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#73/162 FEBRUARY 2003



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ROOTS BIRTHS & DEATHS

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

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MAGIC CAR • WILLIE NELSON

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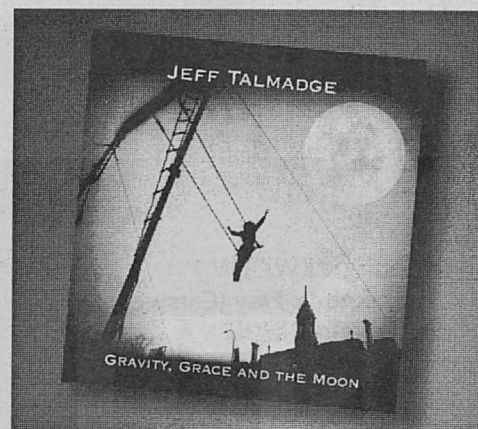
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# FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #42

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## #1 FREDA & THE FIREDOGS

(Plug) \*CP/\*DJ/\*MT/\*NA/\*PP/\*RJ/\*SJ/\*ST

- 2 Justin Trevino: **The Scene Of The Crying** (Lone Star) \*DWB/\*JF/\*JP/\*RT/\*S&D/\*TA
- 3 Sonny Landreth: **The Road We're On** (Sugar Hill) \*GS/\*JB/\*MF/\*ND
- 4 Billy Joe Shaver: **Freedom's Child** (Compadre) \*LH/\*MM
- 5 Johnny Cash: **American IV; The Man Comes Around** (American) \*DN/\*MO
- 6 Kathleen Edwards: **Failer** (Zoe) \*AR/\*RC
- 7= Meanflower: **...a distant episode** (Planetary) \*BC/\*JS  
VA: **Making Singles, Drinking Doubles** (Bloodshot) \*TJ
- 8 Kenny Roby: **Rather Not Know** (Morebarn) \*DWT/\*TW
- 9 Michael Waters: **Fertile Ground** (Tire Swing) \*RH
- 10 The Sadies: **Stories Often Told** (Outside) \*HTR
- 11 Buddy Miller: **Midnight And Lonesome** (Hightone) \*PT
- 12 Magic Car: **Yellow Main Sequence** (Tiny Dog) \*JT
- 13 Steve Earle: **Jerusalem** (Artemis) \*H&R
- 14=Waco Brothers: **New Deal** (Bloodshot) \*DF  
Chris Wall: **Just Another Place** (Cold Spring) \*EW/\*LW
- 15 Tom Armstrong: **Songs That Make the Jukebox Play** (Carswell) \*BP
- 16= Annita: **What Good'll It Do Me** (Continental) \*BL/\*KF  
Bill Neely: **Austin's Original Singer-Songwriter** (Lost Art) \*DA
- 17= Rod Picott: **Stray Dogs** (Welding Rod)  
The Shiners: **See Rock City** (Planetary) \*CZ
- 18 Missy Roback: **Just Like Breathing** (Hear Kitty) \*JRS
- 19=Audrey Auld: **Losing Faith** (Reckless) \*KD  
Randy Howard: **I Rest My Case** (Sugar Hill) \*EB  
James McMurtry: **St Mary Of The Woods** (Sugar Hill)
- 20 Catherine Irwin: **Cut Yourself A Switch** (Thrill Jockey) \*BR  
Beaver Nelson: **Legends Of The Super Heroes** (Freedom) \*SG  
VA: **A Salute To The Heroes Of Texas Swing** (Texttrak) \*JH
- 21= Deke Dickerson In 3-Dimensions! (Major Label) \*DC  
Bob Dylan: **Live 1975; The Rolling Thunder Revue** (Columbia Legacy)  
Tim Easton: **Break Your Mother's Heart** (New West) \*DY
- 22=Kip Boardman: **Up In The Stars** (Ridisculous) \*AL  
Grey De Lisle: **Homewrecker** (Hummin'bird) \*TO  
Stan Martin: **Cigarettes And Cheap Whiskey** (Twangtone)
- 22=Kinky Friedman & Billy Joe Shaver: **Live From Down Under** (Sphincter) \*TG  
The Guthries (Haysale) \*JWE
- 24=Joe Craven: **Mo' Joe** (Blender Logic Creative Arts) \*WR  
Honi Deaton & Dream: **What Should Have Been** (CMG) \*MA  
Dave Evans: **Just Look At Me Now** (Rebel) \*CL  
Liz Foster: **Indecision** (Slippery) \*RB  
Amy Fradon: **Small Town News** (Leo Rising) \*SMJ  
Terri Hendrix: **The Ring** (Wilory) \*TT  
Lisa Miller: **2 weeks in Texas** (Kin Ship) \*MP  
Mark David Manders: **Highs And Lows** (Blind Nello) \*EGB  
Leland Martin: **Simply Traditional** (?) \*H&H  
Marylin: **From Now On** (?) \*RW  
David Norris: **Southern Son** (self) \*FW  
Ron Orlando & Mystery Train: **Jasper, Texas** (self) \*RP  
Rockhouse Ramblers: **Torch This Town** (Hayden's Ferry) \*PR  
Kate Rusby: **10** (Compass) \*MR  
Mark Selby: **Dirt** (Vanguard) \*MD  
The Swindles: **Songs In The Key Of T** (MJW) \*SC  
Martha Schuyler Thompson: **No Visible Means of Support** (Cottage Industry) \*SM  
VA: **Hillbilly Rock** (Magnum) \*RS

# MISSY ROBACK • JUST LIKE BREATHING MAGIC CAR • YELLOW MAIN SEQUENCE

(Hear Kitty \*\*\*\*.5/Tiny Dog [UK] \*\*\*\*)

You can, so the argument goes, connect LA's 80s Paisley Underground, which at the time seemed a more than usually tedious and pretentious dead end, to 90s alt country, Dream Syndicate to Green On Red to Long Ryders to Uncle Tupelo. Whether or not you buy this, Roback, whose husband/producer Steven and brother-in-law David fronted Rain Parade and its various offshoots, does seem to close the circle with a kind of psychedelic alt country, with the emphasis on "kind of," because much of it is more folk-pop than anything else. Reading Roback's reviews, one gets the distinct feeling that these writers really like this album but aren't quite sure why, and I have to join their ranks because Roback/Roback's positives are almost the same as Emmylou Harris/Daniel Lanois' negatives. Those of you familiar with Honest John's Music Fauxabulary will know that code words like 'subtle,' 'delicate,' 'atmospheric' and 'haunting' can be red flags to warn you off, equally the many comparisons with Aimee Mann may also be criticspeak (= great reviews, rotten sales), but one can use them honestly, and positively, when talking about Roback.

◆ Neither the band name nor the album title, which refers to our own jolly old Sol, remotely suggest country, but Magic Car takes the best, or anyway most intriguing, swing at it I've heard from a British outfit in a long while, in fact since The Okeh Wranglers. Brits can do well at pub country, but when it comes to recording they tend to come badly unglued. Wes McGee pulls it off by keeping a foot firmly on each side of the Atlantic, not trying to finesse the fact that he's an Englishman playing American music, but Magic Car go a step further, deliberately emphasizing their origins and otherness. With producer John Thompson's doublebass as the primary instrument, circled by sinuous banjo and pedal steel, even Wigan-style brass on a couple of tracks, singer-songwriter Phil Smeeton gives most of his 13 (including the hidden one) songs, and should have given all of them, to Hazel Atkinson, whose arresting cabaret torch singer voice is what pulls you in to the album and holds your attention while you adjust to the oddness of Smeeton's vision. Actually 'odd' doesn't even begin to describe *Shiny Cattle*, which is downright bizarre, and if it was the opening track would probably kill the album stone dead.

◆ What these two albums have in common is that they kept me on edge, because I expected them momentarily to do something so disastrously wrong that I'd be able to scrub my somewhat grudging and equivocal admiration. To adapt a phrase used by FARster Rik James in his *No Depression* review of Roback, they constantly flirt with being "Too Gorgeous For Their Own Good." Still, at the end of the day, they're both at the very least interesting, and, if nothing else, Roback and Atkinson's voices are undeniably marvellous. It's the settings that make me nervous. JC

## NOT SXSW UPDATE

By this time, I thought there's be plenty to tell you about, but right now there's a lot more pencil than ink involved in the schedules. So all I can really offer is the Threadgill's World HQ definites. Working backwards, Saturday afternoon Troy Campbell will host another singer-songwriter circle, featuring Dayna Kurtz, Jim Roll and John Lilly, with more to be added. Friday will feature what has become a minor tradition, the 3CM Ladies Night, with J-200, Florence Dore, Kelly Kessler & The Wichita Shut-Ins and The Bellyachers. Ben Serrato is working on a string band night for Thursday, but so far only The South Austin Jug Band is certain. Somewhere in the week, we'll have James Hand, Stan Martin, Porter Hall TN and, we hope, a Sunday Gospel show with Git. Guero's are now a definite NotSXSW venue, planning a conjunto night and a Clifford Antone blues show. Oh, hell sign up for the NotSXSW info service (3rdcoast@sbcglobal.net).

## AMERICAN ROOTS HALL OF FAME

For reasons I can no longer reconstruct, I picked January 15th as the deadline for AMHoF ballots, but as I'm fixing to have the results in the March issue, that doesn't make any sense. So the new deadline, which is actually a real one, will be February 15th. To get a ballot, email me at 3rdcoast@sbcglobal.net or go to the link at <http://friendsofamericanrootsmusic.org>. So far, I've gotten 1,562 ballots and I'd really like to get to 2,000, but I need your help.

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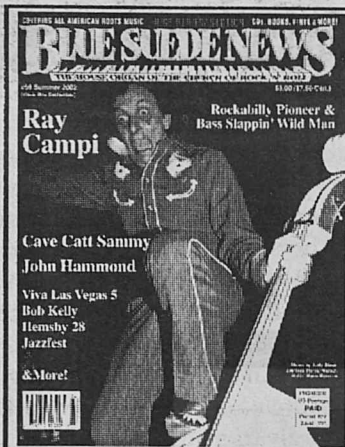
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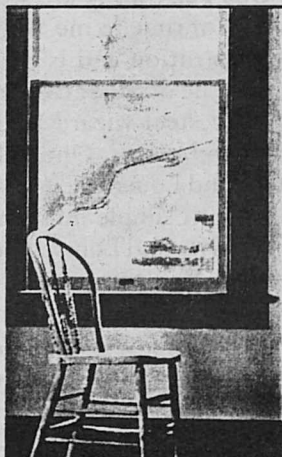


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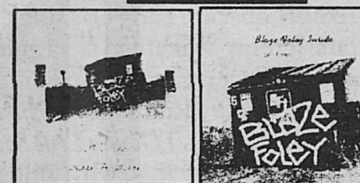
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## DEKE DICKERSON IN 3-DIMENSIONS

(Major Label \*\*\*\*\*)

He's had a **Number One Hit Record** and **More Million Sellers**, so it only makes sense that Dickerson should finally achieve his boyhood dream of being on a major label. I think it's fairly safe to assume that most **3CM** readers remember vinyl, so think of this as a box set of EPs, and if it's not as classy, that ain't Dickerson's fault, he'd take us back to vinyl in a heartbeat. Anyway, what you get is 5 tracks, four originals and Pat Ballard's *I Get So Lonely*, of 'Rock & Rollin' Deke,' accompanied by Carl Sonny Leyland piano, former Eccofonic Ron Dziubla saxes, Los Straitjackets bassman Pete Curry and Little Richard's drummer, the legendary Earl Palmer. Then he moves on to 'Rockabilly Deke,' with Jeff Graves bass, Craig Packham drums, two originals, Johnny Horton's *Take The Long Way Home Tonight*, Hawkshaw Hawkins' *It Would Be A Doggone Lie* and *Bitter Tears*, the B-side of one of Rodney Scott's incredibly obscure early 60s singles. Finally, there's 'Hillbilly Deke,' with Dave Biller guitars, Jeremy Wakefield steel guitar, Billy Horton bass, Fly-Rite Boy Bobby Tremble drums, on seven tracks, including Lattie Moore's *Too Hot To Handle*, Merle Travis' *Gambler's Guitar*, Red Foley's *Pinball Boogie*, Eddie Noack's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Faron Young's *I Gonna Live Some Before I Die*. There's also a bonus instrumental, Bob Wills' *Fat Boy Rag*, with Biller and Wakefield. If you've been to see Dickerson during the last few months—and if you missed the chance, shame on you because his is one the very best live roots shows going—you'll know that he's been selling these for a while, but, for no reason I can make out, it's officially released this month. Guess it's just a major label thing. **JC**

## WILLIE NELSON • CRAZY: THE DEMO SESSIONS

(Sugar Hill \*\*\*)

Your car just barely makes it to Nashville and the very next year one of your songs goes to #1 and another to #2 in the Country charts. The bare bones of the Willie Nelson story have inspired far too many songwriters but, in fact, the Dallas DJ arrived with a track record, Claude Gray's Top ten hit *Family Bible* and *Night Life*, so Hank Cochran was able to land him a job at Ray Price's publishing company, Pamper Music, for whom he cut the 15 demos on this album. The original two-track tapes were recycled long ago but Sony Music, which bought Tree Publishing, which had acquired Pamper, found these in its vaults on a reel of 1/4-inch tape simply labeled 'Pamper demos.' The demos of Nelson's first sale, *Funny How Time Slips Away*, cut by Billy Walker, and his first hit, Faron Young's #1 *Hello Walls*, have, presumably gone forever, and some songs were never recorded by anyone but Nelson himself, but among the survivors were *Three Days*, *Things To Remember* and *A Moment Isn't Very Long* (all recorded by Faron Young), *What Do You Think Of Her Now* (Johnny & Jack & The Tennessee Mountain Boys), *Undo The Right* (Johnny Bush), *Darkness On The Face Of The Earth* (Hawkshaw Hawkins), *I Just Destroyed The World I'm Living In* and *Are You Sure* (Ray Price) and, of course, *Crazy* (like you don't know). The truly fascinating thing about this album is hearing Nelson's development as a performer. On the first few demos, you can see why several labels had passed on signing him, but by *A Moment Isn't Very Long*, you're listening to a viable country artist. With success came perks, as Pamper started springing for such A-team backup musicians as Jimmy Day, Buddy Emmons, Pete Wade, Hargus 'Pig' Robbins and Buddy Harman. Interesting rather than essential. **JC**

## SUPERNATURAL FAMILY BAND LUBBOCK LIGHTS

(Akashic \*\*\*\*\*)

Between Tommy, who formed The Roadside Playboys not long after the war, his wife Charlene, who joined the band in 1952, as celebrated on her recent **50 Years From There To Here**, their daughters Conni and Traci, who now form Texana Dames with their mother, and the briefer family band stints of daughter Holli and sons Joaquin and Marty and Traci's son Nastasi, the Hancocks have racked up something like two centuries worth of music between them. About midway, 1986, they put out a cassette of a live performance at Lubbock's Texas Spoon Cafe & Bar, to which they've now added three bonus studio tracks, all remastered by Jerry Tubb of Terra Nova. The Hancocks themselves were only the core of an extended family of West Texas musicians, many of whom joined them on the 15 basic tracks, mainly country and Western Swing standards such as *Brain Cloudy Blues*, *Bonaparte's Retreat*, *Steel Guitar Rag* and *Love's Gonna Live Here Again*, which feature Curly Big Dog Lawler, Billy Manley, John X Reed and Country Dick Barnett, or the bonus tracks, Jimmie Rodgers' *Desert Blues*, Tommy's *The Marfa Lights* and Conni's *Lubbock Lights*, which feature Flatlanders Steve Wesson and Tony Pearson, Tomas Ramirez, Jesse Taylor and Frosty. Musical talent was not distributed evenly among the Hancocks (Keith Ferguson once remarked to me, "Joaquin is the sweetest guy you could ever hope to meet, and he's quite possibly the world's worst drummer"), but the Supernaturals were an experience that transcended any shortcomings. It was all about heart and soul, spirit rather than technique. Even at their most ragged, they were still right, and when everything clicked, as it often did at this show, they were pure magic. As a general thing, I don't do heartwarming, but I can hardly imagine anyone not falling under the Hancocks' spell. I caught them at the tailend, three years after this album was recorded, and it stirs fond memories. **JC**

## BILL KIRCHEN • DIESELBILLY ROAD TRIP

(Cracker Barrel \*\*\*\*\*)

Yep, that Cracker Barrel, the place you take your folks for breakfast when they come to visit. Kirchen's turbocharged dieselbilly doesn't seem like much of a fit with the chain's customer profile, but Cracker Barrel's ambitious 'Heritage Music Collection' is hardly what you'd call corporate music. Created by the National Council for Traditional Arts, it includes the Balfa Brothers, Seldom Scene, JD Crowe & The New South, The Birmingham Sunlights, a Sacred Steel collection and a whole mess of other traditional music. To be honest, the twangmiester still doesn't seem like much of a fit, but who cares? This is a man who doesn't piss around making mediocre albums, whatever the label. Pace the title, the main motif is travelogue, Otis Blackwell's *Hollywood City*, The Kendalls' *Pittsburgh Stealers* with Linda Lay (who has her own album in this series which I can't wait to hear), Doug Sahm's *Is Anybody Goin' To San Antone?*, Dallas Frazier's *California Cotton Fields*, Tompall Glaser's *Streets Of Baltimore*, Chuck Berry's *The Promised Land*, Kirchen's own *Detroit Diesel*, an updated trucker song that includes GPS among the driver's woes, fellow Lost Planet Airman Tony Johnson's *Midnight In Memphis* and Grandpa Jones' *Eight More Miles To Louisville*, with Buck Owens' *Buckaroo* (Kirchen's salute to Don Rich), Santo & Johnny Farina's *Sleepwalk* and The Virtues' *Guitar Boogie Shuffle* making up the numbers. Long time Kirchen fans will be looking at this list and wondering, where's the Blackie Farrell song? Kirchen did, in fact, cut one, *California Okie*, but it got taken off down the line. I'm not quite sure how to feel about it, but with 50 Cracker Barrel Old Country stores, initially, carrying it, thi'll probably become the best selling album in Kirchen's long and distinguished career. **JC**

## JO SERRAPERRE & THE WILLIE DUNNS TONIGHT AT JOHNNY'S SPEAKEASY UNCLE EARL • SHE WENT UPSTAIRS

(Detroit Radio Co \*\*\*\*\*)

Every time the Asylum Street Spankers put out an album, my question, and they must be sick of it by now, is all very well, but I'm not getting any younger you know, where's my Christina Marrs album? Well, the urgency just went out of it. Serrapere lets her Willie Dunns (I assume a reference to Blind Willie Dunn & His Gin Bottle Four), whose 'Insurgent Skiffle' has a lot in common with the Spankers, cut in a fair bit, acoustic and electric slide guitarist John Devine singing lead on Mississippi John Hurt's *Nobody's Business* and *I'm Satisfied*, and his own *Shoe Shine Man*, fiddler Jef Reynolds on Tom Waits' *Walking Spanish* and Louis Prima's *Closer To The Bone*, but she's very much the main event. Serrapere is very sneaky; on the surface her gorgeous, creamy voice seems cool, relaxed and assured, but she can turn up the intensity so unobtrusively that part way through a song, Roosevelt Sykes' *44 Blues* for instance, you realize that your spine is, by God, actually tingling, and you didn't see it coming. On top of that, she can write a really stunning song, seven of the 13 tracks are her originals, and, from sly humor to painful insight, they're all first rate. Marrs is one of my alltime favorite Austin singers, but if she ever does get round to making the postmodern speakeasy album I've always wanted, she's now got her work cut out for her because Serrapere has set the standard. I'll leave you with the words of my esteemed colleague, Dave Marsh, "I might take a train, I might take a plane, but if I have to walk, I know I'm gonna see Jo Serrapere again." Now that's the kind of line you can't use too often.

♦ The all-woman Uncle Earl features Serrapere and fellow Detroit singer KC Groves, with special guests Sally Van Meter banjo, bass and Resonator guitar and fiddler Laurie Lewis, playing old-timey Appalachia music. To be honest, for me a little of this goes a long way. However, for those of you more spiritually evolved—what can I say? I'm a rockabilly greaser at heart—Serrapere & Groves have been hailed as "the Hazel Dickens & Alice Gerrard of the 21st Century!" **JC**

## ROCKHOUSE FANBLERS • TORCH THIS TOWN

(Hayden's Ferry \*\*\*\*\*)

Seems like every time I talk to Kip Loui, Twangfest organizer and FAR reporting DJ (*The Back Country*, KDHX), another St Louis band I really like has bit the dust. The New Patrons and Belle Starr are history, while One Fell Swoop are still playing, but without Cheryl Stryker, which sounds like a waste of time to me. Still, while I'll miss Belle Starr's Lynne Reif, Loui had a fallback position and is now concentrating on what was once a side project inspired by a reissue of **Sweetheart Of The Rodeo**. Featuring his brother-in-law and local Tele/ steel wizard John Horton (who was a New Patron), Gary Hunt guitar, dobro and vocals, One Fell Swoop's Dade Farrar bass and vocals, Danny Kathriner drums and Loui on acoustic rhythm guitar and vocals, Rockhouse Ramblers started out with simple mission, play hardcore 40s and 50s honky tonk, but Hunt (five songs), Farrar and Loui (three each) started writing original material, and, as with the excellent **Bar Time**, there's only one cover, *Truck Drivin' Buddy*, another great song by Starday's Frankie Miller (you may recall me raving about Tom Armstrong's version of his *No Big Thing To Me*). This is more of what they call "old-school country, rockabilly and hillbilly boogie," Listening to this makes me think what a great live double bill the Rockhouse Ramblers would make with the Starline Rhythm Boys. **JC**



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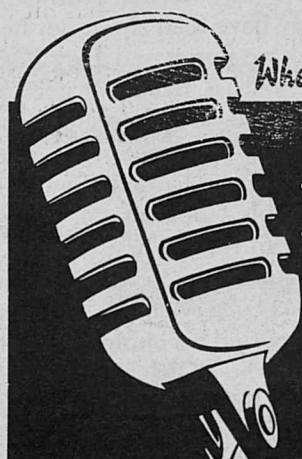
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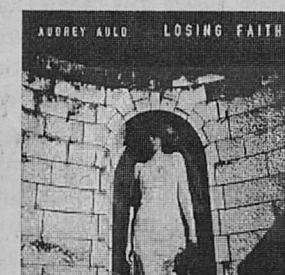
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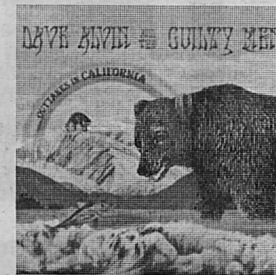
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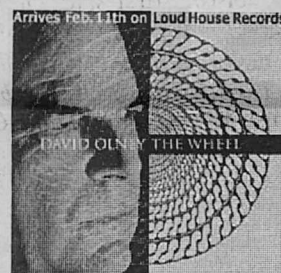
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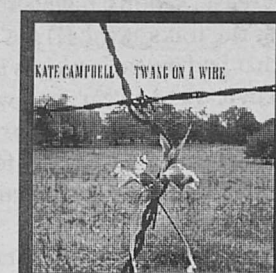
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## CHARLES EARLE'S B-Sides

### ON THE REBOUND

#### COUNTRY ALBUM SALES SPIKE WAY UP IN LAST HALF OF 2002

**Y**ou've heard it from the spokesperson for NARAS during the Grammy Awards telecast. The bigwigs at the RIAA are screaming it from the highest rooftops to anyone who will listen. Artists, songwriters and just about everyone else in the industry is on record about this state of affairs. Internet music piracy, they're saying, has caused a huge drop in record sales and the entire music industry is experiencing a recession as a result.

So is this true? Can we believe these people, considering the fact that they are all record company sleeze? Well, surprising as it may seem, they're actually telling the truth. Overall, CD sales in 2002 were down almost 9% versus those of 2001. To put that into actual numbers, we're talking about 63 million fewer CDs purchased. Furthermore, you can break it down and look at almost every genre within popular music and see declines in sales ranging from single to double digit percentages. Just about every genre, that is, except for good old country music.

Yep, while the rest of the industry is reeling, Nashville is on the rise. How much of an increase are we talking about here in 2002? About 12%, or a total increase versus 2001 of about seven million CD's sold. Not bad, though certainly not a staggering number in terms of total units. But the increase does prompt a couple of important questions:

1. Why the decrease in pop sales.
2. Why the increase for Nashville, and is this a harbinger for a country music boom?

I'll deal with the pop situation first. It's obvious to most observers that music swapping is the culprit when talking about the decrease. I don't have the numbers of song downloads that the folks at the RIAA are always offering. I just know that bad music is no less interesting to teenagers today than it was 20 years ago when I was in high school. But the difference is that our only method of getting music without paying for it back then involved wearing a large coat and a pair of track shoes into the local Sam Goody.

These days we have an increasing number of young consumers who seem to think that music is simply something that comes for free on the net. They're computer savvy and they don't have the experience of years spent building costly record collections. I work at a college in Nashville, which has afforded me the opportunity to hear such rationalizations as:

"I only want one song from that artist, and I don't want to have to buy the whole album."

"These people are already rich. It's not like they need the money I would spend on their records."

I've heard these lines and more, I've also followed the drop in sales that has corresponded with the rise in piracy. So when the next pro-Napster asshole tries to sell you on the thief's party line of how swapping encourages people to go out and buy the albums that they hear on the web, feel free to punch him in the mouth so hard that he swallows his tongue ring.

So now that we know what's going on in pop, the question of how Nashville has managed a significant

increase in this climate comes to the forefront. I said from these pages last summer, when Nashville was showing a 1% sales increase at the halfway point of 2002, that country music fans were just too damn dumb to know how to steal music. Indeed, the folks out in the hinterlands may not be able to spell Kazaa. I would also be willing to accept the idea that country fans show more loyalty to their favorite artists, while swappers steal music with no conscience. But the biggest reason for the country sales increase in 2002 is that the Dixie Chicks, Shania Twain, Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, all put out new albums during the last six months of the year. A scan of the overall top sellers from the last twelve months has the Chicks and Twain at #4 and #9 respectively, Hill and McGraw not far behind.

Does this mean that country is headed back to its lofty sales numbers from the early 90s? Not hardly. What we're talking about here is the four biggest sellers in the whole commercial country music field putting out albums at the same time. All of them will naturally work deep into their records, releasing five or six singles and keeping these albums on the country charts for eighteen months to two years. Then they'll disappear again for a while to make new records, and the lack of newly developed talent will leave yet another sales void. Nashville has been putting all of its eggs into a couple of baskets since about 1995, and the results have been predictable.

One last note on the sales figures for 2002...the Dixie Chicks sold close to four million copies of **Home**, a straight up bluegrass album. Likewise, the **O Brother** sound track sold another three million copies. That's seven million copies of two bluegrass albums in one year. You'd think that this would finally convince Music Row that country music without slick pop production was a viable, cash cow of a product. But of course it won't. They'll see Faith and Shania's sales figures and dismiss everything else as a blip on the radar.

### GRAMMY TIME

**N**ominations for the 45th annual Grammy Awards were announced last month, and Nashville is crossing its fingers that 2003 won't prove as humiliating as 2002, when Nashville's mainstream acts were shut out completely in all country music Grammy categories. As folks like Ralph Stanley and Alison Krauss made their way to the podium instead of country's chart-toppers, Music Row had more collective egg on its face than a fat kid at a quiche-eating contest.

This year looks to be at least a little bit different, as high-profile records from Alan Jackson and the Dixie Chicks have gotten Music Row back into two of the big four categories, Album of the Year and Song of the Year. But it can also be said that country was shut out the highly important Record of the Year and Best New Artist categories.

Last year, Music Row nominees in the specific country music categories were crushed by **O Brother Where Art Thou?** This isn't surprising, as many of the voters don't reside in Nashville and certainly don't suffer through country radio, but Music Row is hoping that things will go differently this year. And voters will get to make some interesting choices. Do you go with the popular Faith Hill or Martina McBride in the Female Country Vocal Performance category, or do you opt for the critically acclaimed work of Lucinda Williams or Dolly Parton? Likewise, can Johnny Cash or Pat Green upset Alan Jackson in the Male Vocal category? These are the tight races that the country music industry will be watching very carefully on Grammy night in hopes of a stronger showing.

The rest of us in Nashville will be paying close attention to the Contemporary Folk Album category, which pits locals Steve Earle, Johnny Cash and Nickel

Creek against Patty Griffin. Of course, this category never is awarded during the live telecast, so we'll all have to hit the net or check the morning paper to find out who won.

One last observation on the nominations...I am pretty amazed at the diversity of the artists in the Album of the Year category. When you have Eminem and Nelly up against Dixie Chicks, Norah Jones and Bruce Springsteen, one has to give a mild tip of the cap to Grammy voters for the range they showed. And I must say this is the first time in years that I've actually owned three of the five nominated albums.

### GRAMMY GRIPING

**I**'ve said it before and I'll gladly repeat myself—Toby Keith is a jackass. The guy goes on television and makes those god-awful cheap long distance commercials, proving to educated people all over the country that some folks in Nashville are as ignorant as they suspected. He also puts out his Muslim-hating anthem this past year, helping to fire up ethnocentric morons all over the country. Now this bone-headed bumpkin is whining because he didn't get nominated for a Grammy. Keith did indeed sell a number of records this year, so he thinks that entitles him to an award over critically acclaimed artists who sell fewer records. Witness this quote that appeared in *The Tennessean*; "You didn't hear it on the radio and you didn't see it on Soundscan, but all of a sudden someone's nominated. The hell with it."

He went on to say that he's boycotting the Grammys, unless of course it will help him to line his pockets. "If it doesn't involve a performance or doesn't help my career, I'm not going."

So Toby Keith thinks that awards for best creative achievements should be determined by nothing more than popularity? Coming soon...*Gourmet* magazine names McDonald's the best restaurant in America! And as for Toby not going, I'm sure that all of the studio cats and jazzers and classical players from New York and LA are just broken up that they won't get to hang with the guy who does television ads with Alf.

Seriously, I can't say I've ever read a more childish example of poor sportsmanship from an adult in my life. I mean, can you imagine an actor or actress publicly chastising the Academy for not nominating them? Or perhaps the more appropriate question is whether you can imagine an actor from a piece of shit like, say, **Men in Black II** saying that Dennis Quaid shouldn't be nominated for **Far From Heaven** because not enough people saw it? This is just sad, pathetic behavior on Keith's part, though I'm sure this doofus doesn't have the capacity to be embarrassed over any such acts.

One more thing...Kenny Chesney was also bitching about being left out. Yet another reason to hate the work of that no-talent hack.

### AND FINALLY...

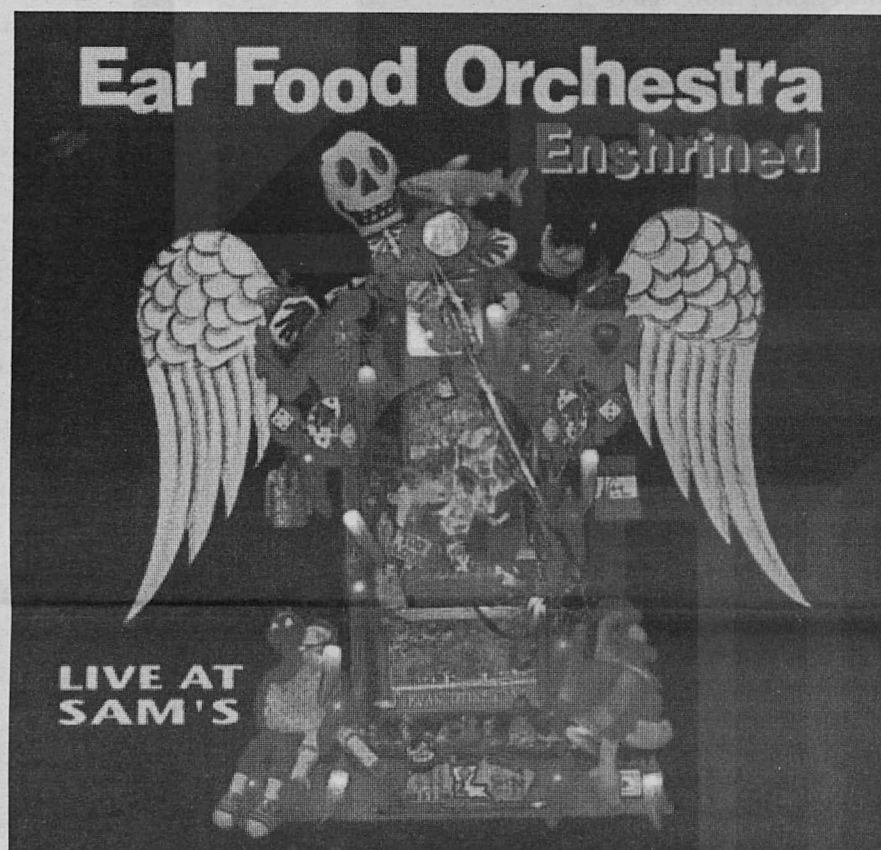
**H**ere is some heartbreaking news for fans of traditional country music; Elizabeth Cook has been released from her deal with Warner Brothers in Nashville. Many of you may have read about her here before. Some of you may have purchased **Hey Y'all**, her critically praised 2002 release from Warner. But after six months with the record on the streets and no visible support from her label, Cook mercifully asked for her walking papers. Warner claimed they were excited about another possible Cook album, though their support was non-existent for the first one. **[JC: as a footnote, Cook was unable to convince Warner that it might be a good idea to service the FAR and Americana DJs who had supported her eponymous self-released album, featured in the 3CM January 2001 cover story. Instead, Warner only sent copies to the mainstream country radio stations, which wouldn't play it. I have a copy because she sent me one herself.]**

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# JOHN THE REVEALATOR

Putting away the set of 2002 issues that I'd been using to organize my thoughts for the Austin Music Pundit awards and my personal FAR & Away, I realized that I was missing the April issue, so I'd failed to take **Charlene Condray Hancock: 50 Years From There To Here** into account. Also Tommy Hancock & John Reed's **Dos Equis**, but that would have been a problem as Reed and Jesse Taylor's **SouthAustinGuitars** was already on both my lists. My apologies to all the Hancocks for this oversight. Charlene would definitely have been in my AMP list, even if it meant sacrificing Earl Poole Ball (sorry, Earl).

♦ When I said last month that **Jim Beal Jr** has never sold any promo albums, I have to admit that I was taking his word for it that keeping absolutely everything and storing them in alphabetical order was the reason there's one by ABBA at the front of the top left hand shelf. However, the less gullible among you may already have come to an alternative conclusion, that Beal is throwing up a smokescreen to conceal the sordid fact that, at the end of a hard day at the roots music coalface, he likes to relax to *Dancing Queen*.

♦ This was one of the lines I was going to use when, for no obvious reason, some of Beal's so-called friends decided to throw a roast a little while back, luring him to Casbeers on the pretext that Butch Morgan would have a special celebrity surprise guest at his Wednesday night jam. So far from tumbling to the set-up, Beal wrote it up as a 'mustn't miss' in his column and, even when he walked into a jam-packed club, smelled nothing fishy, mainly because Ray Wylie Hubbard was there to provide corroborative detail. Unfortunately, after the trap was sprung and the roast got off to a good start, the normally acerbic Steve James decided to change it into a love-fest, and, unwilling or unable to get back on track, Morgan cut the proceedings short and started in on the regular gig. Pissed me off as I'd worked up an exposé, revealing that **John Goodspeed** is actually Beal's nom de plume (for non-San Antonians, Goodspeed writes about fake country and 'Texas Music' for the *Express-News*), which I thought was pretty funny. Well anyway, it made Neesie Beal and Casbeers' Barbara Wolf laugh. Mind you, Barbara had the best line of the night, saying she wasn't going to book Jim & Neesie's **Ear Food Orchestra** anymore, but just have Jim solo, because he drew better than the band.

♦ Illustrating my remarks in the Ear Food Orchestra story about the necessity of touring is the recent experience of **Cave Catt Sammy**. Even when they swung home, they were a touring band that could fill a room at \$8 a pop, but when they decided to take a few months off, they could only draw a decent crowd with no cover, because, playing three times a week, they'd reverted to being a local band. Moreover, they couldn't sell any CDs because everyone in San Antonio who was going to buy one already had.

♦ One of the best 2002 wrap-up lines I came across was from Chet Flippo in *Nashville Skyline*: 'No **Diane Warren** infestation of country music in the past year is proof that prayer can indeed change things.' For those of you unfamiliar with Warren, I was going to attempt a brief resumé of her vile career, but it's hard to improve on this summary from *Wilson & Alroy's Record Reviews* ("We listen to the lousy records so you won't have to"), "The ultimate professional songwriter; if there's a horrible Hallmark Moment love song topping the charts, odds are it's one of hers."

♦ His label describes **Phil Vassar** as "a passionate artist with the power to hook listeners for life," but his second album, **American Child**, hasn't exactly been filling the net. Usually, when a new release is going belly up, major labels have a time worn exit strategy, dump the inventory, cut the artist, but for reasons best known to themselves RCA told Artista Nashville to recall the

album and replace it with one that'll include a new single and a duet with Huey Lewis. This is a fascinating development, which could make buying a CD very similar to buying computer software. You'd have to ask yourself "Shall I get this now or wait until they've ironed out the bugs and added some extra features on V1.1?" The fatal flaw in this concept would seem to me that RCA is assuming that hardcore Vassar fans will shell out yet another eighteen bucks for what's pretty much the same album, instead of taking the first attempt back and trading it in for the new, 'improved' version. On the other hand, RCA may know something about Vassar fans that I don't.

♦ I addressed the topic last March (*'Texas Music Sucks'*), but I recently got this email from a European FAR reporter, who will remain unnamed as I don't want to expose him to ridicule:

"I'm wondering why you are again bashing **Pat Green** and **Cory Morrow**. I don't know these guys, never saw them perform, but when listening to their albums, I can't find anything to hate. Hell, I even give them airplay. Can you give me some good reason why I shouldn't? What's wrong with these guys? This is a serious question, I'm really curious."

I figured I might as well share the answer I gave him with y'all: "OK, here's the deal. Texas has, traditionally, excelled at honky tonk music, producing some of the alltime greats and some of the best contemporary artists. What Green, Moron, et al have done is develop a lite version of honky tonk that excludes any and every element to which Texas fraternity boys can't relate, in other words music that insults the intelligence of a household pet. Of course you may not know what a fraternity boy is and I can only say that your ignorance makes me drool with envy, and I am not about to sully it. Let me put it this way, a Steve Goodman style parody would have to include something about "we tubed down the Guadalupe drinking beer until we puked, then we drove down to the Border and got really drunk." The trouble is, one can't simply ignore this garbage because they've hijacked the name 'Texas Music,' so responsible writers, such as Malcolm Mayhew of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegraph*, who once described Green as "the evil of all Texas evils," and the *Dallas Observer's* Robert Wilonsky and Rob Patterson, have to fight back."

Fortunately, Green et al very rarely surface in FAR reports. I really don't know what I'd do if enough reporters went over to the dark side to actually chart one of these fuckers, but I hope I never have to deal with that. Meanwhile, I had to ask my European friend, "Why do you give these guys airplay? Don't you have any Wayne Hancock albums?"

♦ Thinking of people who rarely come to think never, surface in FAR reports, I was reminded of those jokes about there not being a knob on the sound board that can turn up the talent when I read that **Heidi Newfield** of **Trick Pony** will go under the knife this month to remedy vocal cord problems. What does she think they can do, implant a good voice?

♦ Assigned to write a biography of a famous Oklahoman, Krystal Keith interviewed her father, **Toby Keith**, whom you may remember as the writer and singer of the jingoistic 9/11 jingle *Courtesy Of The Red, White And Blue (The Angry American)*. According to Brad Schmitt of *The Tennessean*, she was more than a little surprised when her paper got a D. Shit, I'd given her an F, "I said 'famous,' not 'opportunist.'"

♦ As we all know, **Willie Nelson** (see Reviews) isn't the world's greatest money manager, but his cavalier attitude goes back much earlier than his IRS problems. First he sold *Family Bible* for \$50, then, when he decided he needed to be in Nashville, he financed the move by selling *Night Life* outright to the owner of a Houston

guitar school for \$150. However, when he tried to sell *Hello Walls* to Faron Young for \$500, Young turned him down and lent him the money instead. Nelson's first royalty check on Young's #1 hit was for \$20,000. "When it arrived, he drove immediately to Tootsie's, found Faron at the bar and kissed him square on the mouth."

♦ One small thing in the Nelson review is bugging me. *Crazy* went to #2 in the Country charts in the fall of 1961, but I can't find out what kept it from reaching the top spot, and the Internet's been no help. I suspect it may have been Leroy Van Dyke's *Walk On By*, but if you know for sure, I'd appreciate it if you'd clue me in. Incidentally, Patsy Cline disliked *Crazy*, and made no bones about it (she didn't care much for *Walking After Midnight* or *I Fall To Pieces* either).

♦ Elsewhere, you'll find a review of **Deke Dickerson's** latest, which, as it's officially released on February 4th. I've been hanging on to since he gave me a copy at Casbeers last Halloween. To mark the occasion, Deke wore a glamrock wig, and let me tell you, Deke with hair is very scary, though he says the chicks dig it.

♦ As no one else will, I'd like to salute **Greg Johnson** of The Blue Door, Oklahoma City, for inventing the **Woody Guthrie Tribute** back in 1991. The idea has fallen on hard times since, one staged by Texas Folkloric Resources, was sponsored by a bank, a truly classic failure, by both parties, to grasp the concept. The latest, which will be rolling round the country—bypassing Oklahoma—during February is the **Ribbon Of Highway-Endless Skyway Tour**, which, though also featuring Jimmy LaFave, Slaid Cleaves, Eliza Gilkyson and Ellis Paul, seems rather obviously as much a vehicle for jumpstarting the faltering careers of the headliners, the terminally untalented Sarah Lee Guthrie and her husband Johnny Irion, as a tribute to her grandfather. If you have a copy of Dejadisc's marvelous **Pastures Of Plenty**, which murders the promo CD that came with the tour's presskit, I'd recommend staying home and reliving Johnson's third Guthrie tribute at which it was recorded.



† JUYEV GOMEZ

Friends in Dallas usually let me know about musicians' deaths, of which, sadly, as Dallas was a thriving music center back in the 40s and 50s, they get more than their fair share, but I've only just found out about the passing of Juvenal Gomez, who died of a heart attack on September 12, 2002. Gomez was a respected local jazz drummer, but his main claim to fame was that, when only 15, he joined Gene Vincent's Blue Caps, playing on the famous Capitol Tower sessions which featured Eddie Cochran's backing vocals. For many years, he didn't realize how much interest there was in his Blue Caps days, and he was very proud to finally have his picture on the cover, shown above, of a Vincent album, Dragon Street's 1998 CD **Gene Vincent & His Blue Caps: The Lost Dallas Sessions, 1957-58**.



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Sat March 1st • **Nathan Hamilton**

Bands 8.30 Tue-Fri, 9.30 Sat

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Tue 4th **LUCY KAPLANSKY** Wed 5th **PAUL BRADY**  
Thu 6th & Fri 7th **JORMA KAUKONEN & BLUE COUNTRY**  
Sat 8th **TERRI HENDRIX** Mon 10th **IAN MOORE (acoustic)**  
Wed 12th **VANCE GILBERT** Thu 13th **CHIP TAYLOR & CARRIE RODRIGUEZ**  
Sat 15th **RIBBON OF HIGHWAY ENDLESS SKYWAY TOUR (TU Theatre)**  
Slaid Cleaves + Ellis Paul + Jimmy LaFave + Eliza Gilkyson + Sara Lee Guthrie + Johnny Irion

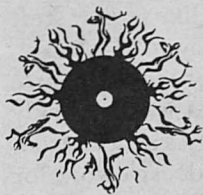
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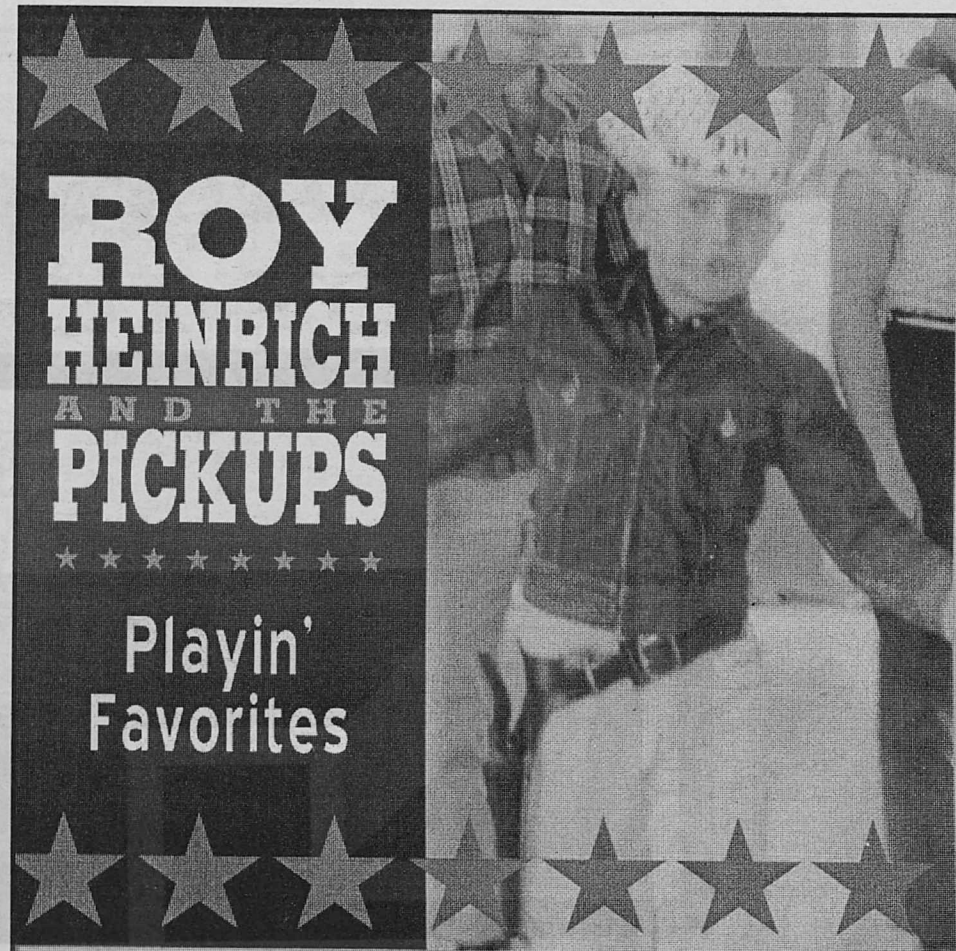
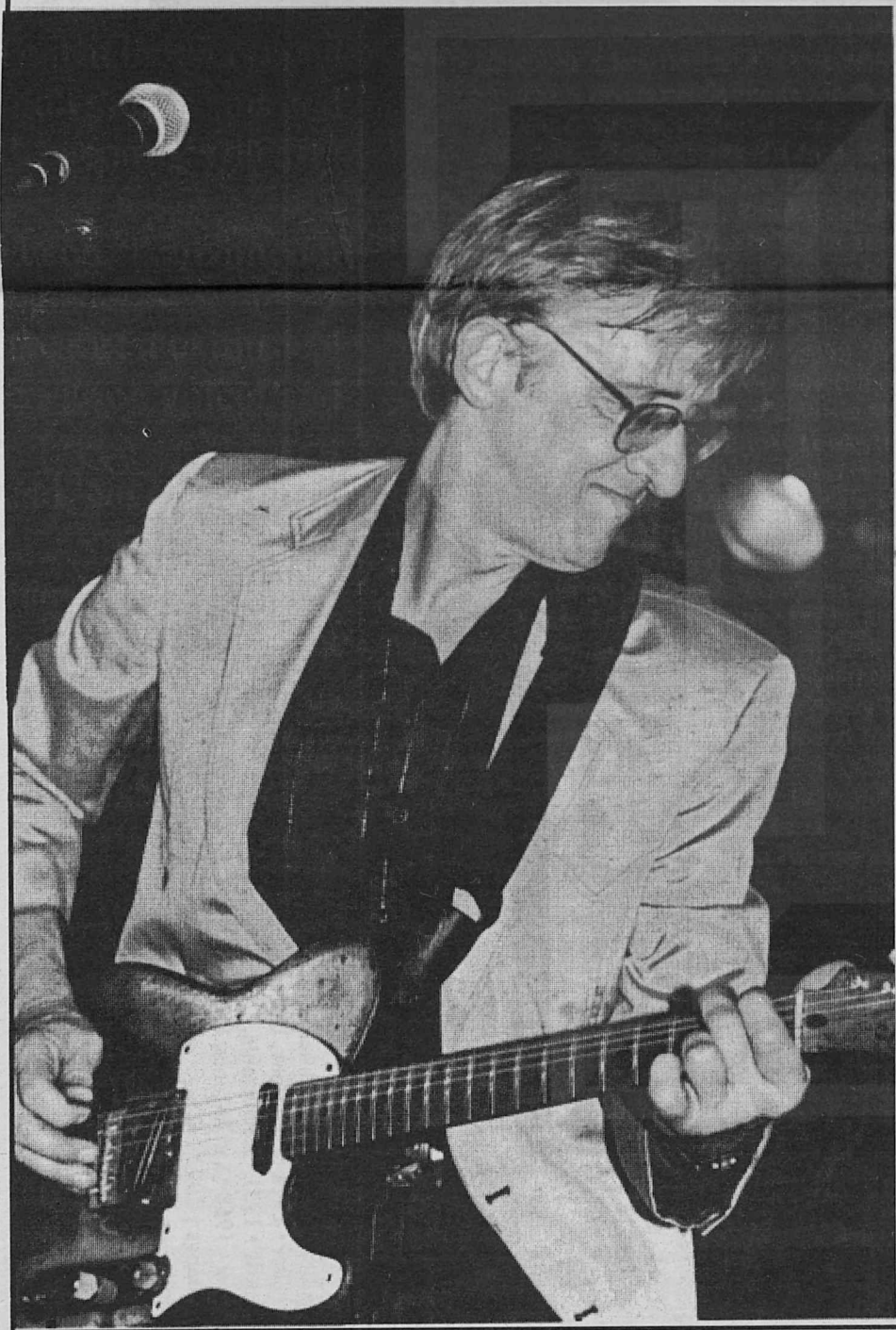
THU 2/13 ALL GOOD CAFE,  
2934 Main St., Dallas, TX 214-742-5362 9PM

FRI 2/14 SAN ANTONIO STOCK SHOW & RODEO,  
w/special guest Tommy Detamore on steel guitar, in Gruene  
Hall Tent, 7-10PM, SBC Center at Freeman Coliseum Grounds,  
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<http://www.sarodeo.com> or <http://www.gruenehall.com>

SAT 2/15 PRIVATE PARTY, Waco, TX

SUN 2/16 EGO'S LOUNGE  
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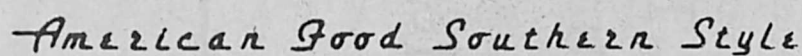
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1st -- Don Everly • 1937 • Brownie, KY  
----- Cyprien Landreneaux † 1981  
----- Blaze Foley † 1989  
2nd - Stubbs • 1927 • Navasota, TX  
----- Rusty Kershaw • 1940 • Tiel Ridge, LA  
3rd - Johnny Guitar Watson  
----- • 1935 • Houston, TX  
----- Buddy Holly † 1959  
----- The Big Bopper † 1959  
----- Ritchie Valens † 1959  
4th - Paul Burlison • 1929 • Brownsville, TN  
----- Louis Jordan † 1975  
5th - Bob Dunn • 1908 • Braggs, OK  
----- Grace (Broussard) • 1939 • Prairieville, LA  
----- Link Davis Sr † 1972  
6th - Jesse Belvin † 1960  
7th - Dock Boggs • 1898 • West Norton, VA  
----- Wilma Lee Cooper  
----- • 1921 • Valley Head, WV  
----- Warren Smith • 1933 • Humphreys Co, MS  
----- King Curtis • 1934 • Fort Worth, TX  
----- Earl King • 1934 • New Orleans, LA  
----- Gene Elders • 1951 • Chicago, IL  
----- Dock Boggs † 1971  
----- Roxy Gordon † 2000  
----- Dale Evans † 2001  
8th - Skeet Dixon • 1929 • Marshall, TX  
----- Ray Sharpe • 1938 • Fort Worth, TX  
9th - Ernest Tubb • 1914 • Crisp, TX  
----- Jivin' Gene • 1940 • Port Arthur, TX  
----- Joe Ely • 1946 • Amarillo, TX  
10th Aldus Roger • 1916 • Carencro, LA  
----- Rockin' Dopsie • 1932 • Lafayette, LA  
----- Michael Fracasso  
----- • 1952 • Steubenville, OH  
----- Mike Ireland • 1961 • Kansas City, MO  
----- Ruthie Foster • 1964 • Mineola, TX  
----- Janet Bean • 1964 • FL  
11th Gene Vincent • 1935 • Norfolk, VA  
----- Slim Richey • 1938 • Atlanta, TX  
12th Tex Beneke • 1914 • Fort Worth, TX  
13th Ernie Ford • 1919 • Bristol, TN  
----- Boudleaux Bryant • 1920 • Shellman, GA  
----- Leland H Miller • 1924 • Columbus, TX  
----- Fred Zimmerle • 1931 • San Antonio, TX  
----- Terri Hendrix • 1968 • San Antonio, TX  
----- Waylon Jennings † 2002  
14th Valerio Longoria • 1924 • Kenedy, TX  
----- Magic Sam • 1937 • Grenada, MS  
----- Michael Doucet • 1951 • Scott, LA

- Threadgill's Old #1,  
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Feb 6 - Bluegrass Nibblers  
Feb 13 - S Austin Jug Band  
Feb 20 - The Green Cars  
Feb 27 - Two High String Band  
GOSPEL BRUNCH  
Sundays, 11am-1.30pm  
Feb 2 & 9 Durden Family  
Feb 16 TBA  
Feb 23 Bells Of Joy**