as a part of my job search. I was stunned and raced to tell family members that Chet Atkins phoned my home. While he'd rubbed elbows over the years with Elvis and The Beatles, Chet was an average joe who was sympathetic to my plight.

A few years later, after I had gotten a gig writing about music, I was invited to attend a show that Atkins was giving at a local club. He'd visited New York the previous year to check out a weekly bar show his old friend Les Paul was playing. It seemed like a good idea to Chet, so he put together a band and started giving a performance every Monday at a local club called Caffè Milano. I was there opening night, and went back several times. Each show was truly memorable. Atkins pulled out different little musical gems every night, and his playing was inspired. Between wowing the crowd with his finger picking, Chet also told some great stories. And one of things that I remember most about those shows was his sense of humor. Chet was a very funny man.

Shortly after this run of shows, Chet was diagnosed with cancer and went under the knife for brain surgery. But before you knew it, after a few months of recovery time, Chet was in the news again. This time it was for his Chet Atkins Musician Days. This was a gathering of players held in Nashville at the urging of Atkins. He'd seen a similar festival in France and thought Nashville needed such a thing.

It was in relation to this show that I got to interview Atkins, as best I can tell, among the last full length interviews he gave. He was very excited about the Musician Days gathering, as he thought that Nashville players needed more credit for making the singers sound so good. He spoke candidly about the effect his surgery had on his body. He said he didn't think he would ever be able to finger pick again. He didn't sound as though he was looking for sympathy, but I couldn't help but feel a profound sadness.

Chet and I also talked about the artists he had worked with over the years. He told me about a young, shy Elvis Presley saying "yes sir" and "no sir" to the people in the recording studio, and about playing the signature lick on *Heartbreak Hotel*. He also told stories about working with Paul McCartney, and how the two recorded *Walking in the Park with Eloise*, a song written by McCartney's father. McCartney later told Atkins that it was one of his favorite things he had ever recorded.

As a part of the Musician Days festival, influential performers were honored each year at a concert called Witnessing History. Atkins appeared at each event as honorary host. The most recent concert, which honored Duane Eddy and famed sideman Grady Martin, featured a few truly memorable moments. It was about a year ago, and Chet wasn't getting around so well. He had to be helped out to the microphone by John Fogerty, who was one of the guest performers that evening. While he was out there, Atkins began to talk about how he wasn't able to drive anymore, and how his fairly new Cadillac was of no use to him anymore. I ran into Marty Stuart a few minutes later and we had a big laugh about it. "That's the slickest way to sell a Cadillac I've ever seen in my life," a chuckling Stuart said.

Nashville will never forget the great Mr Atkins. We have a street named after him and a life-sized statue of him on a corner in the middle of downtown. We have a Country Music Hall of Fame full of artists who either worked with him, were produced by him, or were at least influenced by him. We're talking about a guy who over the years played with everyone from Mother Maybelle & the Carter Sisters to George Benson. He did two albums with the Boston Pops and played with Ray Charles and the Everly Brothers. Chet was one of a kind and will indeed be missed.

## FAN FAIR REDUX

**I**f you pay much attention to the goings on in Nashville, you've probably heard of Fan Fair. This annual gathering, which has now lasted well over two decades, brings the country music buying public together with performers here in town for a week.

To the industry, this is a very important event because it acts as something of a barometer for fan interest. In the first half of the 1990's, when record sales were way up, Fan Fair sold out all 24,000 tickets in a hurry. In recent years, with sales and interest in the genre plummeting, the week-long gathering has had plenty of tickets available on opening day.

The Nashville Fairgrounds, a dirty, dated looking complex, was home to Fan Fair for many years. Bumpkins from all over piled in to see live performances, visit autograph booths and bake in the mid-June heat and humidity. Locals usually disliked Fan Fair due to the extra traffic that it brought to Nashville, but the location kept the masses away from downtown and the suburbs.

However, with attendance down over the last few years, the folks at the CMA decided that a change of venue was in order. Also spurring their desire for alteration may have been the newly relocated and refurbished Country Music Hall of Fame, which is located downtown and has a fifteen bucks a head admission. Whatever the reason, the CMA felt that Fan Fair needed to move out of the boonies and onto the streets of Music City. Thus, Fan Fair 2001 came into downtown. The problems were many. Here are a few observations:

1. Locals who thought of Fan Fair as a humorous annual inconvenience were stuck battling mobs of out-of-towners in traffic this year during their daily commute. Parking spaces were basically non-existent. Tempers flared. One banker I know joked that Fan Fair may now join the list of bank holidays at most downtown locations.

2. Venues were spread all over downtown, causing fans confusion and fatigue. Those in attendance had to hike from the convention center to Riverfront Park, and then from Adelphia Coliseum (home of the Tennessee Titans) to our Bicentennial Mall. Certainly most of you in Austin don't know the exact dimensions of our downtown, so you'll just have to trust me that we are talking about a helluva lot of walking on a hot day.

3. Once again, a lot of the biggest stars didn't perform. There is a huge gulf forming in country music between the biggest names (ie Shania, Faith Hill, etc) and the rest of the bunch. The big stars know that their spot on the pedestal is secure. Thus, they don't have to get out and hustle for fan support. As a result, Fan Fair is starting to seem like a junior varsity event, at best. Some have privately commented that this may cause more stars to ditch Fan Fair in the future. They say that managers will start telling performers that they are "too big" for Fan Fair in order to stroke their egos.

4. After years of selling only week-long event tickets, the CMA began to sell tickets for individual days of Fan Fair. A few more folks may have attended who wouldn't have in the past, but there is a great deal of skepticism here in town about whether the gaudy numbers being reported by the CMA accurately depict the number of actual attendees. Did comp tickets that went unused count? And how about the fact that people were counted two or three times as they came and went from venues all day long? With the industry in such a bad state, actual numbers would have been interesting.

In spite of the problems this year, the one huge positive was that a number of indie and alt-country artists played to big crowds at the Riverfront Park stage. This is certainly encouraging, and I hope that these crowds at that stage in the future may cause the record company weasels to wander down the street. Still, it is important to remember that when one artist performing on that stage this year asked a large crowd if they liked the new venues better than the Fairground, the audience answered with a thundering "NO."



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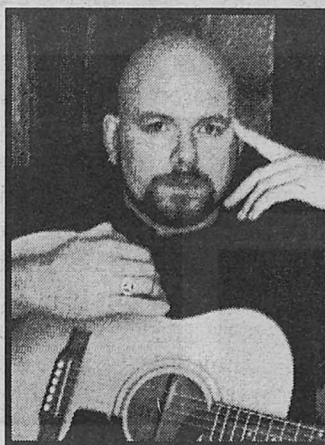
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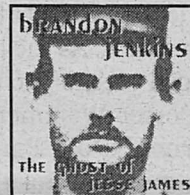


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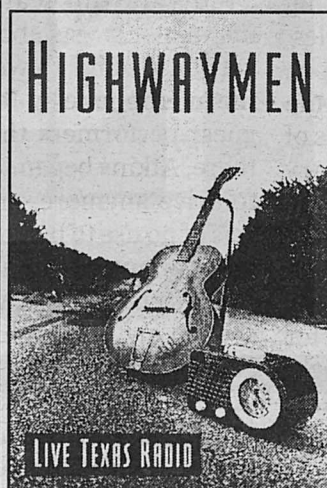


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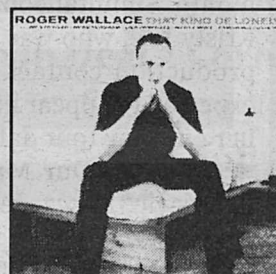


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# JOHN THE REVEALATOR

**P**retty useless headline for last month's editorial, mainly because 'From A Distance' was left over from the previous month's. I was mulling over various possibilities along the lines of 'Aural Gridlock' or 'Americana Pie,' but in the end clean forgot to plug in something—anything—that remotely bore on the subject in hand, so if, by any chance, you happened to wonder about the relevance, there was none.

◆ Memory played me false again last month in my review of Tom Russell's latest, but Joe Specht of Abilene was on the case: "Because I know you enjoy having readers keep you on your toes—Orson Welles' **A Touch of Evil** was primarily shot in Venice, CA. Welles had wanted to film in Juarez, but when these plans fell through, he followed up on a suggestion from Aldous Huxley to check out Venice. It proved to be just the spot he was looking for. The name of the Mexican border town in the movie is Los Robles."

◆ Finally (I hope), the GS who made Alejandro Escovedo's **A Man Under The Influence** his Album of the Month in FAR #22 was actually, or should I say literally (proofreader joke), SG, aka Steve Gardner, WXDU, Durham, NC, while the one who went for The Starline Rhythm Boys' **Better Luck Is A Barroom Away** was the real GS, Gerd Stassen, Radio Ems-Vechte-Welle, Lingen, Germany.

◆ As a PS to last month's comment about the radio chart recognized by the **Americana Music Association** being published in a magazine owned by Clear Channel Communications, I tried to find out how much Americana is aired by the Evil Empire. Far as I can make out, the answer is none at all, but I did come across two interesting factoids that nobody else seems to have put together. One is that before the 1996 Telecommunications Act, the largest radio group owned 39 stations, today Clear Channel, the largest of the four corporate radio giants, owns 1,100. During the same five year period, Arbitron reports that radio listening in all formats declined by 15%. Coincidence? You be the judge.

◆ As I reported when it first started, the Americana chart is inaccessible, unless you're willing to take out a second mortgage to pay for a subscription to *Album Network*, and at least one person in the AMA has realized that this is a problem. In an internal AMA memo, passed on to me by 'A Friend,' **Jeff Wall**, editor of *twangzine*, remarked "John Conquest with the FAR chart (is), quite frankly, kicking our ass. Conquest, while he may not win a Mr Congeniality award, goes out of his way to give artists info on who the FAR reporting people are, access to the charts, etc." Incidentally, with the latest recruits, FAR now has more than twice as many reporters as Son of Gavin, not to mention ten times the credibility.

◆ Just before it was set to go to trial last month, **The Eagles** dropped a lawsuit against the American Eagle Foundation ([www.eagles.org](http://www.eagles.org)), which looks out for those big birds. Why the group would bring such a ludicrous and arrogant action, which alleged infringement on their name and image, in the first place defies understanding, but possibly it occurred to someone at the last minute that there was no conceivable outcome that wouldn't make them look like evil shits. No news on Madonna's suit against the Catholic Church.

◆ A reader in Nashville passed on a revealing little aside about the **Country Music Association** slogan. Seems it was agreed to at the last quarterly board meeting, which was held at the New York

Palace Hotel (formerly the Helmsley Palace Hotel), in midtown New York City. As he remarked, "Now that's country!"

◆ While we're with the CMA, the same reader takes exception to the organization's habit of referring to **Fan Fair** as "the world's biggest country festival," pointing out that Australia has not one but two much larger events, "and you don't see the biggest stars in Aussie country boycotting them the way Garth, Shania, Reba, Faith, Dixie Chicks et al routinely do for Fan Fair." The **Tamworth Country Music Festival**, which runs for 10 days, plus a week long 'pre-festival,' every January in Tamworth, New South Wales, attracts 50,000 visitors for its 800 separate shows. The **National Country Music Muster**, which runs for five days in late August in the Queensland 'gympie' (rainforest), northwest of Brisbane, draws some 40,000 people. FARster Ken Date adds "Tamworth is a huge amount of fun and there can be some great music. A few of our musicians can stand alongside anyone from Nashville or Texas and not be in the slightest bit embarrassed. I've never made it to the Gympie Muster, so I can't speak from personal experience, but I have never met anyone who has been who didn't enjoy it. Having been to Fan Fair and Tamworth, give me Tamworth any day—you'd love it!"

◆ By contrast, **Fan Fair** pulls some 20,000 people—or does it? This year, the CMA wouldn't say how many tickets were sold, instead claiming an "aggregate daily attendance of 124,000." This figure, using what is, apparently, the common bullshit methodology for this kind of event, counts four-day passes four times, then adds individual tickets sold for day access and nightly shows, plus all the free tickets given to sponsors and promotional partners. *The Tennessean* reported that "an official familiar with Fan Fair ticket sales said roughly 25,000 four-day passes were sold."

◆ *The Tennessean* also ran a large number of interviews with pissed off fans, bitching about the new downtown setup. Bighearted **Ed Benson**, the CMA's Executive Director, fired back with "The older fans are going to have to learn to adjust." Actually, Ed, if you read the interviews, the older fans don't have to learn to adjust because, as many of them made clear, they've given up on Fan Fair.

◆ Mind you, you have to wonder why they haven't given up on country altogether. I'm not exactly a big **Pam Tillis** fan, but how's this for a sign of the times? After seven albums, two platinum, three gold, Arista Nashville has dropped Tillis, who'll turn 43 this month. Simultaneously, the label signed 17-year old Kristy Lee, who was 'discovered' by, and is under a production contact to, Britney Spears. Spears is expected to appear in Lee's first video and to include her on some tour dates. Just what country needs.

◆ When Our Man in Yugoslavia, Aleksandar Lazarevic, forwarded this report from *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), he wasn't sure if it might not be a hoax. According to the story, there's a fungus that eats CDs. "Victor Cardenes, of Spain's Superior Council for Scientific Research in Madrid, stumbled across the microscopic creature two years ago, while visiting Belize. Friends complained that in the hot and sticky Central American climate, a CD had stopped working and developed an odd discoloration that left parts of it virtually transparent. Dr Cardenes discovered a fungus was steadily eating through the

supposedly indestructible disc. The fungus had burrowed into the CD from the outer edge, then devoured the thin aluminium layer and some of the data-storing polycarbonate resin. Biologists at the council had never seen this fungus, but concluded that it belonged to a common genus called *geotrichum*." If you try and check this out, you won't get far but the name sounded wrong (guess it comes from living in Texas), so I ran a variant and there indeed a **Dr Victor Cardenas** who works in the right field and that part of the world. In any case, CDs are far from indestructible, Archivists don't trust them because they eventually, sometimes in as little as five years, delaminate. Hang to that vinyl, kids.

◆ I have issues with **Eric Clapton**, but I can't blame him for the *Austin American-Statesman's* utter lack of class. Reporting that Clapton had played *Boogie Chillun* in honor of the late great **John Lee Hooker** at a recent concert, the paper chose to demonstrate its lack of respect by illustrating the story with a picture not of Hooker but of Clapton. That really chaps my hide.

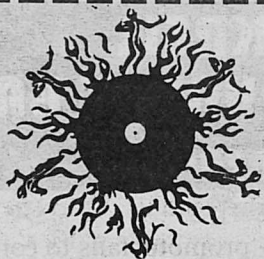
◆ New FARsters this month are **Dan Alloway**, *Folk Fury*, KTEP, El Paso, TX; **Roz & Howard Larman**, *FolkScene*, [www.kpig.com](http://www.kpig.com), WUMB, Boston, MA, and Plains FM, Christchurch, New Zealand; and **Vicki Pepper** aka Darlin', *Radio Rodeo*, KUCI, Irvine, CA. Something of an honor having radio veterans Roz & Howard Larman on board. They had been on KPFF, Los Angeles, for over 30 years, making them an institution in folk and singer-songwriter circles. Roz Larman explains why the show was cancelled last October: "Our troubles started at KPFF when they wanted us to sign a 'work for hire' agreement as volunteers, so they would own the program. This would also include the performers' copyrights. We have two CDs of guests who have been on our program (Volume 3 will be out July 10th, on Red House Records) and we couldn't give away their copyrights. We hired an attorney, but the GM at KPFF wouldn't budge or compromise. He wanted what we had. We even gave the station 25% of the royalties from the CDs, totally our idea. There is a lot more, but this is the condensed version. They cancelled the program, but our integrity is intact. So here we are."

## † SMOKEY MONTGOMERY

**B**orn Marvin Wetter in Rinard, Iowa (he adopted the name of his favorite actor, Robert Montgomery), Smokey Montgomery joined The Light Crust Doughboys in 1935, a couple of years after Milton Brown quit and Bob Wills was fired, and made his last appearance with the world's longest surviving Western Swing band a few weeks ago, in a show with the Abilene Philharmonic Symphony. Montgomery, who won a banjo ukulele in a contest for newspaper carriers when he was nine, was also, as musician, arranger, bandleader, composer or producer, involved in many Dallas-area bands, including The Wanderers, The Flying X Ranch Boys (the first group to appear on TV in Texas), The Levee Singers, Smokey & The Bearcats, The Dallas Banjo Band and The Dallas Hot Five. Playing his 1948 or gold-plated 1922 Bacon & Day Silver Bell four string tenor banjos, very different from the five-string bluegrass instrument, he was a master of Dixieland jazz. Universally loved and admired, one of the very last links with the early days of Western Swing died of a heart attack Wednesday June 6th, aged 88.

◆ I'm trying to think of something nice to say about Chet Atkins but having loathed the man for 40 some years, it ain't easy. Pretty good picker, shame they let him produce records.





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## TWO CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF A COUNTRY SONG

Judging by the number of places at which it shows up in Austin alone, I imagine many of you will have come across *Country Standard Time*, a magazine which puzzles me more than somewhat. Aside from professional curiosity about how it can possibly break even and my usual impatience with relentlessly upbeat reviewing—there's no album so dreadful that *CST* can't find someone to love it—what truly bewilders me is that the reviews and features evenhandedly praise every kind of country that comes down the pike. Traditional, alternative, neo-honkytonk, Americana and every 'New,' 'Hot,' 'Young,' etc, variety of Nashville, it's all good as far as *CST*'s concerned. Chalk and cheese alike get rave reviews, but then so does any stinking heap of dogshit marketed as country. My belief is that such promiscuous reviews simply cancel each other out, leaving a big fat zero.

◆ I used to think that *CST* was just wrongheadedly trying to be all things to all people, but I learned recently that publisher Jeffrey Remiz really believes country is homogenous. A simple ad sales pitch turned into an hour long battle of wills when he tried to persuade Steve Dean of Under The Sun that there's no inherent contradiction in equally admiring Wayne Hancock and Brooks & Dunn, an exercise in futility compared to which Sisyphus had it easy. Those of you who've caught any of Under The Sun's South X South Austin shows will have a good idea where Dean's loyalties lie; about the only way he'd advertise in a magazine that praises Brooks & Dunn would be if it was holding Lisa hostage, simply putting a gun to his head wouldn't be enough.

◆ This non-meeting of minds, between two people who would both describe themselves as country music fans, illustrates a crucial problem with the CMA slogan. It begs an essential question—what exactly do you mean by 'country'? In *You're So Cold I'm Turning Blue*, Martha Hume listed 23 distinct subsets of country music, but for practical purposes, ever since the introduction of Countrypolitan, there have been two categories, call them Nashville and non-Nashville, and the gap between them has widened inexorably over the years.

◆ There may, for all I know, be people who'd qualify their taste for country by adding 'but not the old stuff or that alternative shit,' that is if any fans of Nashville music are aware of those alternatives. However, one thing I know for sure is that, for the last 40 years, those of us on the other side of the divide have had to clearly establish what we mean when we say 'country.' In the 60s, the rubric was "but not that Chet Atkins/Billy Sherrill/Paul Cohen Nashville garbage (my motto back then, paraphrasing Reichsmarshal Goering, was 'When I hear the words Anita Kerr Singers, I reach for my Browning'). The one good thing I can say for Faith Hill, Shania Twain, Tim McGraw, The Dixie Chicks et al is that these days people grasp the (updated) point—that there are at least two, if not more, unrelated genres all called by the same name—much more readily.

◆ A free copy of *The Highwaymen: Live Texas Radio* to the first person who can tell me from whose song the headline is taken.

JC

## THAD COCKRELL & THE STARLITE COUNTRY BAND STACK OF DREAMS

(Miles Of Music \*\*\*\*1/2)

Seems like every time I put on events—'promote' fails to convey the intrinsic amateurism of 3CM presentations, not to mention their intractable nonprofit status—they always seems to spring some kind of leak at the last minute but every time a Hero steps in and saves the day. Among those who have bailed me out at various times, and to whom I owe debts that can hardly be repaid, are Troy Campbell, Terry Kirkendall and Blackie White. The most recent additions to this honor roll are Thad Cockrell and Ann Fermin, who came to my rescue during this year's NotSXSWS. Having screwed up their schedule, Elizabeth Cook and Tim Carroll had to cut their set short, leaving me with the ugly prospect of 40 dead minutes between Fermin and Laura Cantrell. Then, as if by magic, Cockrell showed up and offered to fill the rest of the slot. However, he has to share his Hero points because he was probably the only musician in Austin during the SXSWS week who didn't have an instrument handy at all times, so Fermin, perilously delaying her band's departure for Dallas, lent him her guitar.

◆ On the other hand, at that time I was one of the few people outside North Carolina who knew Cockrell's work and gladly welcomed the opportunity to showcase him. When he got up on the stage at Jovita's that day, his reputation was limited to those fortunate enough to have seen him performing in the Golden Triangle area or have heard his demo being played on WXDU or be within electronic ear-bending range of my source, FAR reporter and self-proclaimed Cockrell evangelist Steve Gardner, whose review of Cockrell's eight song demo CD, which originally appeared in the inaugural edition of his e-zine *Fresh Dirt*, I ran in last March's issue, giving Cockrell his first ink outside North Carolina.

◆ In keeping with his background, son of a preacher and graduate of Southeast Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, where he still lives, it's hard to resist thinking that Cockrell has been blessed. Having a great, soulful country voice and being able to write world class hurting and gospel songs as well are fairly considerable boons in themselves, but the Lord really does seem to have taken a liking to Thad, who remarked to me "I know there are shady people out there in the music business, but I've yet to run into any of them." Doors that most musicians beat against in vain for years have opened wide for him almost before he knocks.

◆ It all started on the college wrestling team, where assistant coach Jeff Dernlan also became Cockrell's songwriting tutor. "I knew he wrote songs, so I just asked him how you did it." After writing a couple and working up "two and a half" covers, Cockrell was, out of the blue, offered "\$20 and your tips, and a steady Saturday night gig if it works out." "I played my five songs then took a break and waited till some people left and new ones arrived then got up and played them again, and kept doing that for four hours. It kinda helped that nobody was listening. I know some singer-songwriters get real pissed when people don't listen, but I decided I'd just try and sing in a way where they have to."

◆ Looking to expand his options, Cockrell decided to make a demo, using a handpicked team of local players from various local bands, including Two Dollar Pistols and Whiskeytown. They cut seven tracks in seven hours, to which Cockrell added an original gospel song recorded during a radio show and started burning CDs. "Steve [Gardner] was the first industry person to get one and he just started hitting the water and making the ripples. He asked me to burn ten copies for him to give out to people he knew were blabbermouths and inside a couple of weeks I was spending all day every day burning CDs." Among those "blabbermouths" were myself and indie radio promoter Al Moss, who remarked, "It's not often you get a first album, let alone a demo, and DJs round the world are literally begging for copies."

◆ However, when Miles of Music asked him if he'd make enough for them to sell through their online catalog, he drew the line, but as MoM are already in the label business, the solution was obvious. Cockrell went back to Chris Stampely's studio and added a ninth track, *Together Again* with Caitlin Cary (I've said it before and I'll say it again, the best thing about Whiskeytown) and is now officially out of the CD burning business.

◆ Cockrell marvels that "There aren't ten hours of studio time in this album," but major stars spend months, even years, in the studio and come up with dreck. Those were ten hours well spent, and will give you far, far more hours of enjoying great country music.

JC



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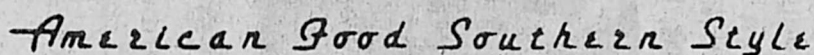
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----- Eddie Bond • 1933 • Memphis, TN  
----- Wolfman Jack † 1995  
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----- Lee Allen • 1926 • Pittsburgh, KS  
----- Eddie Cleanhead Vinson † 1988  
3rd -- Johnny Lee • 1945 • Texas City, TX  
----- Betty Buckley • 1947 • Big Spring, TX  
----- Fontella Bass • 1940 • St Louis, MO  
----- Fred McDowell † 1972  
4th -- Bob Shelton • 1909 • Hopkins Co, TX  
----- Fred 'Papa' Calhoun † 1987  
5th -- Smiley Lewis • 1913 • De Quincey, LA  
----- Teisco Del Ray • 1953 • Oakland, CA  
6th -- Shelly Lee Alley • 1894 • Alleyton, TX  
----- Gene Chandler • 1937 • Chicago, IL  
----- Barb Donovan • 1958 • Detroit, MI  
----- Roy Rogers † 1998  
7th -- Elton Britt • 1917 • Marshall, AR  
----- Charlie Louvin • 1927 • Rainesville, AL  
8th -- Louis Jordan • 1908 • Brinkley, AR  
----- Link Davis • 1914 • Van Zandt Co, TX  
9th -- Eddie Dean • 1907 • Posey, TX  
----- Molly O'Day • 1923 • McVeigh, KY  
----- Fred Eaglesmith  
                    • 1957 • Lincoln Co, Ontario, Canada  
----- Shaan Shirazi • 1968 • Stillwater, OK  
10th Hociel Thomas • 1904 • Houston, TX  
11th Blind Lemon Jefferson • 1897 • Couchman, TX  
----- Tom Clifford • 1963 • Washington, DC  
12th Joe Houston • 1927 • Austin, TX  
----- Steve Young • 1942 • Noonan, GA  
----- Butch Hancock • 1945 • Lubbock, TX  
----- Jimmy LaFave • 1955 • Wills Point, TX  
----- Evan Johns • 1956 • Washington, DC  
13th Long John Hunter • 1931 • Ringold, LA  
----- Andrew Cormier • 1936 • Church Point, LA  
----- Joe Barry • 1939 • Cut-Off, LA  
----- Johnny Clegg • 1953 • Rochdale, UK  
----- Riley Puckett † 1946  
14th Woody Guthrie • 1912 • Okemah, OK  
----- Beth Galiger • 1960 • St Louis, MO  
----- Clarence White † 1973  
15th Cowboy Copas • 1913 • Muskogee, OK  
----- Roky Erickson • 1947 • Austin, TX  
----- Steve James • 1950 • New York City, NY  
----- Jeff Hughes • 1964 • Dallas, TX  
----- Bill Justis † 1982  
16th Gurf Morlix • 1951 • Lackwanna, NY  
----- Nanci Griffith • 1953 • Seguin, TX  
----- Laura Cantrell • 1967 • Nashville, TN  
----- Don Rich † 1974

- 17th Harry Choates † 1951  
----- Billie Holiday † 1959  
----- Wynn Stewart † 1985  
18th Screamin' Jay Hawkins • 1929 • Cleveland, OH  
----- Dion • 1939 • The Bronx, NY  
----- Bobby Fuller † 1966  
19th Buster Benton • 1935 • Texarkana, TX  
----- Commander Cody • 1944 • Boise City, ID  
----- Lefty Frizzell † 1975  
20th JE Mainer • 1898 • Weaversville, NC  
----- Cindy Walker • 1925 • Mart, TX  
----- Sleepy LaBeef • 1935 • Smackover, AR  
----- Jo Ann Campbell • 1938 • Jacksonville, FL  
----- Jo Carol Pierce • 1944 • Wellington, TX  
----- Henry Rivas • 1957 • San Antonio, TX  
----- Radney Foster • 1959 • Del Rio, TX  
21st - Sara Carter • 1898 • Flat Woods, VA  
----- Darcie Deaville • 1962 • Canada  
23rd - Tony Joe White • 1943 • Oak Grove, LA  
----- Keith Ferguson • 1946 • Houston, TX  
25th Steve Goodman • 1948 • Chicago, IL  
----- Tommy Duncan † 1967  
----- Big Mama Thornton † 1984  
26th Dobie Gray • 1943 • Brookshire, TX  
27th Bobby Day † 1990  
28th Floyd Domino • 1952 • CA  
29th Charlie Christian • 1916 • Bonham, TX  
----- Ed Miller • 1945 • Edinburgh, Scotland  
----- Oscar Fox † 1961  
----- Pete Drake † 1988  
----- Canray Fontenot † 1995  
30th Buddy Guy • 1936 • Lettsworth, LA  
----- Sonny West • 1937 • Lubbock County, TX  
----- RC Banks • 1950 • Lubbock, TX  
31st - Roy Heinrich • 1953 • Houston, TX  
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