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**BRADLEY JAYE
WILLIAMS**

#1/90 FEBRUARY 1997



The Gulf Coast Playboys

HONEST JOHN • Births & Deaths REVIEWS

**Johnnie Allan • Ray Campi & Rosie Flores
'Rockabilly Music & Its Makers' • Aldus Roger
Eddie 'Lalo' Torres • World Accordion Anthology
Townes Van Zandt**

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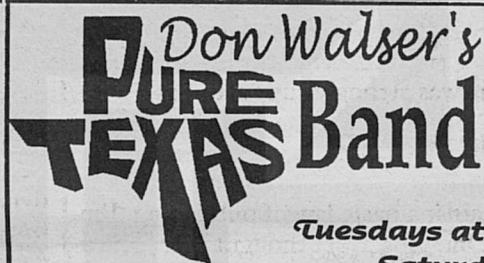


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Art & Grit

NEW MAPS OF HELL

Well, that was interesting. At one extreme, a California reader proposed **Nashville Sucks**, which would certainly nail one's colors to the mast, at the other, an Austin store, noting that, in their experience, the mag that got picked up most was the one with the magic words 'Music' and 'Texas' in the title, voted firmly for, you guessed it, **Music City Texas**. I was amazed how many people thought I should incorporate one or other of my identities in the title, but **The Conquest Report** or **Honest John's New & Used Music** (two of the suggestions) would make me feel even more as if I were preaching to the choir. **Art & Grit** was strongly supported as a subtitle, while **3rd Coast Music** was, overall, most favored as the main title, particularly by the San Antonio contingent, and that, for better or worse, is the combo I'm going with.

♦ So now, offending, I'm sure, against a basic law of publishing, I'm going to try to *explain* the concept. One subscriber thought "the 'Third Coast' concept is too narrow in scope for all the music you cover," but I hope to persuade him, at least, that it's not a matter of geography. What we're talking about here, without, I hope, sounding too New Agey, is the greater metaphysical reality beneath the merely material surface. At first glance, the metapmap of America looks pretty simple; on the East Coast, New York City, and on the West, Los Angeles, twin cesspools into which most, though regrettably not all, the bottom feeders of America are irresistibly drawn, anchor a stifling blanket of vapid corporate culture under which the rest of the country seems to have lost any separate identity. To be honest, I'm having trouble finding a precise analogy. I thought of two spiders and a sticky, toxic web, but that misses the point that most people voluntarily embrace uniformity, and also it's unfair to spiders—they aren't parasites.

♦ However, while the blight can be seen, and heard, everywhere, there are pockets of resistance. Some of them may just be handfuls of likeminded people, even isolated individuals, cut off from all support, but there are places where viable local and noncommercial (but I repeat myself) cultures of audiences, artists, bands, clubs, radio stations, TV channels and record stores still flourish. Marginalized by the homogenizing, audience eroding forces of New York and LA (and their outlying trailer park, Nashville), whatever distances separate America's surviving regional, ethnic and traditional musics, they've become, in adversity, psychic neighbors. Southwest Louisiana, South Texas and New Orleans may actually be on the Third Coast of America, but so too, to name just the most obvious, are the Bay Area, Chicago, Memphis and Washington.

♦ Well, that's the spiel. You may not buy it, but it works for me, suggesting an underlying coherence, in this crazy musical quilt I cobble together each month. Anyway, what I'm offering under this new name is pretty much what you've been getting the last few months—real music, indie labels, a certain bias towards Texas and Louisiana (though I'm really trying to reach outwards and would sure appreciate any tips) and, above all, the combination of talent and honesty—art and grit. Also, I intend to go on being real hard to please. I have no objection in principle to stroking musicians' egos, it's just I like to see them work for it. When you get down to it, getting a rave review in **3CM** is really easy—all you have to do is make a really good record. Is that so hard? Oh, yes, and an accordion isn't essential, but it always helps. JC

BRADLEY JAYE WILLIAMS

LOS PINKYS • GULF COAST PLAYBOYS

W eaned on Polish polkas, he started out as an old timey/bluegrass mandolin player in the Bay Area, graduated to accordion, moved to South Austin, won universal acceptance among Tejanos as the leader of the much admired conjunto Los Pinkys and is about to branch out into Cajun, fronting the Gulf Coast Playboys. If I wanted a poster boy for the Third Coast music concept, it would hard to improve on Bradley Jaye Williams. Born in Saginaw, Michigan, Williams' maternal family came from the ambiguous area that is sometimes Poland, but despite having numerous relatives who played in polka bands, and hearing the music constantly while helping his aunt cater Polish weddings, he rather inexplicably drifted into Berkeley's "big but stuffy" folk scene.

♦ Williams' transforming epiphany was the mid-80s acquisition of one of Flaco Jimenez's Arhoolie albums. "I always loved Polish music, but growing up hearing Polish jokes all the time, I pretended to like the same stuff as the other kids, Blue Oyster Cult, Black Sabbath and so on, but when I heard Flaco playing this very European style music, very like the music I grew up with, it really opened up my eyes. Made me realize the accordion could be cool." Jimenez himself provided the next impetus in 1988, by which time Williams was playing accordion, self taught, and mandolin in a folk-rock band that opened three shows for him, "After the first show, he took me back to his hotel room and tuned my accordion. I give him a lot of credit, generally, for introducing people to conjunto, but also he's just been so supportive, right from the beginning."

♦ This benediction led to the initial formation of Los Pinkys. When Heinz Geissler of Watermelon told me he was thinking of signing an all-Anglo Bay Area-based conjunto, I must confess to a deplorable, though, I think, understandable, knee-jerk reaction—"Heinz, we're 80 miles away from San Antonio. Is this some kind of fucking joke?" In any case, the group was essentially a street band, its members too busy with other projects to go further than playing to morning commuters at BART stations. However, when he learned that San Antonio's Tex-Mex station KEDA was playing a Los Pinkys tape, Williams decided that a move to Austin was inevitable.

♦ "It was very scary, though. I wasn't sure what people in Texas would think, seeing a white guy playing Conjunto, but they accepted me. They know I love the music and they see that I do my own thing with it." Among many validating experiences, perhaps the most significant were Los Pinkys' early bookings at Happy Days, Williams' dynamic partnership with the veteran Isidro Samilpa, the enlistment of two of Austin's finest young players, Javier and Chris Cruz, and being invited not just to play at San Antonio's annual Conjunto Festival, but on the Pesado (heavyweight) day. Three years after arriving in Austin with a bag of clothes, two accordions and a bajo sexto, "People I respect, all of a sudden I'm producing their records (see Reviews: **Eddie 'Lalo' Torres**), people who turned me on to the music are coming up and congratulating me."

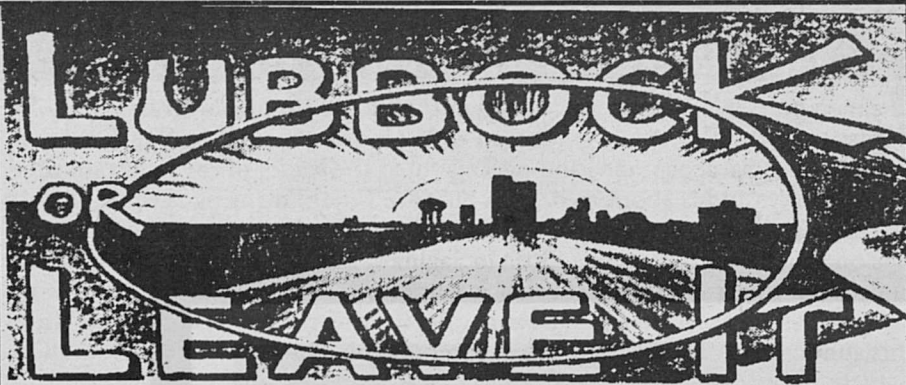
♦ Accepted into the conjunto world, Williams seems to be looking for new worlds to conquer. Last year, paying tribute to his roots, he cut, in his living room, playing all the instruments, a commissioned CD of original polka instrumentals, **Mining City Polka Party**, for distribution in Montana, "kind of a sketchbook in full color. I'm not quite there yet." This year, he's branching out into Cajun, with a band that includes Bad Liver Ralph White on fiddle and LeRoi Brother Steve Doerr on guitar. "We're basically going to be an Aldus Roger cover band, try and get that Lawrence Walker, Iry Lejeune dance hall sound." Rather ambitiously, The Gulf Coast Playboys are setting out to recreate a Louisiana tradition in Austin, with family-orientated Saturday afternoon dances. I must admit to having qualms about their choice of venue, the New Chaparral on South Congress, which may not actually have chicken wire protecting the stage but feels like it ought to. Still, it does have a great dance floor and, as Tony Villanueva points out about the 1-6pm time slot, "At least it'll over before sundown." Personally, I'm going to stick with the infinitely more gemütlich Jovita's, which will feature the Playboys on the 14th (and Los Pinkys on the 23rd).

♦ Comparing Conjunto and Cajun, Williams describes them as "Sweet music played by tough people," but for him the key seems to be that both, and his native Polish polkas, have the same basic *raison d'être*. "When you're up there and all you can see is people dancing, it's the greatest feeling in the world." JC

ALDUS ROGER A CAJUN LEGEND

(La Louisianne, CD, 1007)

Celebrating his 80th birthday on February 10th, The Gulf Coast Playboys' role model truly deserves the often overworked appellation of his only extant CD's title (La Louisianne still offer some of his LPs). An outstanding performer, dubbed 'The King of the French Accordion,' and composer, he was also an extraordinary bandleader, a once crucial talent now rarely seen or acknowledged. In the years, 1947-1965, in which Aldus Roger & The Lafayette Playboys were a major, indeed dominant, force in Cajun music, extending their influence well into the future as the house band of Lafayette's Cajun culture supportive Channel 10, the band included many musicians now legendary in their own right. These 22 tracks, culled from various LPs, feature Doc Guidry, Fernest 'Man,' Tunice 'Bee' and David Abshire, Johnny Credeur, Phillip Alleman, Louis Foreman, Tony Thibodeaux and Vernon Bergeron. If you like what the Gulf Coast Playboys do, this is their primary source of inspiration. JC



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HONEST JOHN'S SMOKING SECTION

For all its inevitability—and it has to be said that many people were somewhat amazed he lasted as long as he did—the death of **Townes Van Zandt** was still a terrible blow, and a hideously inauspicious start to the new year. The last thing I wanted was to make points from such a tragedy, but in the immediate aftermath, many people who saw the January issue when it came out on the 2nd wanted to know how I managed to have Townes on the cover, some thinking it must have been a macabre coincidence. As it happens, Harold Eggers, Townes' friend-manager-minder, called me in the middle of the night when the mag was being printed first thing, which let me partially deal with the news by remaking the front cover in his honor.

◆ When I said that Van Zandt changed my life, this was no mere hyperbolic emotional reaction but the plain, simple, unvarnished truth. In 1976, when all I knew was that if you had hair more than inch long and a penchant for naughty cigarettes, you should avoid Texas at all costs, a friend played me an album he'd brought back from Dallas, **Live At The Old Quarter, Houston**, and, people, I'm *literally* here to tell you my life turned around with that record. Shortly after, I discovered Ely, Hancock, Gilmore and Allen, but if they gave me momentum on my new spiritual path, it was Van Zandt who provided the initial impetus.

◆ Over the years, I kinda got to know Townes, not the easiest of people, but then great songwriters tend to be pretty complex individuals. First time we met, I mentioned a British tour he was supposed to make with Guy Clark and Jerry Jeff Walker, and was a bit took aback when he flatly denied all knowledge of it, even when Clark backed me up. At the time, I put it down to his being fucked up on vodka, but later wised up to his predilection, high, low or in between, for playing mind games. Anyway, we had some good visits over the years, particularly round the time I interviewed him for a cover feature (#49), and cleaned him out pitching pennies, but if we'd never met, I'd still be mourning the passing of one of the greatest songwriters of our time, and the one who affected me the most.

◆ Several hundred people were ahead of us, so we had to watch the **Cactus Cafe's** all-star tributes on a monitor. Thoughts turned, inevitably, to seeing Townes at his home base, a dozen or so shows ranging from magnificent to barely worthwhile, one horrifying (when Townes collapsed) and one so pitiful we gave up. About par for the course.

◆ In the aftermath, I learned that **Rex Bell**, immortalized in *Rex's Blues*, has revived his legendary acoustic cafe, though it's now **The Old Quarter, Galveston**, at which Townes played the inaugural show last May. Talking to Bell, I rashly mentioned a 1987 British TV documentary on Van Zandt for which I did the intro and voiceovers. He jumped on this but neither Townes nor I ever did find out if it got aired. Any of you guys ever come across it?

◆ Elsewhere, you'll find a review of Van Zandt's **Rear View Mirror**, just reissued by **Sugar Hill**, and I couldn't help thinking that the label's had a rather rough patch lately, with death claiming three of its artists, Van Zandt, Walter Hyatt and John Duffey, founder of The Seldom Scene, while Robert Earl Keen's move to Arista can be seen as a form of slow suicide. Still, as far as being the preeminent Texas singer-songwriter label goes, the loss of Keen is more than offset by the recent additions of Guy Clark, James McMurtry and Bad Livers (Danny Barnes being a vastly underrated songwriter) to a roster that already includes Butch Hancock and Terry Allen.

◆ Another very special, much-loved person was lost to us in January, and the last **MCT** Poll Party at Threadgill's World Headquarters on February 17th will be dedicated to the memory of **Martha Taylor Fain**, who died on Saturday, January 25th, aged 71. DL and I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to her son, our dear friend Jesse Taylor, and to her family. As for the show, the simplest way to describe it is that Marvin Dykhuis and Gene Elders *won't* be there as they're on the road.

◆ From the sublime to the ridiculous, Michael Corcoran called me early January to get my reaction to the title of an **Alejandro Escovedo** song on a forthcoming Buick McKane album, *John Conquest, You've Got Enough Dandruff On Your Collar To Bread A Veal Cutlet*. I have no real quarrel with what I was subsequently quoted as saying, but, for the record, what I told Corky was "As I've said about Escovedo before, and will doubtless say again, I don't get it." I shouldn't dwell on this as, judging by sales of his previous records, fewer people will hear the song than read this column, but, far as I can make out, it's payback for my heretical dissent from the chorus of laudatory reviews—Escovedo was once described by a particularly idiotic *Chronicle* writer as "every critic's security blanket"—for **Thirteen Years**, as if it's my fault nobody bought the bastard. Still, I guess Escovedo needs to vent as, no thanks to me, he's been dropped after one album by a scalded Ryko, who openly describe it a disaster of epic proportions. By the way, my collar is open to inspection any time.

◆ On the other hand, I gather from Gurf Morlix that I come across rather well in *John Conquest's Blues #88*, which **William James IV** wrote after reading my polemic on co-writing (in #88), and which will be on his next album. I haven't heard either Escovedo or James' songs yet, but, subjective considerations aside, I'm willing to take a stab at which will be the better of the two.

◆ Does it strike you as odd that NBC and CNN are willing to fork over unspecified, but presumably substantial, amounts of money to Richard Jewell, but absolutely won't admit to being wrong? Well, none of that bullshit along **MCT/3CM**—when I screw up I say so. Last month's Poll results had one spelling error and one outright mistake. Rubboard player **Mambo John** (#2 Any Other Instrument) is Treanor not Traynor. John tells me this is a perennial problem, "I hate to think how much work I've lost over the years because people think it's spelled like that." I mistakenly put **Glover Gill's** votes under Multi-Instrumentalist instead of Any Other Instrument, where he would have placed 4th. Actually this is a compound foul up as I simply forgot to include a Keyboards category.

◆ One blessed side effect of the changes round here is that the 1997 poll will be wide open, so I'll no longer be forced, as I have been each and every year, to void Steel Guitar votes for **Lloyd Maines**. As a distant early warning, though I still have to iron out some details, instead of Austin area residency, the crux of the next poll will be independent label/self-released records and recording artists. One notion I'm kicking around is having subcategories for areas where there are significant numbers of **MCT/3CM** subscribers, ie San Antonio, Northern California and Greater Chicago, but I'm still a bit hazy on the mechanics.

◆ Major brain slip last month. I meant to describe Dr John's liner notes for the Professor Longhair album as 'effusive,' but somehow it came out as 'fulsome,' which, as I'm sure you all know, means "offensive to good taste, disgusting or repulsive." Not exactly a synonym.

FEBRUARY BIRTHS & DEATHS

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1st | Jack Huddle • 1928 • Lubbock |
| | Joe Sample • 1939 • Houston |
| | Cyprien Landreneaux † 1981 |
| | Blaze Foley † 1989 |
| 2nd | Stubbs • 1927 • Navasota, TX |
| 3rd | Johnny Guitar Watson • 1935 • Houston |
| | Shawn Phillips • 1943 • Fort Worth |
| | Buddy Holly † 1959 |
| | Big Bopper † 1959 |
| 5th | Bob Dunn • 1908 • Braggs, OK |
| | Grace (Broussard) • 1939 • Prairieville, LA |
| | Link Davis Sr † 1972 |
| 6th | Jesse Belvin † 1960 |
| 7th | King Curtis • 1934 • Fort Worth |
| | Earl King • 1934 • New Orleans |
| | Gene Elders • 1951 • Chicago |
| 8th | Skeet Dixon • 1929 • Marshall, TX |
| | Ray Sharpe • 1938 • Fort Worth |
| 9th | Ernest Tubb • 1914 • Crisp, TX |
| | Jivin' Gene • 1940 • Port Arthur |
| | Joe Ely • 1946 • Amarillo |
| 10th | TV Slim Wills • 1916 • Houston |
| | Aldus Roger • 1916 • Carencro, LA |
| | Rockin' Dopsie • 1932 • Lafayette, LA |
| | Slim Richey • 1938 • Atlanta, TX |
| | Michael Fracasso • 1952 • Ohio |
| | Ruthie Foster • 1964 • Mineola, TX |
| 12th | Tex Beneke • 1914 • Fort Worth |
| | Moe Bandy • 1944 • Meridian, MS |
| 13th | Leland H Miller • 1924 • Columbus, TX |
| | Fred Zimmerle • 1931 • San Antonio |
| 14th | Valerio Longoria • 1924 • Kenedy, TX |
| | Michael Doucet • 1951 • Scott, LA |
| 15th | David Lee Garza • 19?? • Poteet, TX |
| 16th | Blues Boy Hubbard • 1934 • LaGrange |
| | Chris Duarte • 1963 • San Antonio |
| | Kris McKay • 1964 • Houston |
| 17th | Johnny Bush • 1935 • Houston |
| | Doyle Bramhall Sr • 1949 • Dallas |
| | Lou Ann Barton • 1954 • Fort Worth |
| 18th | Warren Storm • 1937 • Abbeville, LA |
| | Irma Thomas • 1941 • Ponchatoula, LA |
| | Johnny Carroll † 1995 |
| 19th | Alan Haynes • 1956 • Houston |
| 21st | Bobby Charles • 1938 • Abbeville, LA |
| 22nd | Jesse Ashlock • 1915 • Walker County, TX |
| | RS Rankin • 1933 • Royse City, TX |
| | Ernie K-Doe • 1936 • New Orleans |
| | Josh Alan • 1956 • New York City |
| 23rd | Austin Pitre • 1918 • Ville Platte, LA |
| | Steve Jordan • 1939 • Elsa, TX |
| | Johnny Winter • 1944 • Leland, MS |
| | Erik Hokkanen • 1963 • Clearwater, FL |
| 24th | David Fathead Newman • 1933 • Dallas |
| | Benny Graeff • 1948 • Aberdeen, MD |
| | Tom Shaw † 1977 |
| 25th | Faron Young • 1932 • Shreveport, LA |
| 26th | Harry Choates • 1922 • Rayne, LA |
| | Fats Domino • 1928 • New Orleans |
| | Chris Wall • 1946 • Hollywood, CA |
| 27th | Clarence Garlow • 1911 • Welsh, LA |
| | Bobby Balderama • 1950 • O'Donnell, TX |
| | Jane Gillman • 1958 • DC |
| 28th | Sam The Sham • 1937 • Dallas |
| | Tommy Tune • 1939 • Wichita Falls, TX |
| | Stuart Hamblen † 1989 |

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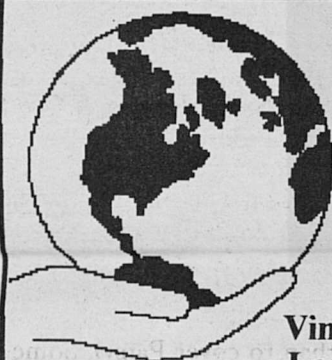
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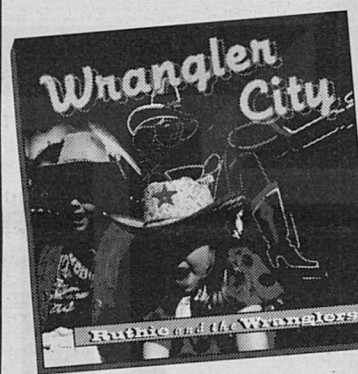
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3CM RECORD REVIEWS

TOWNES VAN ZANDT REAR VIEW MIRROR

(Sugar Hill, CD, 1054)

Sugar Hill has a new live album, **Highway Kind**, recorded at various European and American shows, due out in March. Meantime, the label pays tribute by reissuing a live album originally released in 1993 by Sundown, a chimerical Austin label that folded shortly after (incidentally stiffing me for \$400, so I had no qualms about swiping their picture for last month's cover). As on the original version, no date is given, but I imagine it's closer in time to the classic 70s **Live At The Old Quarter, Houston** than the murky **Rain On A Conga Drum**, cut in 1992 at a Berlin club. In any case, it differs from both partly in being 100% originals, but mainly in that, so far, it's the only live Van Zandt album to feature backing musicians, Freddy Fender's fiddler Owen Cody and Guy Clark's guitarist Danny Rowland. Recorded at The Blue Onion in Norman, Oklahoma ("Oddly enough," Van Zandt remarked to me, "the first place I ever got arrested"), at the end of a long tour, this ensemble had got rather good, Cody adding a particularly distinctive touch. Crucially, though, Van Zandt was in exceptionally good form, delivering 17 songs, mostly familiar, some less so (*Brother Flower*, *Colorado Girl*), with easy power and confidence, proving yet again, to quote myself from the liner notes, that his versions are the true, authentic ones of which all covers are but shadows. Going to a Townes show was always an iffy business, and I have to admit to walking out of one, but on a good night, as this certainly was, he was mesmerizing. JC

EDDIE 'LALO' TORRES IS EVERYWHERE

(Rounder, CD, 6072)

Still fondly remembered by Conjunto connoisseurs, Los Pavos Reales (The Royal Peacocks), distinguished by the sensational dual accordions, vocal harmonies and original material of Eduardo, still a teenager when the group formed in 1957, and his older brother Salvador Torres-Garcia, cut 36 albums and hundreds of singles for Ideal, Del Bravo, Joey, Falcon and on their own Pavo label, before breaking up in 1976. Equally proficient on accordion, tololoche and guitar, Eddie, who later dropped his father's name to go under the name of the mother who helped him learn the accordion as a child (he made his professional debut at eight in a Seguin bar), worked as a San Antonio session player and played with or fronted a bewildering number of conjuntos, hence the catchphrase of the album title. However, Torres seemed to disappear in the last few years, treatment for cancer, now in remission, being followed by a lengthy world tour with Little Joe Hernandez. His first CD, produced by Bradley Williams of Los Pinkys, thus comes a little late for a man of his repute. Cut, in true South Texas fashion, in a single day (actually seven hours) at Toby Torres' San Antonio studio, the album leans heavily on his original material, including two Pavos hits, *Quiero* and *Hablando Se Entienden Las Cosas*, the latter included in a splendid ranchera popurri. Though Torres is an adequate vocalist, it's easy to deduce that Salvador was the better singer of the two, but his accordion work throughout, particularly on the showcase instrumental polkas *Arriba San Antonio*, *Margarita* and *Sandra* and *Bailando Cumbia*, is outstanding. For what it's worth, there are rumors that Salvador Torres-Garcia may be paroled soon and Los Pavos Reales may reform. JC

SQUEEZE PLAY

A WORLD ACCORDION ANTHOLOGY

(Rounder, CD, 1090)

Dick Spottswood's name rang a faint ethnomusicological bell that I couldn't pin down, but my very first inquiry produced resounding endorsements both of the man and, sight unseen, of this album which he compiled. "Among us 78rpm knuckleheads," says Mark Rubin, "Spottswood is *very* heavy duty." 78s are of the essence, as Spottswood's temporal frame is 1920 to c1956 (there are a lot of 'circas' in the credits), while his 24 selections girdle the world. Though many were recorded in New York or Chicago, they represent a multitude of cultures that adopted the stomach Steinway—Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Irish, Rumanian, Tejano, South African, Jewish, Scots, Greek, Cajun, French-Canadian, Slovene and Dominican accordion and concertina players are represented in this extraordinarily rich tapestry. It's somewhat humbling to be confronted so sharply by the narrowness of one's musical boundaries. I'm generally familiar with Irish and Scots styles, and know the work of Trio Huracán, Don Santiago Jimenez, Mishka Ziganoff and Joe Falcon, but that barely scratches the surface of this collection. When it comes to the fascinating Rumanian Margarita Radulescu, whose *In Padure La Ghergani* may have been recorded in 1927 but is *still* mindbendingly radical, the only comfort is that Spottswood's equally in the dark, "It would be interesting to know more about (her) and the vigorous tradition her ferociously arrhythmic singing represents." A penchant for accordion music is, of course, of the essence here, but given that, Spottswood opens up fascinating new dimensions. JC

JOHNNIE ALLAN THE ULTIMATE LOUISIANA EXPERIENCE

(Jin, CD, 9052)

Flat Town's legendary swamp pop label has been home to one of the first, currently by far the most active, of the genre's stars, since 1958. On these 16 tracks, however, Allan stretches himself across a wide spectrum of South Louisiana music, embracing swamp pop, Cajun, Zydeco, country, rock & roll, R&B and blues. With a core group of Tony Ardoin guitar, Oran Guidry Jr (presumably son of Doc Guidry) bass and Gerald Melancon drums, Allan's distinct and magisterial style is flavored by some wonderful guests, historic figures such as fiddler Rufus Thibodeaux, tenor saxman Harry Simoneaux, who created the fantastic break on Bobby Charles' 1955 *Later, Alligator* and is still absolutely astounding and Carol Rachou, founder of La Louisianne Records, who does the 'vocals' on *Se Nest Pas Farce De Vieillier* (It's No Fun Getting Old), alongside young hotshots like accordion wizard Steve Riley and Roddie Romero, who plays slide guitar on one track. Other earcatchers are Richard Comeaux, steel guitar and dobro, and Robert Burton's harmonica on the Jimmy Reed-ish *Demon Woman*. If it doesn't really live up to the ambitious title, a vigorous melange (I absolutely refuse to call it a "spicy gumbo") with some knockout playing and ensemble work behind a great master. JC

ROSIE FLORES & RAY CAMPI A LITTLE BIT OF HEARTACHE

(Watermelon, CD, 1059)

Years go by with no sighting of Ray Campi, and suddenly there are two new albums in as many months. New releases, I should say, as last month's **Perpetual Stomp** was a retrospective going all the way back to 1951 and this duet heavy collection was actually recorded in 1990 but sat on by CMH. One kind of sees their point as, though pairing two people best known as rockabilies, one a veteran the other a revivalist, this, apart from a Rock & Roll Trio version of Tiny Bradshaw's *Train Kept A-Rollin*, with Flores on lead guitar, is a country album and, what's more, dedicated to reviving a lost art. Campi contributes three songs, Flores one, which ties them with four from Joe Maphis, including the Joe & Rose Lee comic duet *I'm Gonna Wear The Pants*. With very maudlin brackets, *This Song Is Just For You* by Perk Williams & Cecil Harris, of Jimmy Heap & The Melody Masters, and Ernest Tubb & Jimmie Skinner's *Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello*, the other songs are Boudleaux Bryant's *All I Have To Do Is Dream*, Merle Travis' *There Ain't A Cow In Texas*, Bill Boling's *Eighteen Wheels*, Carl Butler's *If Teardrops Were Pennies* and, as much a showcase for Flores' hubris as her voice, Willie Nelson's *Crazy* (you would think she'd know better than to cover Patsy). Some very nice material in there, with great backing by musicians like Jesse McReynolds (Jim & Jesse) mandolin, Uncle Josh Graves dobro/steel guitar, Glen Duncan fiddle and Curley Hollingsworth piano. Though I have serious reservations about the true extent and depth of both Flores' and Campi's talents, it has to be said they mesh together surprisingly well, and if one admires them simply for attempting the duet concept, they carry it off with considerable style. Longer on charm and showmanship than substance though. JC

CRAIG MORRISON Go Cat Go! ROCKABILLY MUSIC AND ITS MAKERS

(University of Illinois Press, hardback)

Strong on concepts, Canadian musician, teacher and broadcaster Morrison occasionally shows alarming weakness on details in his reworking of an MA thesis. Thus, he gets off to a very good start, sardonically listing the competing prerequisites (eg "southern origins") and disqualifications (eg "electric bass") espoused by anal aficionados of 'obscurabilly,' sensibly concluding "A precise, universal, definition may be impossible and even undesirable," but shortly after has Hank Williams dying in Alabama, a peripheral but significant error. What really undermines confidence in his blend of critical narrative and biographical sketches, based on his own interviews and material from specialist periodicals, is that while his book includes recent references—High Noon, for instance, are praised in the context of a 1995 TV appearance with Ronnie Dawson—and pages of chauvinistic analysis of staggeringly obscure Canadian bands, many crucial contemporaries go unmentioned. The most glaring lacunae are perhaps the omission of Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys and James Intveld, but the entire 'Revivalists' chapter is pretty much of a haphazard shambles. Still, this is a concise and coherent, if neither utterly reliable nor totally comprehensive, guide to the history and development of a genre whose literature, apart from Randy McNutt's deeply flawed **We Wanna Boogie** and Richard Jandrow's slapdash **What It Was**, is almost entirely confined to back issues of *New Kommotion*, *Kicks*, *Let It Rock* and others. At \$29.95, it's worth dropping hints when your next birthday looms, or you could wait for *Rockabilly Revue* editor Billy Poore's bluecollar eyewitness account, due this summer. JC

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