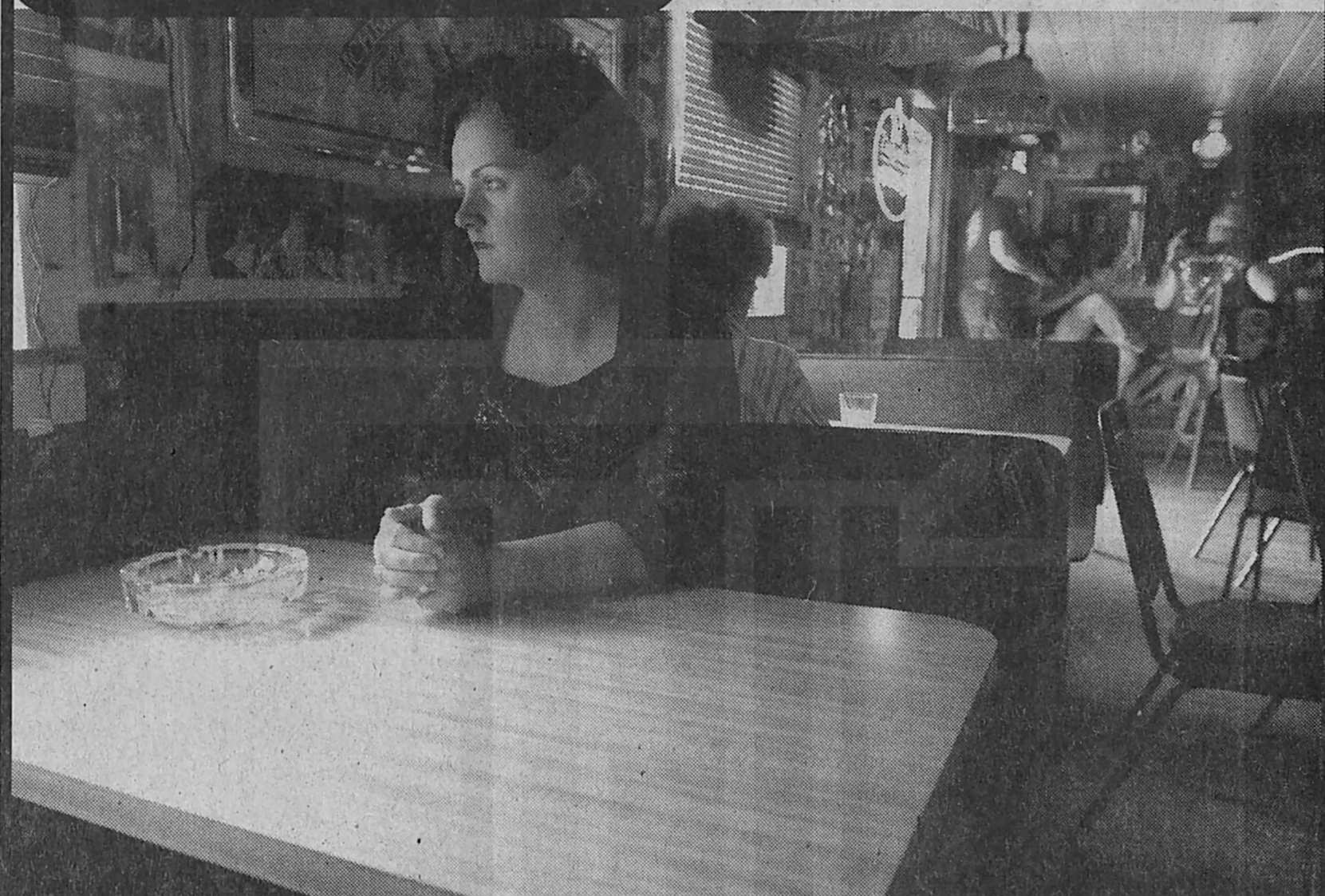


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**#118/207 NOVEMBER 2006**



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JOHN THE REVEALATOR  
FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #87  
ROOTS BIRTHS & DEATHS**

**REVIEWS \*\*\*\*\* (or not)**

**THE BAND OF HEATHENS • THE BE GOOD TANYAS  
MICHAEL BRENNAN • JOHNNY CASH • DURWOOD HADDOCK  
JP JONES • MARK LeGRAND • LOOMER • CORB LUND  
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Michael Hall. He's recorded with the Wild Seeds, the Settlers (w/ Alejandro Escovedo & Walter Solas-Humans), Jon Dee Graham, Rosie Flores, Vicki Peterson, members of Fastball, Poi Dog Pondering, and Lyle Lovett's Large Band. He's been covered by the Silos, Kris McKay, the Vulgar Boatmen, Mike Ireland, and others. Now Michael Hall is releasing his eighth album, "The Song He Was Listening To When He Died," on Freedom Records. The album, produced by Scrappy Jod Newcomb and George Reiff, is full of spare acoustic beauty, pure pop longing, and inscrutable Vietnamese disco. The moment of death has never sounded more alive.

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## FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #87

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DURING OCTOBER 2006

### #1 WAYNE HANCOCK: TULSA

(Bloodshot) \*BR/\*BS/\*CP/\*DC/\*DF/\*JF/\*KR/\*LB/\*  
MA/\*MM/\*MT/\*PTT/\*RMP/\*TM/\*TR

- 2 Butch Hancock: War And Peace (Two Roads)  
\*AA/\*DJ/\*EB/\*FW/\*GM/\*JM/\*JW/\*KC/\*MN/\*PP/\*ST/\*WT
- 3 Solomon Burke: Nashville (Shout! Factory) \*BF/\*DG/\*DT/\*JP
- 4 Grayson Capps: Wail & Ride (Hyena) \*DD/\*JZ/\*MB/\*TA
- 5 The Band Of Heathens: Live From Momo's  
(Fat Caddy) \*DA/\*MDT/\*MF/\*SC
- 6 Jerry Lee Lewis: Last Man Standing (Artist First) \*JD/\*KD
- 7 Carrie Rodriguez: Seven Angels On A Bicycle  
(Train Wreck/Back Porch) \*XE
- 8 Paul Burch: East To West (Bloodshot) \*BP/\*TW
- 9 Chris Smither: Leave The Light On  
(Signature Sounds) \*BBC/\*RJ
- 10 Loomer: Songs Of The Wild West Island (Newtone) \*AOK
- 11= The Be Good Tanyas: Hello Love (Nettwerk) \*DWT/\*SB
- Bob Dylan: Modern Times (Columbia) \*HP/\*N&T
- 12 Jim Lauderdale: Country Super Hits Vol 1 (Yep Roc) \*KM
- 13 The Sadies: In Concert (Yep Roc) \*DP
- 14 Cole Mitchell: Invictus (Wasteland) \*DB
- 15 Bobby Bare Jr.: The Longest Meow (Bloodshot) \*RC
- 16 Sherry Austin: Drive On Back (Barking Topiary)
- 17= Guy Clark: Workbench Songs (Dualtone) \*T&C
- Bradley Walker: Highway Of Dreams (Rounder) \*BH
- 18 Willie Nelson: Songbird (Lost Highway) \*RV
- 19= Marshall Rhodes (Big River) \*TF
- Leeroy Stagger: Depression River (Boomba) \*SR
- 20= Los Lobos: The Town And The City (Hollywood) \*BK
- Romi Mayes: Sweet Somethin' Steady (Self) \*RA
- The Mercy Brothers: Strange Adventure (Corazong) \*CR
- 21 Crooked Still: Shaken By A Low Sound (Signature Sounds)
- 22= Dustin Bentall: Streets With No Lights (self) \*JR
- Michael Brennan: Cautious Man (Red Rows)
- The Doo-Wah Riders: Hillbilly Ranch (self) \*JT
- Halfway : Remember The River (Laughing Outlaws) \*MP
- Mindy Smith: Long Island Shores (Vanguard) \*HT
- 23 Sunny Sweeney : Heartbreaker's Hall of Fame (self)
- 24= Jerry Allcorn: 50 Years Too Late (self) \*RS
- Jim Cuddy: The Light That Guides You Home (WEA) \*FS
- Douglas Greer: Just A Man (Zilker Park) \*JS
- JP Jones: Magical Thinking (Vision Company) \*BB
- Chris Knight: Enough Rope (Drifter's Church)
- Anne McCue: Koala Motel (Messenger) \*AN
- VA: The Harry Smith Project (Shout! Factory) \*B&C
- 25= Corb Lund: Hair In My Eyes Like A Highland Steer  
(Stony Plain)
- Old Crow Medicine Show: Big Iron World (Nettwerk) \*R&H
- AJ Roach: Revelation (New Folk Star) \*RE
- Darrell Scott: The Invisible Man (Full Light) \*OO
- Chip Taylor: Unglorious Hallelujah  
(BackPorch/Train Wreck) \*CS
- 26= Johnny Cash: American V; A Hundred Highways  
(Lost Highway) \*BL
- Dan Montgomery: Rosetta, Please [A Love Story]  
(Makeshift) \*T&J
- Two Timin' Three: Payin' The Price (Take Off!) \*LG
- VA: Old Town School of Music Songbook Vol I (Bloodshot)
- Halden Wofford & The Hi-Beams: Midnight Rodeo (self)



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

Freeform American Roots is compiled from reports provided by 140 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)

## LOOSE DIAMONDS:

### A DJ's PRIVATE STASH # 29

#### BRIAN BOURGOIN

**B**eing a freeform DJ gives me a chance to basically make a favorite mix tape for others to hear each show. As a DJ for an independent radio station, WCNI, New London, CT, I feel a sense of responsibility to promote real music by real artists in this era of pre-programmed, generic and overproduced fluff being passed as music. In my opinion, the best new music is happening on an individual and smaller scale and my radio show focuses on newer releases by independent artists. My radio show is called *Twisted Roots* and that is somewhat literal, since I tend to take a twisted road each show—ranging from singer-songwriter, twang and roots rock. Roots rock has always been near and dear to my heart, ever since I snuck into an X/Del Fuegos nightclub show when I was 14. I was hooked. When John asked me to participate in the Loose Diamonds series, I was not sure if I should focus on influences and originators (Cash, Sahm, T Van Zandt), rarities or some releases which summarize the politics of the today (Earle, Trudell). I opted instead to focus on some of the releases over the last 10-15 years, which I keep going back to daily, weekly and yearly and continue to find enjoyment.

**Bottle Rockets: 24 Hours A Day** (Atlantic, 1997) These guys are basically tops for me and every release is well liked, but this one is rock solid from start to finish. Brian Henneman captures a real life view in his songs and the barroom rock/twang fits the words perfectly.

**Fred Eaglesmith: 50 Odd Dollars** (Razor & Tie, 1999). I know, this is his rock album and is not supposed to be as good as **Drive in Movie** or **Lipstick, Lies...** but for my \$, this is my favorite Fred album.

**Slobberbone: Everything You Thought was Right...** (New West, 2000). These guys were a great live band and this CD continues to be a watermark showing how rock and mandolins do belong together.

**Dave Alvin: Museum Of The Heart** (Hightone 1993). Every Dave album has something enjoyable, but this CD has some touching ballads and mid-tempo blues that just continue to resonate.

**Alejandro Escovedo: With These Hands** (Ryko, 1996). This guy is an original and needs to be seen live, but this CD is one of my personal favorites. It narrowly edges out **Man Under The Influence**.

**Michael Weston King: Absent Friends** (MWK, 2004). An incredible songwriter and very nice person, he has rightfully gotten good press in this publication.

**Otis Gibbs: One Day Our Whispers** (Benchmark, 2004). He manages to capture a gritty view of life. This CD puts it all together, also check out his sometimes funny Christmas CD.

**Kelly Pardekooper: Haymaker Heart** (Leisure Time, 2004). All of his releases get airtime on my show, but his last CD really started to develop a varied music style over the always poignant lyrics.

**Kan Layne & The Corvids: Fought Down** (Scrub Jay, 2003). This release is a fun updating of the classic 70s Stones sound, but with an original style. This is probably a desert island CD for me as well.

**Luther Wright & The Wrongs: Guitar Pickin' Martyrs** (Backporch, 2003). These Canadian guys put out a slightly warped sense of Honktonk/Twang, I guess that's why it makes sense on my show.

**John Trudell: AKA Grafitti Man** (Ryko, 1993). Poet, activist and musician. This CD cements his place as an important artist with a lot to say. This is basically a tie with his last release **Bone Days**.

### AND MY OWN ELECTIONS SONGS

**Bottle Rockets: Align Yourself**

**James McMurtry: We Can't Make It Here**

**JJ Cale: The Problem**

**Neil Young: Looking For A Leader**

**Matthew Grimm & The Red Smear: Kill The Poor**

**Robert Cray: Twenty**

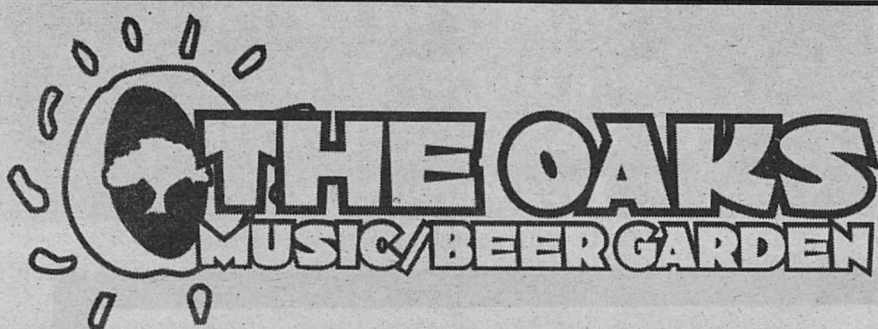


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 Sun 26th Stuart Adamson & The Flying As (6)  
 Wed 29th Harry Bodine (6) Seth Walker (8.30)

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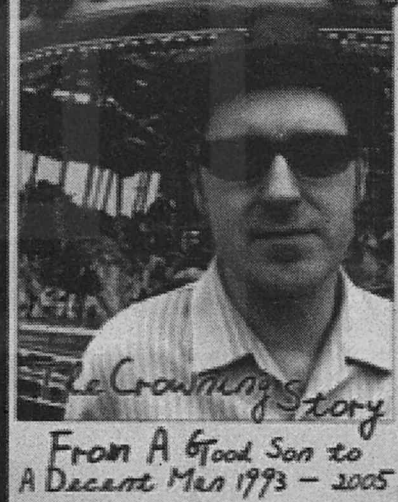


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**CORB LUND**  
**HAIR IN MY EYES LIKE A HIGHLAND STEER**  
**MICHAEL BRENNAN**  
**CAUTIOUS MAN**  
**LOOMER**  
**SONGS OF THE WILD WEST ISLAND**  
**THE BE GOOD TANYAS • HELLO LOVE**

(Stony Plain \*\*5/Red Rows \*\*\*\*\*/Newtone \*\*\*.5/Nettwerk \*\*\*\*.5)

Canada is kind of a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it sent us Jack Scott and, well, that's good enough right there, Bob Nolan, Hank Snow, Ian & Sylvia, Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, Ray Condo, Fred Eaglesmith et al are just gravy. On the other, Anne Murray, Celine Dion, Robert Goulet, Diana Krall, Paul Shaffer, Shania Twain and Terri Clark make you wonder if America ought to rethink which border needs a fence. Though they don't make a big thing out of them, Canadian musicians have some interesting advantages, such as government recording subsidies, the 'Canadian content' law that requires most radio stations to air at least 35% home grown music and their own exclusive music awards.

◆ Corb Lund, who fronts roots-country band The Hurtin' Albertans, out of Edmonton, has mopped up a whole mess of Canadian Country Music Association and Western Canadian Music awards, and is now testing whether or not they mean anything much south of the border, spending the whole of November touring Texas. There's a certain logic to this because his music has much in common with 'Texas Music.' I tend to be suspicious of people who make major genre switches, in Lund's case from indie rock/metal, and, although he has the pedigree, raised on a ranch, son of a rodeo rider and himself a teenage bullrider, competing, and placing, at the Calgary Stampede, and superficially everything sounds right, like 'Texas Music,' there's a kind of a spiritual emptiness at the core that makes his music unconvincing. Lund has all the right moves, but they just don't seem natural.

◆ Socrates said "the unexamined life is not worth living," but, making a really gross generalization, while American singer-songwriters obviously reflect on their lives, mining them for material, and are frequently self-absorbed (how do Massachusetts singer-songwriters do their scales "Me, me, me, me"), they tend not to run the kind of continual self-audit that informs the writing of such Britons as Michael Weston King and Terry Clarke. And, apparently, Canadians like Michael Brennan, who has much in common with King and Clarke. Born and raised in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, now based in Toronto, where he teaches math when he's not playing roots/rockabilly, fronting The Wayward Angels, in area bars, Brennan doesn't spend his whole time publicly cross-examining himself, but there's a sub-text, most obviously in the title track, that says that he's well aware of his personal and musical capabilities and limitations. Comfortable in himself, his music is genuine and unaffected and his album, while something of a sleeper, is as comfortable as an old shirt.

◆ One of my favorite comments about alt.country came from a Norwegian country fan: "REM in cowboy hats." While it's too early to read the last rites over the sub-genre, its heyday seems to be pretty much done—I mean, right now Bloodshot's most important artist is the hardest of hardcore real country traditionalists, what does that tell you? The decline of alt.country may explain why Toronto's Loomer is being hailed as the second coming of Uncle Tupelo/Wilco/The Jayhawks/Whiskeytown, you name it, though, frankly, one incarnation of any of those groups was more than enough for me. Lead singer Scott Loomer is a deft songwriter, the band is considerably more melodic than its guitar-heavy predecessors and both the country and punk underpinnings are subtly disguised, but there's still a lot of Michael Stipe in here. The album's best moment, and its downfall, is *Only Lovers*, a duet with Sarah Harmer, which makes you want more, more of the same—Sarah Harmer & Loomer would be a force to be reckoned with. As it is, Loomer is merely the best alt.country available in the sound's twilight.

◆ Vancouver-based trio The Be Good Tanyas have a formula—as the great British music writer Charlie Gillett recently remarked, this is their third first album—but it's a killer, spine-tingling harmonies, strong originals by Samantha Parton and Frazey Ford, a couple three well chosen contemporary covers, a sprinkling of traditional songs and what Gillett calls Ford's "trademark indecipherable mumble." This time round, Parton (two songs) and Ford (three), plus another they cowrote with Trish Klein, deliver again, and the covers, Neil Young's *For The Turnstiles*, Sean Hayes' standout *A Thousand Tiny Pieces* and JT & The Clouds' *Scattered Leaves* are excellent. Unfortunately, the album crumbles a bit in the second half with the traditional material, *Out Of The Wilderness*, *What Are They Doing In Heaven Today* and Mississippi John Hurt's *Nobody Cares For Me*, none of which really come off successfully. And then there's the coda, a 'hidden' version of *When Doves Cry*, which is either the best or worst track on the album, depending on who you believe. Having absolutely no memory of Prince's original, it strikes me as a pretty decent skiffle number, neither the best nor worst on a good album with a few iffy moments.

◆ I'm sure there's plenty more where these came from, but that's enough Canadiana for now.

JC

**MANDY MERCIER**  
**RUN OUT OF DARKNESS**  
**THE BAND OF HEATHENS**  
**LIVE FROM MOMO'S**

(Wild Cantinas \*\*\*\*\*/Fat Caddy \*\*\*\*\*)

My own reasons for being fond of Mercier and her music were crystallized in a single moment. During a show, Ray Wylie Hubbard invited her and another female musician, who shall remain nameless, up to join him. Standing side by side, one was clearly having the time of her life, playing her heart out, the other, a black hole sucking the energy out of the room, looked like she'd rather be chewing broken glass. Playing her heart out is pretty much what Mercier does on a regular basis and while I've heard her abilities, as a singer, fiddler and songwriter, questioned, such criticism misses the point, that her sheer energy, exuberance and commitment can propel her to heights where mere technical considerations cease to matter. Her press kit is stuffed with raves for her live shows, routinely referring to her as the most underrated musician in Austin. Her problem, of course, is transferring explosive performing strengths onto tape in the studio, but if it seems rather subdued, her fourth album does strongly suggest her elemental nature, and, at least with Big Mama Thornton's *Ball And Chain*, a certain damping down actually works in her favor. With a core band that included guitarists Marvin Dykhuis and Ben Cocke, Chip Dolan on organ, James Fenner percussion and Eric Johnson's drummer Tommy Taylor, Mercier, who flirted with a more 'sophisticated' sound last time round, pegs this as a return to roots by opening with Willie Dixon's *Spoonful*, followed by the original *Get There*, which features Champ Hood on guitar, Cocke's *Call It Love*, Ernie K-Doe's *Hello My Lover* by patriarch Clarence Reggie Toussaint, Sippie Wallace's *Special Delivery*, *Wild Heart* by former bandmate (The Hellhounds) Tom Pacheco, The Lovin' Spoonful's *Sportin' Life*, a duet with Ray Wylie Hubbard of his *Run Out Of Darkness*, *Ball & Chain*, winding up with *You've Got To Move*, with Paul Skelton on lead guitar. With arrangements that maximize her strengths, this is an album that, even if it doesn't break her out of 'Most Underrated' status, should help to illustrate why so many of us in these parts think so well of Mandy Mercier.

◆ There's a fascinating contrast between the approaches taken by Mercier, who's been involved in the Austin music scene since the late 70s, and Colin Brooks, Ed Jurdi, Brian Keane and Gordy Quist, who, by comparison, have barely finished unpacking. Where Mercier is old school, putting her resources into recording the best album she can then throwing it out there to sink or swim, The Band Of Heathens economized on the recording but are promoting the living crap out their album. After coming together as separate acts sharing a bill, the four singer-songwriters experimented with an improvised, unrehearsed collaboration last spring which, via the short-lived name The Good Time Supper Club, coalesced into The Band Of Heathens. There's a certain trade off in this arrangement, the individual songs and their singers gain from the band-format energy, but there's an occasional grinding of gears as they switch from one distinctive writer and contrasting song stylist to another. Brooks, Jurdi and Quist contribute three apiece, Keane just one, plus *No Great Mystery* by Austin songwriter Wayne Sutton, Leadbelly's *Ain't No More Cane* and Tom Waits' *Anywhere I Lay My Head*, creating a kind of tartan effect, bold colors and patterns that should clash but somehow cohere. Musical co-ops are nothing new in Austin, where life has always been hard for the solo performer, but they're usually monolithic and unstable, one member already or becoming primus inter pares, first among equals, with little incentive to remain, but while Brooks, who has a parallel career as a guitarslinger, may bring a little extra to the mix, The Heathens' compare and contrast dynamic and balance of talents make them seem potentially more durable. Meantime, they have at least one kickass album

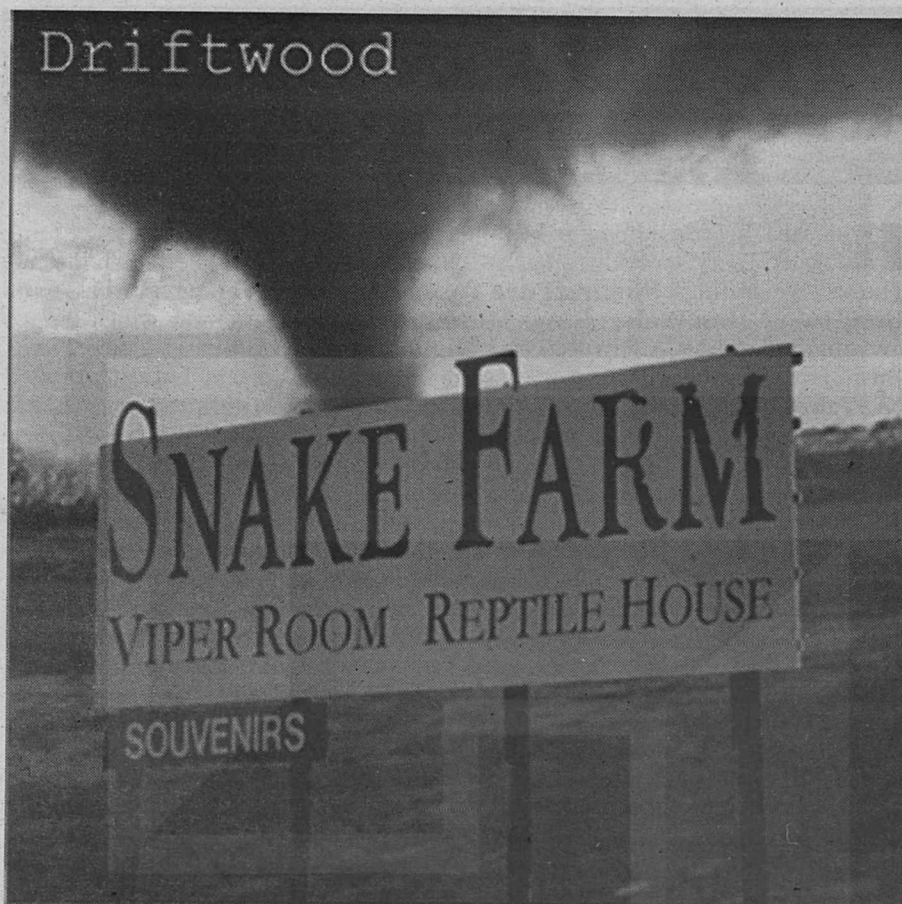
**JP JONES • MAGICAL THINKING**

(Vision Company \*\*\*\*\*)

Couple three months ago, reviewing Ray Wylie Hubbard's first post-Philo CD, I quoted JP Jones, actually misquoted but the sense was there, though at the time I couldn't remember where I'd heard or read what he said, so couldn't attribute it—"They refused to release me from my contract asserting their right of ownership of everything I wrote for the term of the deal. I was unable to write anything for the next five years. Fortunately on the day after the contract expired I was able to write about 100 songs." Just before it imploded in 1973, Windfall, a shortlived Columbia subsidiary, released **John Paul Jones**, which sold 8000 copies, probably to Led Zepplin fans who thought it was the bassplayer's solo album. Jones resurfaced in 1991 with the first of 12 albums (he calls himself "Rhode Island's most prolific independent recording artist") that have made him a cult figure. Jones studied at a Baptist seminary but it seems to have stuck as religiosity rather than religion, he's sort of the musical equivalent of Dietrich Bohoeffler, addressing deep issues not as a preacher but, with a light touch and wry humor, simply offering his thought and asking loaded questions. However, after dropping out of seminary, he actually graduated in music composition, and his albums are considerably more sonically complex and layered than those of your average singer-songwriter. He's been compared to Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Tom Waits, but Jones has his own row to hoe. JC



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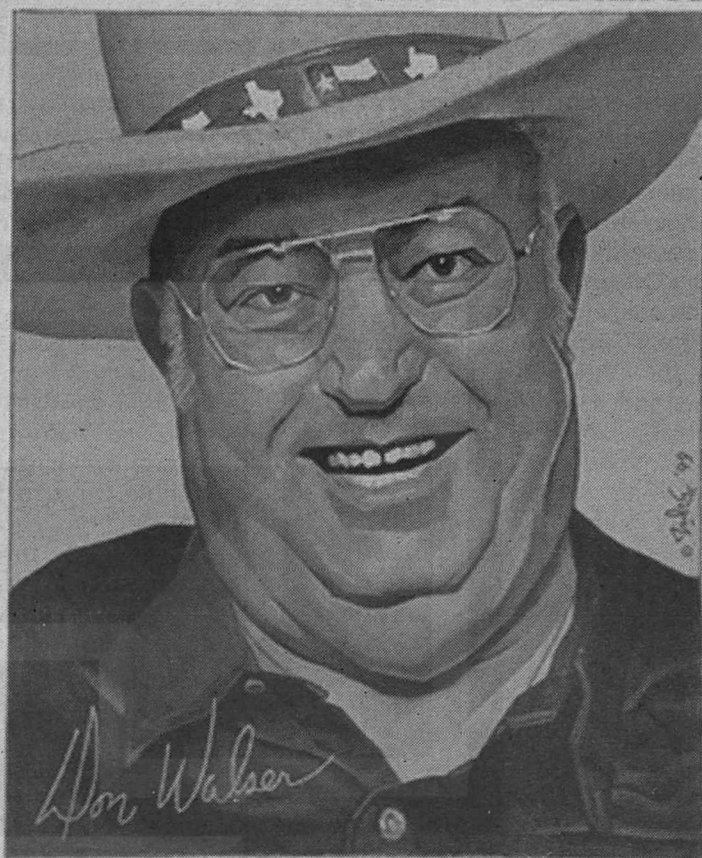
*"Michael Hurwitz sings his  
Prairie Blues like a thun-  
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plains, potent yet soothing.  
His guitar sparkles like a  
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## JOHNNY CASH AT SAN QUENTIN (LEGACY EDITION)

(Columbia/Legacy 3 CDs + DVD box \*\*\*\*\*)

Not counting *At Folsom Prison & San Quentin* (1976) and *The Collection: At Folsom Prison/At San Quentin/America* (2004), this is the third go-round for what many people think is Cash's greatest album. Personally, I've always favored *At Folsom Prison*, partly because it features Luther Perkins, who died seven months before the San Quentin recording, partly because the song selection is somewhat stronger, but there's no question *At San Quentin* is up there among Cash's best. Question is, which version? OK, with only nine tracks, the 1969 LP was far too short, with 18, *At San Quentin [The Complete 1969 Concert]* (2002) was a vast improvement, and with 31, the *Legacy Edition* is too much. You may ask how come 13 tracks have been added to a 'Complete' edition? Well, even as a Johnny Cash album, it wasn't actually complete, his *Long Black Veil*/Give My Love To Rose medley, *Orange Blossom Special*, on which he did the fiddle part on two harmonicas, *Jackson* and *Blistered* appear on this edition for the first time. On top of that, this should really be titled 'The Johnny Cash Show At San Quentin,' because it includes three tracks by Carl Perkins, two by The Statler Brothers and three by The Carter Family. June Carter gets off some great zingers in a schtick listed as a track, but the Carters and Perkins sound pretty tired and the best I can say for the Statlers is you can keep 'em. However, even if four more Cash tracks aren't sufficient inducement to spring for yet another edition, the DVD, which, as far as I can make out, isn't available as a standalone, bears serious consideration. The show, plus interspersed interviews with convicts and guards, was filmed by Britain's Granada TV and this is the first official release of the resulting program, *Johnny Cash In San Quentin*, though notoriously shitty bootlegs, taped from broadcasts, have been knocking around for years. Very well filmed, it features 12 songs in their entirety, cutting away from Cash, the band and the audience very sparingly. The famous moment when Cash flipped the bird at a cameraman who got between him and the convicts doesn't appear, but Cash advising another cameraman that bending over isn't a good idea in San Quentin does. There's an extraordinarily silly opening sequence, but both the concert footage and the interviews are gripping. It may be an advance copy thing, but the chapter markers don't seem to work for shit. **JC**

## MARK LeGRAND & THE LOVESICK BANDITS COLD NEW ENGLAND TOWN

(Hillbilly Millionaire \*\*\*\*\*)

For all I know there are even more, but even two excellent country bands in Vermont seems quite remarkable, two in a town with a population of 8,000 and change, Montpelier, the smallest of the state capitals (more useless 3CM trivia), is really rather extraordinary, and that's not even the end of it. Their live sets may include the same kind of classic material you might hear from any good real country act, but the two bands each boast a remarkable writer of original material, Billy Brachter for The Starline Rhythm Boys (whose third album is ready but with no release date yet) and LeGrand. However, where The Starline Rhythm Boys are generally upbeat, even in heartbreak, LeGrand, a veteran who's been playing in Vermont since the late 60s and has battled enough musician's demons, alcohol, drugs and failed marriages, to qualify as an Honorary Texas, is dark and moody. The very first song, *Hillbilly Hollywood*, about broken Tinseltown dreams, references *Sunday Morning Coming Down*, a cover of which would have fitted perfectly among the ten minor key originals. Playing rhythm guitar and backed by guitarist Dan Haley and upright bass player Noah Hahn (there seems to be a local shortage of drummers, The Starline Rhythm Boys don't have one either), creating a sparse but effective Southern Gothic sound, LeGrand is not the only exponent of 'country noir,' but he has some stark and unusual slants. *Shooting Star* is about a hillbilly junkie, "No one here's gonna bring her no harm, she numbs 'em out through a hole in her arm," in *The Shadow Of A Jukebox*, it's not just A-11 that makes a man fall apart, in *Lonesome Daddy Blues* a father's losing his daughter to the wild side, *Mexico* is a fantasy about escaping from one border to another, and "there's nothing as lonesome as a cold New England town." This may sound way too fanciful, but if you can imagine Lou Reed growing up in rural Vermont and writing country songs... OK, forget it, let's just say that this is a thoughtful and thought-provoking album by a distinctive singer, songwriter and group. **JC**



## DON WALSER & THE PURE TEXAS BAND TEXAS LEGEND

(Varese Saraband \*\*\*\*\*.5)

Had the label consulted me, I would have suggested a different title, quoting James Henry's weekly remark—It Just Doesn't Get Any Better Than This. The early recordings, *Singing Pure Texas With Don Walser's Pure Texas Band* (1991), *Don Walser Sings More Pure Texas* (1991) and, which slipped my mind last month, *A Honky Tonk Night With Don Walser's Pure Texas Band* (1992), were originally on cassettes, 23 tracks from which were compiled on Walser's first CD, *A Souvenir Of Pure Texas Music* (Sight & Sound Southwest, 1993) and 34 on the two volumes of *The Archive Series* (Watermelon, 1995). This time round, there are only 18, though in the context of making any of Don Walser's best work available again, 'only' isn't really a put-down, I'd be deeply grateful for this album at any length, despite the unfortunate timing. The crucial aspect of it is '& The Pure Texas Band.' The plain fact of the matter is that Don never sounded quite as good when he was separated from his guys, and though these tracks were recorded under less than optimum conditions, in a cheapass studio that specialized in advertising jingles—pissing off Ed Miller, who'd persuaded Cedar Creek to offer Don a special Don't Tell Anyone rate—they're still the best you'll hear, made when Walser was still in good health. The only constants in the Pure Texas Band during this period were bassplayer Skinny Don Keeling and fiddler Howard Kalish, who were joined by steel guitar legend Jimmy Day on Don's *Cowboy Ramsey*, *The John Deere Tractor Song* and *Rolling Stone From Texas*, Jimmy Wakely's *Castling My Lasso*, Merle Haggard's *Shelly's Winter Love* (the only track that wasn't on *Souvenir*), Lefty Frizzell's *Long Black Veil* and Tex Owens' *Cattle Call*, from the first tape. From the second tape, Don's *Tomorrow Is A Million Miles Away*, *You and Yodel Polka*, Ray Price's *Curtain In The Window*, Marty Robbins' *All Around Cowboy*, Hoyle Nix's *Big Ball In Cowntown* and Elton Britt's *Chime Bells* feature the band's finest lineup, with Day plus Jason Roberts doing twin fiddles with Kalish. Finally, Don's *Fuzz Dixon* and *Hill Country Waltz*, Elton Britt's *Cowpoke* and Eddy Arnold's *Bouquet Of Roses* come from the third tape, on which Roberts was still with the band but Day, who'd moved to Nashville, had been replaced by Bert Rivera. Personally, I'd have used Mel Tillis' *New Patches* rather than the mushy *Hill Country Waltz* and, as the album 'only' runs to just short of an hour, squeezed in Marty Robbins' *Begging To You*, Jeanne Pruett's *Love Me* and Walser's own *Side Men*, which would make this album just about perfect. Even so, it comes pretty damn close. Except for the liner notes; apparently Rush Evans interviewed Walser in 1998, but seems to have misplaced the tape. The problem with "When he retired from the Guard at 55, he finally had the freedom to pursue music as a full time career. This collection features the best of his early post-retirement recordings" is that Walser actually retired five years later, in 1994, after he'd cut all these tracks. Ah well, a minor irritant in what's otherwise an album no Walser or real country, fan can afford to be without. Spread culture—give one to a Yankee. **JC**

## DURWOOD HADDOCK HONKY TONK CRAZY AND OTHER LOVE SONGS

(Eagle International \*\*\*\*.5)

So, I was watching TV the other night and up came an ad for a compilation of 'Power Ballads.' I freely admit to being hazy on the concept, but what struck me about the spiel was that even the acts I vaguely remember despising aren't around anymore. Call me a naive, sentimental fool but one of the things that draws me to roots music is that it is, or anyway can be, a lifetime deal. Once you get rolling in real country, acoustic, conjunto, zydeco, cajun, bluegrass, polka or whatever, genres in which performers can by 18 or 81, you can keep going until you drop. Case in point, Ray Price will turn 81 in January and shows no sign of quitting any time soon, so at 72, Durwood Haddock still has some tread left on his tires. Involved in country music all his life, as a fiddler, DJ, songwriter, United Artists and Monument recording artist, publisher, booker and, most recently, online record store owner, Haddock charted several times in the outer reaches of the Billboard Top 100, but though he never had a hit himself, his *There She Goes* was one for Carl Smith, Jerry Wallace and, as *There He Goes*, Patsy Cline, who also cut his *I Don't Wanta*. Though he put out his first single in 1954, Haddock didn't release an album until 1995 (the retrospective *Texas Honky Tonk Blues*, #76) and it was another ten years until his second, *I Remember Jenny Lou Carson* (#103/192). As on the latter, Haddock plays all the instruments, fiddles, lap steel, guitars, harmonica, keyboard, bass and drums, this time behind 13 originals. Haddock is firmly rooted in the mid-50s, a rather unfortunate time for a young aspiring country artist, whipsawed between the decline of Western Swing and the onslaught of rock & roll, which knocked classic honky tonk permanently out of mainstream country. Of the 13 tracks, with old school titles like *Last Night I Really Had A Bawl*, the standout is *Honky Tonk Crazy (& Bar Hoppin' Mad)*, in which Haddock leaves the doublewide to track down his errant sweetie, an *I've Been Everywhere* odyssey that involves hitting more real honky tonks and bars than you can shake a stick at—and if your joint somehow got overlooked, you take it up with him ([www.durwoodhaddock.com](http://www.durwoodhaddock.com)). **JC**





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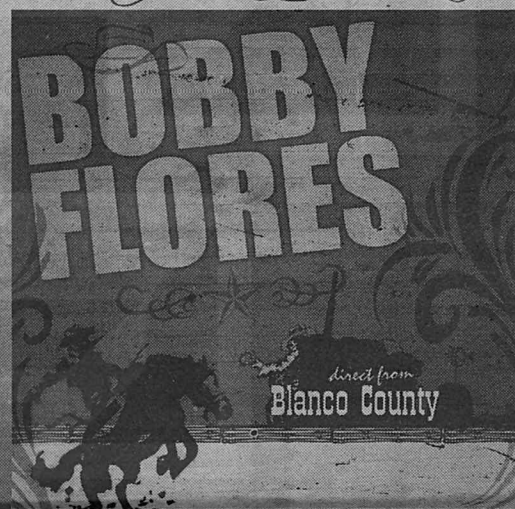


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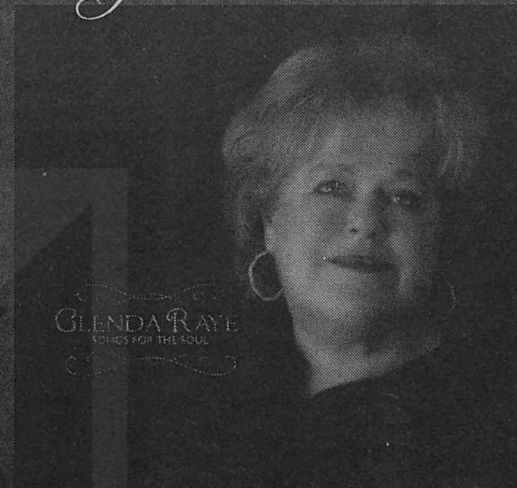
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# GOLDEN PROTEST

The oldest known protest song is *The Cutty Wren* from the Peasants Revolt of 1381, the youngest is being uploaded to the Internet even as you read this sentence. Whatever else can be said about the Year of Our Lord 2006, it's a great time for protest songs—Neil Young's website has a page of links to 600 downloadable 'Songs of the Times,' plus another 100 or so New Listings, and it's far from comprehensive.

Protest songs naturally tend to come in waves, during the American Revolution, the abolition movement, the War Between The States, the union movement (particularly in the IWW), the Great Depression, the civil rights movement and, of course, the Vietnam War. The great differences in contemporary protest is that, shedding the image of bearded pinko folkies in coffeehouses preaching to the choir, it's diversified into Americana, hip-hop, jazz, punk, country, metal, alt-rock, and everything in between, and rather than being sparked by a cause, most of it is inspired by one man, George W Bush, and the message of almost all of it is, in the words of Laura Love (as early as 2003, God love her), *I Want You Gone*.

Another difference is that alongside veteran agitators like Neil Young and Steve Earle, protest songs are being written and recorded by people with no prior history. James McMurtry's remark, "I've always been a little put off by activists, so you know it's a dire situation when I have to become an activist myself," is echoed by Rickie Lee Jones, who emerged as a ferocious Bush critic with *Evening Of My Best Day*, "I've never been an activist, but I wanted to start doing something."

Yet another difference is that these songs aren't being bought, because they aren't being heard. In 1969, Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Fortune Son* hit the *Billboard* Pop chart at #14 despite being a B-side. In 1970, Edwin Starr's *War* was a #1 hit, The Temptations' *Ball Of Confusion* went to #3, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Ohio* peaked at #14. When was the last time a song as political, not to say overtly subversive, as any of these made the charts? Given that Marvin Gaye had to threaten Motown's Berry Gordy before he'd release *What's Going On*; one of the biggest hits of 1971 (#2 in the Pop chart, #1 in the R&B chart), it's not hard to figure out why such material doesn't get much exposure in a consolidated media landscape dominated by a few corporations.

Which is not to say that major labels and radio conglomerates aren't altogether unjustified in stifling dissent. As anyone who survived the folk revival can tell you, a crippling weakness of protest songs is that too many songwriters (using the word in the broadest possible sense) think that the message transcends the medium, that right-on content trumps poor craftsmanship. They are, of course, wrong, a bad song is a bad song, whether it's about loathing your president or loving your bitch. Judging from a random sampling, most of the stuff on Neil Young's site is really rancid. On another level, which probably doesn't bother Clear Channel any, some protest songs are either superficial, made by musicians for whom political stances are simply part of the act and don't really mean anything much, or simply kvetch posing as anger, an obvious example being Conor Oberst's jejune *When The President Talks To God*, though, come to think, that's already covered under the Bad Song caveat.

However, a corollary to Sturgeon's Law is that the size of the worthwhile 10% is proportionate to the volume of crud and after you sweep away the detrius, you're left with a really amazing number of good songs and even some great ones that, the ultimate test, may well outlive the context in which they were written. Now, I'm not saying that any of the Freeform American Roots reporters are ultra-liberal, America-hating Defeatocrats, but I suspect that in the weeks before the November elections, a certain number of them will be slipping the odd protest song or ten into their playlists, and I thought it might be interesting to see which ones would get the most airplay. So here are FAR's Songs of Election 2006.

As usual with any 3CM deal, Rule #1 was: There are no rules. I did think of stipulating that nominated songs had to have been written during the life of this administration, but this seemed redundant, as I figured people would be playing songs they deemed relevant, and if that included oldies that still resonate, fair enough. I also left it open to all FARsters, partly because, unlike certain presidents I could mention, 3CM's willing to listen to international opinion, partly because US elections affect everybody on the planet, even if they don't get to vote in them, in fact, in some places, especially if they don't get to vote in them. There was a tendency, particularly among the Euros, to treat this as all-time rather than tied to the elections, but that's OK too.

One note, this is about songs, so on the few occasions more than one version, eg CCR and Ivan Neville's versions of *Fortunate Son*, was nominated, I conflated them.

**Golden Protest**, incidentally, was the title of a faux K-Tel compilation being hawked by Bob Dylan (great impersonation by Christopher Guest) in a 1972 *National Lampoon* spoof, 'Those Fabulous Sixties' ("act now and you'll also get **A Treasury Of Acid Rock** and **Best Of The Supergroups**... Well, it's time for my boot heels to be wanderin'"). **JC**

# FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS' SONGS OF ELECTION 2006

## #1 James McMurtry: *We Can't Make It Here*

- \*AOK/\*CP/\*CS/\*GM/\*PP/\*TA/\*XE
- 2 Bob Dylan: *Masters Of War* \*3RC/\*JB/\*RV/\*TJ
  - 3 Johnny Cash: *Man In Black* \*JP/\*RT
  - 4 Jen Cass: *Dear Mr President* \*DS/\*JMB
  - 5 Steve Earle: *Christmas In Washington* \*EB
  - 6 Creedence Clearwater Revival/Ivan Neville: *Fortunate Son* \*JM/\*SC
  - 7= Woody Guthrie: *Deportees* \*RJ
  - Buddy Miller: *With God On Our Side* \*CR/\*GS
  - Todd Snider: *You Got Away With It* \*JW
  - 8 Todd Snider: *Conservative Christian, White Wing Republican, Straight, White American Males* \*BS/\*SF
  - 9 Johnny Cash: *The One On The Right Is On The Left* \*LG/\*TG
  - 10= Steve Earle: *Rich Man's War*
  - Tom Russell: *Who's Gonna Build Your Wall* \*MR
  - 11 The Blasters: *Common Man* \*TF
  - 16= Iris Dement: *Wasteland Of The Free* \*AA
  - Blaze Foley: *Oval Room*
  - Eliza Gilkyson: *Hiway 9*
  - 17 James McMurtry: *God Bless America* (download) \*TJ
  - 18= Billy Bragg: *Bush War Blues* (download)
  - Bruce Cockburn: *Call It Democracy* \*DT
  - Hundred Year Flood: *Rich Man's War* \*ST
  - 19= Rodney Crowell: *Don't Get Me Started* \*MN
  - Mary Gauthier: *Mercy Now*
  - Eliza Gilkyson: *Man Of God*
  - Steve Goodman/Michelle Shocked: *Ballad Of Penny Evans*
  - John Lilly: *W* (download)
  - Graham Parker: *2000 Funerals*
  - Jefferson Pepper: *Christmas In Falluja*
  - John Prine: *Your Flag Decal Won't Get You into Heaven Anymore*
  - The Woodpickers: *If There's A War On* \*KR
  - 20= The Bottle Rockets: *Align Yourself* \*BB
  - Chris Chandler: *Something In The Air/It's Not On The Airwaves* \*DA
  - Chumbawamba: *Laughter In A Time Of War* \*MDT
  - Catie Curtis: *People Look Around* \*BK
  - Richard Dobson: *Save The World* \*DJ
  - Steve Earle: *Jerusalem* \*JS
  - Grayson & Whitter/Dry Branch Fire Squad: *He Is Coming To Us Dead* \*CL
  - Woody Guthrie: *1913 Massacre* \*MF
  - Butch Hancock: *Give Them Water* \*R&H
  - Dan Kelly & The Alpha Males: *Drunk On Election Night* \*SR
  - Charlie King & Karen Brandow: *If Jimmy Didn't Have To Go* \*JA
  - Jonell Mosser: *Strangest Dream/Peace Stories* \*SM
  - Richie Stearns: *Baghdad Children* \*CD
  - Neil Young: *Let's Impeach The President*
  - 21 Tim Easton: *Jesus Protect Me From Your Followers*
  - 22= Merle Haggard: *America First*
  - Phil Ochs: *I Ain't Marching Anymore*
  - John Prine: *Some Humans Aren't Human*
  - PF Sloan: *Eve Of Destruction*
  - John Trudell: *Bombs Over Baghdad*

## ENTIRE ALBUMS

- 1 Butch Hancock: *War And Peace* (Two Roads)
- 2 The Therapy Sisters: *Let's Put A Folksinger In The White House* (self)

## BEST RICH MAN'S WAR

- 1 Steve Earle
- 2 Hundred Year Flood
- 3 The Resentments
- 4 John Trudell

## JC's GOLDEN PROTEST

- 1 John Trudell: *Bombs Over Baghdad*
- 2 James McMurtry: *We Can't Make It Here*
- 3 Butch Hancock: *Cast The Devils Out*
- 4 Eliza Gilkyson: *Man Of God*
- 5 David Rodriguez: *Time Of Constant War*
- 6 Blaze Foley: *Oval Room*
- 7 Eliza Gilkyson: *Hiway 9*
- 8 John Fogerty: *Fortunate Son*
- 9 John Lilly: *W*
- 10 Merle Haggard: *America First*





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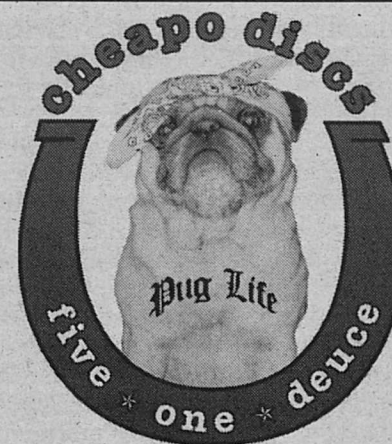
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# JOHN THE REVEALATOR

**J**eez, I still can't believe I did that. Over the last 15 years or so, I must have typed **Don Walser's** name hundreds of times and never got it wrong, even though, quite often, at least when I was still running gig calendars, it wouldn't really have mattered all that much if I had. So what happens when it's a particularly sensitive moment? Yep, it comes out, on the front cover no less (but right everywhere else in last month's issue) as WASLER, and, of course, I didn't see it until I went to pick up the mags from the printers. I'm told that when people see a typo like that, their minds automatically correct it and they hardly even notice it consciously. I hope and trust this is true. Of course, if that happened with you, I've just blown it.

◆ Several people told me how pleased they were that, while mourning Don Walser, I made special mention of **The Pure Texas Band**. To me, Skinny Don Keeling and Howard Kalish, in particular, and other players such as Jimmy Day, Scott Walls and Philip Farjado, were part and parcel of the Don Walser experience. I can pay the band no greater tribute than to quote what Don Walser had to say about them: "These boys are outstanding in their field, and that's where I found them, standing out in a field."

◆ So what part of **International Bluegrass Music Association** do they not understand? In late September, the IBMA's annual awards show included a performance by a US Navy group called Country Current, which I understand is a pretty good bluegrass band at that, but, despite assurances that that they wouldn't play military anthems that might offend non-US members, some 15% of the Association's membership, they went ahead and played them anyway. In a rare example of someone in authority actually taking personal responsibility, David Crow, the organization's president and chairman of the board, who was backstage, resigned on the spot. A rather appalling number of bluegrass fans didn't seem to see what the problem was; "if all 300 international members are offended because the IBMA's annual event has an American patriotic theme, TOO BAD!", "keep PC and leftist politics out of bluegrass," "Disgusting... this 'tolerance' crap is just the pits," "I'm sick over political correctness working its way into one of the last bastions of true Americanism." Well, they've obviously got the 'national' down, it's the 'inter' that seems to give them trouble.

◆ Papers all across America at least picked up the lengthy AP story on **Freddy Fender's** death, while the *San Antonio Express-News* gave him a very good home-grown, front page send-off, so he falls into the Too Well-Known/You Already Know About This category. Still, there are a couple of things about the coverage that were a bit odd. One was that AP included a quote from one Cristina Balli, spokeswoman for the Narciso Martinez Cultural Arts Center in San Benito, who said Fender illustrated the diversity of Mexican-American and Latino musicians. "I think he was the precursor to Los Lonely Boys." Well, whoop-di-do, there's something to be remembered for. Talk about damning with faint praise. The other is that there's an easy way to find out which papers ran original stories, do a Search for Fender Meaux. AP (and the *Express-News*) unpersoned producer **Huey P Meaux**, who salvaged Fender after his release from Louisiana's Angola State Penitentiary, bullied him into recording *Before The Next Teardrop Falls* and put him on the road to stardom, writing him out of the story, but he got his due in the *Austin American-Statesman*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Brownsville Herald*, *LA Times*, Britain's *The Times* and *The Guardian* and, rather surprisingly, *USA Today* and CMT online.

◆ The October 23 issue of *Country Weekly* featured the "modern-day cowgirls" of Dallas trio **Lantana**. You can read how Biz Haddock (no relation to

Durwood), Karol Ann DeLong and Dalene Richelle walked out of a fashionable Texas boutique with over \$50,000 in clothes to wear at their first photo shoot. Reminds me of Dolly Parton's line, "You wouldn't believe how much it costs to look this cheap."

◆ In May 2004, **Mojo** (#126) ran "The 100 Greatest Protest Songs" and in October 2004, **VH1** presented '25 Greatest Political Protest Songs,' hosted and narrated by John Mellencamp. Though both put Bob Dylan at #1, they disagreed on the song, Mojo going for *Masters Of War*, VH1 for *Blowin' In The Wind*, but seemed to agree that the top spot was enough, neither including any other Dylan songs. Illustrating the difficulty of compiling lists in such a subjective field, only 14 songs in the smaller made it into the larger, the shut-outs including Patti Smith, System of a down (? what it says here, never heard of 'em), Black Eyed Peas (who, unfortunately, I have heard) and Neil Young, while Marvin Gaye, U2, The Sex Pistols, Rage Against The Machine, The Clash and Elvis Costello made both lists but with different songs. Young does appear in both lists but in Mojo's only as the Y in CSN&Y, with *Ohio*, and though his *Rockin' In The Free World* is in VH1's list, they credit *Ohio* to Crosby, Still & Nash, even though Young, of course, wrote it. One of the big winners is The Clash whose *London Calling* was #20 with VH1 while *Mojo* liked it so much they ranked it at both #30 and #42. My favorite 'protest' song has to be *Mojo's* #58, Eddie Cochran's *Summertime Blues*, which edged out Bill Withers' *I Can't Write Left-Handed* and was 11 places ahead of Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Fortunate Son*. I mean, I love Eddie, but come on, teen angst doesn't really cut it compared to Vietnam.

◆ Thinking of **John Fogerty's** *Fortunate Son*, I got to wondering what the current state of play was on Spot The Senator's Son. Originally, Al Gore Jr was the prime candidate, because, though his father was an outspoken critic of the Vietnam War, which likely cost him reelection in 1970, and Gore did, in fact, later enlist, serving in Vietnam, though not at the sharp end, he was the only Senator's son of draft age when Fogerty, who was drafted in 1966, wrote the song. Later on I saw George W Bush mentioned as a candidate, but in 1969, George The Elder was only a one-term Representative from Texas and a very minor figure. Anyway, according the Urban Legends website, Snopes.com, it was neither Gore nor Bush, Fogerty himself having fingered his inspiration, **David Eisenhower**, not in fact a Senator's son but the grandson of one President and the son-in-law of another. "You just had the feeling that none of those people were going to be involved with the war." To be fair, Eisenhower enlisted in the Navy Reserve in 1970, serving for three years, mostly in the Mediterranean.

◆ There have, of course, been many, many examples of great songs being coopted by advertising agencies. How many of you wanted to smash the TV the first time you heard Janis Joplin's *Mercedes Benz* in a Mercedes Benz ad? Or The Chambers Brothers' *Time Has Come Today* used to hawk Hondas? Still, **Wranglers'** use of *Fortunate Son*, well actually just the first two lines ("Some folks are born made to wave the flag, Ooh, they're red, white and blue") which they had to take out of context as the rest of the song probably wouldn't have done much to sell jeans, wins some kind of prize for crassness. Fogerty, who would have refused permission if it had been up to him, didn't even make money out of it as he'd signed away his publishing rights. Legend has it that CCR's drummer showed the Fantasy Records contract to his lawyer father who OK'd it, so Fogerty signed. There's a moral in it that.

◆ Meanwhile, though Wrangler quietly dropped the campaign after Fogerty sounded off about it in an *LA Times* interview, the dreaded Saul Zaentz of Fantasy probably pocketed a very useful chunk of change. Chrysler reportedly offered **Bruce Springsteen** \$12 million to use *Born In The USA*

(he told them to fuck off, so they used Kenny Roger's *The Pride's Back* instead). **Bob Dylan** has sold off *The Times They Are A-Changin'* three times, to Bank Of Montreal, Cooper & Lybrand and Mitsubishi, and though it's hard to find any specific amounts, from some rueful remarks one gathers that these companies took care of his alimony for a while.

◆ Off on a tangent, I can't remember where I saw this, but it made me laugh at the time and I think I recall it fairly accurately: "Seeing **Bob Dylan** in a **Victoria's Secret** ad was pretty scary for Dylan fans, but even scarier for Victoria's Secret fans."

◆ When you hear some songs used in ad campaigns, you have to wonder if anybody actually grasped the pairing of client with content, or if some agencies just have a very warped sense of humor. Some notable oddities are Volkswagen—car makers seem to the leaders in commodity fetishism—using **Nick Drake's** *Pink Moon*, a metaphor for nuclear fallout, and **Psychic TV's** *Roman P*, very specifically about the Manson murders, smack anthems like **Iggy Pop's** *Lust For Life* (Royal Caribbean), **Lou Reed's** *Perfect Day* (NFL Super Bowl) and **The La's** *There She Goes* (Ortho Tri-Cyclen Lo, who didn't even use the original but a lame cover), and, a personal favorite, **The Rolling Stones' Brown Sugar**, which, as it's about the sexual abuse of black slaves by their white owners, didn't give either Pepsi or Kahlua's people much to work with except the words "brown sugar." Lines like "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss" (**The Who's** *Won't Get Fooled Again*/Nissan), "you go home, and you cry, and you want to die" (**The Smiths' How Soon Is Now?**/Nissan again), "I get nothing that's nice, I get nothing at all" (**The Buzzcocks' What Do I Get?**/Toyota), "I used to be cruel to my woman I beat her" (**The Beatles' Getting Better**/Phillips), "You make a grown man cry" (**The Rolling Stones' Start Me Up**/Microsoft), "Be thankful I don't take it all" (**The Beatles' Taxman**/H&R Block), "See them out on the street at night, Picking up all kinds of strangers if the price is right" (**Donna Summers' Bad Girls**/Nabisco's SnackWell cookies) or "Engines stop running" (**The Clash's London Calling**/Jaguar) hardly seem compelling inducements for the product. I mean, doesn't **Led Zepplin's Rock & Roll** ("Been a long lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely time") say that if you buy a Cadillac you'll never get laid again?

◆ Richard Schwartz (Professor Purple, *Amarillo Highway*, KZMU, Moad, UT) once remarked to me that **The Rolling Stones** could have been a pretty country band if they'd put their minds to it, but I doubt even he wouldn't ever expect to hear them play Waylon Jennings' *Bob Wills Is Still The King*, as they did at October gigs in Austin and San Antonio.

◆ Mind you, "you just can't live in Texas unless you got alot of soul" would make a first rate illustration of the **Voltaire** maxim I quoted last month, "anything too stupid to be said is sung."

◆ A recent press release serves as a good example of why I try not to think about, let alone listen to, 'contemporary country' too much, it just makes me nauseous. One odd thing about this one, incidentally, is that it concerns a duo, you'd think that if even I know that, Columbia's publicists would too. **Montgomery Gentry** may be part of the new wild bunch in country music, as he [sic] uses rock, funk, and even some hip-hop beats on **Some People Change**. The album addresses race, class, spirituality, good-timey, innocent hedonism, poverty, regret, repentance, courage in the face of adversity, and transcendence. It's an album that expresses tolerance for other views and rollicks like an out-of-control barroom in places. This is the sound of the new Nashville, one that is smart, hip, and a serious candidate for becoming in the 21st century what the best of mainstream rock was in the 20th." See what I mean, pass the barf bag when you're done with it.



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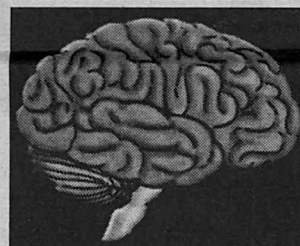
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## HIDING OUT IN THE OPEN

Elsewhere (*Golden Protest*), I note the unfortunate tendency for writers of protest songs to regard content as outweighing craftsmanship, as if mere sincerity can somehow make up for shoddy construction, a tendency, unfortunately, prevalent enough to have brought protest songs into disrepute. As Al Rose, co-owner of Chicago's Kopi Cafe, once remarked, "You start singing a protest song and people roll their eyes. You can almost hear the collective eye-rolling." No better evidence of this debilitating weakness can be found than Bob Dylan's *You Been Hiding Too Long*.

I'm not going to get into the 'was he or wasn't he' controversy, still being debated more than 40 years later. Up to *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, Dylan either had his finger on the zeitgeist or he was an opportunist using a social movement, which he publicly repudiated in 1964, to further his career. Frankly, I'm not Dylanophile or -phobe enough to care either way, and the fact is that, even if they were cynical contrivances many of the songs he wrote between January 1962 and November 1963 took on a life independent of their creator after he stopped performing them. As noted in John The Revealator, *Blowin' In The Wind* was #1 in VH1's '25 Greatest Political Protest Songs,' and *Masters Of War*, which, even back when, I thought was prolix, pretentious and mannered (though not as much as *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*) was #1 in *Mojo's* '100 Greatest Protest Songs.' Whatever his motives, and whether he likes it not, the words 'voice of his generation' and 'protest songs' are going to be in the first paragraph of Dylan's obituaries.

However, even the most ardent admirer of early Dylan would have to draw the line at *You Been Hiding Too Long*. I won't quote the whole thing, that would be too painful, but it starts, "Come, you phony superpatriotic people..." As Greil Marcus remarks in *The Threepenny Review*, "OK, stop right there, we don't need to hear any more, but there is more, a lot more, no melody, no rhythm, no heart, no conviction, but press a button and the protest song comes out... It's so awful it's been erased from Dylan's song collections; he probably never recorded it. He may have only performed it once, at a concert in New York in 1963, when he also sang *Masters Of War*—but this horrible song is inside *Masters Of War*, and for one night at least it got out." In fact, Marcus is wrong on one point. Though never officially released, Dylan did record the song and it appears on at least two bootlegs—hey, this is Dylan we're talking about—listed on one as "from the *Freewheelin'* sessions."

One has hand it to him that even though he wrote and cut it, Dylan had the decency to knock the bastard on the head after one performance and either he or John Hammond the sense to shitcan it at the studio. One wishes more songwriters and producers had as much self-discipline. The fact remains, however, that he did write it, and reading the lyrics (which, should you be in a masochist mood, you can find online), it's clearly a Dylan song and, as Marcus points out, close kin to *Masters Of War*.

The moral here is not just that Dylan was perfectly capable of writing a bad song but that he was capable of writing a bad song that he didn't strangle in the cradle before anyone else got a look at it. Horace observed, "Sometime even Homer nods," and if the man many people think, mistakenly, was the greatest songwriter of the 20th century, and some of them may even be going for the 21st, could let a real stinker get as far as this one did, imagine what the average delusions of genius Dylan wannabe will cheerfully inflict on the world. Some songs are immortal, many, if not most, are a waste of toilet paper. **JC**

## MISS LESLIE & HER JUKE-JOINTERS

### HONKY TONK HAPPY HOUR

(Zero Label)

After eight members of her band died in a plane crash, Reba McEntire, overcome with emotion, broke down in tears during *I'm Checking Out*—every night. It was a piece of schtick as tightly scripted, cued and rehearsed as any aspect of any arena show. At the other end of the spectrum, the only thing the lead singer of British punk-rockers Alberto y Lost Trios Paranoías, despised more than rehearsing was singing the same song twice, so no one, least of all the band, knew what was coming next.

Most acts, of course, fall somewhere between these extremes. Some have to stick to the set list because they only have so much material, or the pickup drummer didn't bother listening to the tape. Depending on the audience's knowledge of the repertoire and its depth, a set list can be derailed by requests—complicated by the number of people he invited to come up and sing, and his mastery at reading a room and making tactical changes, Don Walser's set lists were pretty much scrap paper after the first couple of numbers.

Apart from selecting what to play, and, in theory, you can, as Bad Livers used to demonstrate, get away with just about anything (though *Mustang Sally* is probably always a bad idea), the key to a successful set is sequencing. This can be obvious enough, mixing shuffles, waltzes and two-steps at country dance halls, or avoiding what DJs, who, come to think, need the same skill set, call 'train wrecks,' slow, quiet numbers back to back with raucous rockers.

Last month, The Kennedys and Sean Mencher illustrated the art of the covers album, this month, although her second album has 17 covers and only two originals, Leslie Lindley of Houston may help us explore the intricacies of something rather different—set construction. Not that Lindley and her Juke-Jointers don't have originals, about 20 in the set, another ten in the works, but they were either on their first studio album or will be on their next. Otherwise, this live recording is pretty representative of what you get when you hear Miss Leslie & Her Juke Jointers in a club.

Randy & Leslie Lindley's backgrounds are both in bluegrass, he as a professional with Karl Shifflet & Big Country, she as a local amateur, but Randy was tired of national touring and Leslie wanted to take music more seriously, so when Big Country imploded, they decided that as Leslie's voice is much more suited to country and Randy plays mean Don Rich-style guitar, that was the way to go. On the plus side, there's hardly any competition in the Houston area (the album, by way, was recorded at the Houston Continental), where country means either 'Texas Country' or Top 40 covers. On the minus side, there's not much local support for real country, so the band is now touring regionally. Also, Leslie encounters the same resistance to female fronted bands as Austin women, "We'd do better if we just called ourselves The Juke Jointers and Randy made the calls." Even so, Miss Leslie & Her Juke Jointers have made a lot of friends fairly quickly, *Honky Tonk Revival* designated FAR's 2005 Debut of the Year and getting a stack of good press.

Early on, Leslie and Randy focussed on the 50s and 60s. "We started out with some songs that were big hits, but over the last few months we've started phasing out anything that was ever in the Top 40." Leslie kicks off with Glenn Barber's stellar *Yes Ma'am He Found Me In Honky Tonk* which she first heard Leona Williams sing on a rerun of a 60s *Country Carnival Barn Dance* ("I about fell out of my chair"), followed by two George Jones numbers, *Everything Ain't Right* and *You're Still On My Mind*, then takes a break while her father, acoustic rhythm guitarist Country Jim Sloan, sings Bob Wills' *Bubbles In My Beer*. Back at the mike, she carries on with Johnny Paycheck's *I'm Barely Hanging On To Me*, Mel Tillis' *The Arms Of A Fool* and Ray Price's *I Want To Hear It From You*, then steps back again while the band plays Randy's instrumental *Bobo's Boogie*, returning for the excellent original *I'll Be Gone Tonight*. Then it's Jones again, a terrific reading of *Things Have Gone To Pieces*, followed by upright pianist Damian O'Grady (outstanding throughout) singing Johnny Cash's *Blistered*. After that comes *Cry, Cry, Cry*, not the Cash standard but written by Shirley Wood, recorded by Connie Smith, yet more Jones, *Ship Of Love*, and more Price, *Touch My Heart*, then Randy sings Leon Payne's *You've Still Got A Place In My Heart*, Leslie winding up with *Empty Barstool* by her sister Hilary Sloan, who also fronts a Houston area band, *Little Ole Wine Drinker Me* taken from Lefty Frizzell's version and Hank Cochran's *A-11*. Finally, steel guitarist Ricky Davis leads an outro of Lloyd Green's *Little Darlin'*.

A pretty great Hard Country evening, but is it a tad on the obvious side? Now there's a trick question. You might, for instance, think of *Bubbles In My Beer* as a standard, but, apart from Wills tributes, it's not really been covered that often since 1948 (Jones, Price, ET, Charlie Walker, Hank Thompson, Willie and Cornell Hurd), and these seem to be the first ever covers of *Cry, Cry, Cry* and *I'm Barely Hanging On To Me*, which even Groovy Joe Poovey, who wrote it, didn't cut. Thing is, you and I may know most all this stuff (Jones' *Ship Of Love* was new to me, though, useless 3CM trivia, I do have The Nutmegs' original doo-wop version), but, except on left end of the dial specialist shows, none of it's been on the radio in decades.

As for sequencing, well, you can't hardly go wrong when you've got this class of material, but Randy, the band's musical director, does a pretty flawless job, opening big, keeping them coming and neatly spacing the numbers on which Leslie doesn't sing. Maybe that's all it takes, an excellent singer, a crackerjack band and great songs. Pretty simple, really, more bands ought to try it. **JC**



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 ----- Kinky Friedman • 1944 Chicago, IL  
 ----- Lyle Lovett • 1956 Klein, TX  
 ----- Sippie Wallace † 1986  
 2nd -- Charlie Walker • 1926 Collin Co, TX  
 ----- JD Souther • 1945 Detroit, MI  
 3rd -- Sonny Rhodes • 1940 Smithville, TX  
 ----- Hugh Moffatt • 1948 Fort Worth, TX  
 ----- John Lilly • Chicago, IL  
 ----- Champ Hood † 2001  
 4th -- Delbert McClinton • 1940 Lubbock, TX  
 5th -- Etta Moten • 1901 San Antonio, TX  
 ----- Roy Rogers • 1911 Cincinnati, OH  
 ----- Ike Turner • 1931 Clarksdale, MS  
 ----- Gram Parsons • 1946 Winterhaven FL  
 ----- Johnny Horton † 1960  
 ----- Link Wray † 2005  
 6th -- Stonewall Jackson • 1932 Tabor City, NC  
 ----- Guy Clark • 1941 Monahans, TX  
 ----- Doug Sahm • 1941 San Antonio, TX  
 ----- Tary Owens • 1942 Toledo, OH  
 7th -- Little Bob • 1937 Arnaudville, LA  
 ----- AP Carter † 1960  
 8th -- Ivory Joe Hunter † 1974  
 9th -- James Talley • 1944 Tulsa, OK  
 10th -- Stephen Doster • 1955 Corpus Christi, TX  
 11th -- Sippie Wallace • 1898 Houston, TX  
 ----- Mose Allison • 1927 Tippecanoe, MS  
 ----- LaVern Baker • 1929 Chicago, IL  
 ----- Hank Garland • 1930 Cowpens, NC  
 ----- Dave Alvin • 1955 Los Angeles, CA  
 ----- Beau Jocque • 1957 Basile, LA  
 12th -- Bukka White • 1906 Houston, MS  
 ----- Booker T Jones • 1944 Memphis, TN  
 ----- Neil Young • 1945 Toronto, Canada  
 ----- James Intveld • 1959 Los Angeles, CA  
 ----- Lord Buckley † 1960  
 13th -- Sonny Fisher • 1931 Chandler, TX  
 ----- Ray Wylie Hubbard • 1946 Hugo, OK  
 ----- Ruth Ann Logsdon • 19?? New London, CT  
 14th -- Noel Boggs • 1917 Oklahoma City, OK  
 ----- Buckwheat • 1947 Lafayette, LA  
 ----- Joe Gracey • 1951 Fort Worth, TX  
 ----- Tex Edwards • 1954 Dallas, TX  
 15th -- Clyde McPhatter • 1933 Durham, NC  
 ----- Wes Reeves • 1933 La Mesa, TX  
 16th -- Jesse Stone • 1901 Atchison, KS  
 ----- Bois-Sec Ardoin • 1916 Duralde, LA  
 ----- Earl Bollick • 1919 Hickory, NC  
 ----- Shirley Bergeron • 1933 Church Point, LA  
 ----- Albert Collins † 1993

17th -- Terry Noland • 1938 Abilene, TX  
 ----- Gene Clark • 1944 Tipton, MO  
 ----- Black Ardoin • 1946 Duralde, LA  
 18th -- Hank Ballard • 1936 Detroit, MI  
 ----- Leeann Atherton • 1955 Birmingham, AL  
 ----- Doug Sahm † 1999  
 19th -- Katy Moffatt • 1950 Fort Worth, TX  
 20th -- Eck Robertson • 1887 Amarillo, TX  
 ----- Duane Allman • 1946 Nashville, TN  
 21st -- Lloyd Glenn • 1909 San Antonio, TX  
 ----- Jean Shepard • 1933 Paul's Valley, OK  
 ----- Little Joe Carson • 1936 Holliday, TX  
 ----- Dr John • 1941 New Orleans, LA  
 ----- Cecil Brower • 1965  
 22nd -- Hoagy Carmichael • 1899 Bloomington, IN  
 ----- Charles Mann • 1945 Welsh, LA  
 23rd -- Spade Cooley † 1969  
 ----- Big Joe Turner † 1985  
 ----- Roy Acuff † 1992  
 24th -- Scott Joplin • 1868 Bowie Co, TX  
 24th -- Johnny Degollado • 1935 Austin, TX  
 27th -- Werly Fairburn • 1924 Folsom, LA  
 ----- Lotte Lenya † 1981  
 ----- Charline Arthur † 1987  
 28th -- Cecil Brower • 1914 Bellevue, TX  
 ----- Bruce Channel • 1940 Jacksonville, TX  
 ----- Libbi Bosworth • 1964 Galveston, TX  
 ----- Wanda Coffman † 1991  
 29th -- Merle Travis • 1917 Rosewood, KY  
 ----- Joe Falcon † 1965  
 ----- Ray Smith † 1979  
 30th -- Fred 'Papa' Calhoun • 1904 Chico, TX  
 ----- Walter Mouton • 1938 Scott, LA  
 ----- Jeannie Kendall • 1954 St Louis, MO  
 ----- Jim Patton • 1950 Alton, IL  
 ----- Guy Forsyth • 1968 Denver, CO

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