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GUY CLARK

THE DERAILERS

DEKE DICKERSON
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EDGE CITY

FREDDY FENDER

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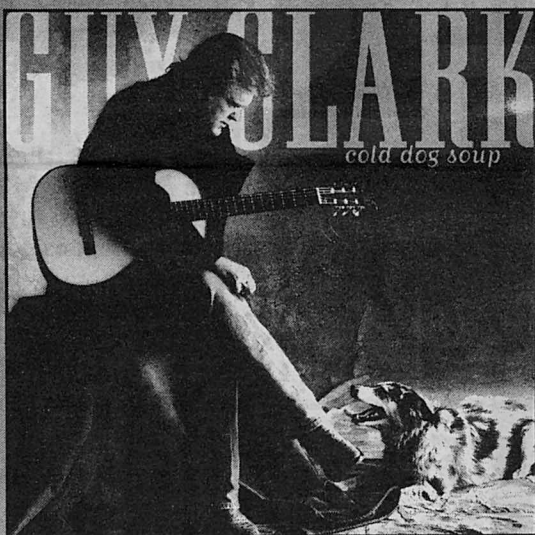
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Deke Dickerson & The Ecco-Fonics: More Million Sellers (Hightone) *RS

Freakwater: End Time (Thrilljockey) *TJ

Guy Clark: Cold Dog Soup (Sugar Hill) *JH

Red Dirt Rangers: Ranger's Command (Lazy SOB)

West Coast Pinups: Woman's Work (Hard Eight) *TG

5. BB King: Tribute To Louis Jordan (?) *DO

Grandpa Jones: Pickin' Time (MCA Special Products) *WH

John Hartford & The Hartford String Band: Good Old Boys (Rounder) *DJ

Johnny Sansone: Watermelon Patch (Bullseye Blues) *DT

Lefty Frizzell: Songs Of Jimmie Rodgers (KOCH) *PP

Patty Booker: I Don't Need All That (PMS) *JP

Rico Bell & The Snakehandlers: Dark Side Of The Mersey (Bloodshot) *PD

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Wayne Hancock: Wild Free & Reckless (ARK21) *JS

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REAL MUSIC PLAYED FOR REAL PEOPLE BY REAL DJS IN OCTOBER, 1999

FAR charts are compiled from reports sent in by actual DJs with freeform (ie no playlists) radio shows on public, college and community stations round the country (and in Australia). Each of them lists the four albums they took most pleasure in playing, one of which can be their Album of the Month (designated by a * and their initials). Albums reported do not have to be new releases, but should, for choice, still be available.

THIS MONTH'S CAST OF CHARACTERS

JB: Jim Beal Jr, KSYM, TX
LB: Len Brown WDVR, NJ
BC: Bill Conner, KNBT, TX
KD: Ken Date, 2RRR, Australia
PD: Paul Daly, KSYM, TX
DF: Dan Ferguson, WRIU, RI
TG: Thomas Greener, KVMR, CA
JH: Jamie Hoover KGLP, NM
JLH: John Hauser, KOOP, TX
WH: Wade Hockett, KBOO, OR
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TJ: Tom Jackson, WLUW, IL
RM: Rod Moag, KOOP, TX
MM: Mark Mundy, KNON, TX
DO: Dan Orange, KZSC, CA
JP: Jana Pendragon KXLU, CA
PP: Professor Purple, KZMU, UT
ER: Eddie Russell, RPEM/JRRI
KR: Kim Rogers, KVMR, CA
WR: Wesley Robertson, KVMR, CA
JS: Johnny Simmons, KUSP, CA
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LW: Larry Weir, KDHX, MO

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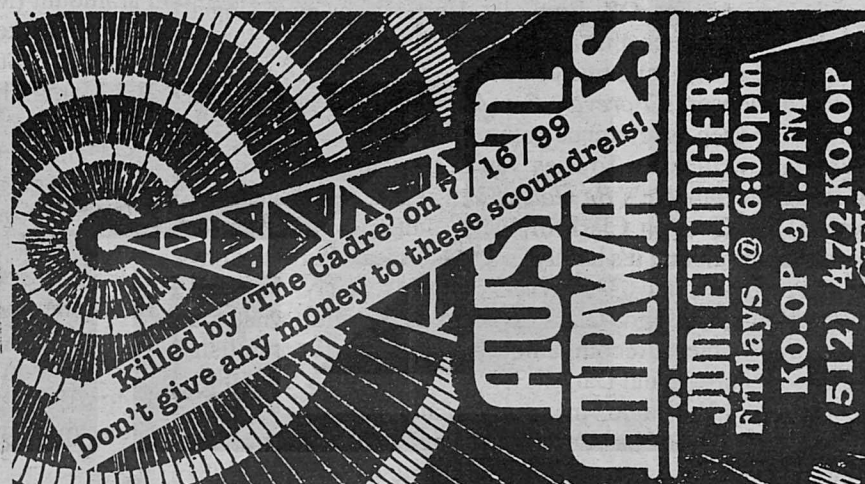
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GUY CLARK • COLD DOG SOUP

(Sugar Hill ****)

Should you want to illustrate the principle of deconstruction, you need look no further than the Guy Clark canon, in which, reversing the usual order of things, he's progressed—and I use the word advisedly—from planned and polished arrangements and packaging to a raw and intimate recording style, every frill and furbelow ruthlessly discarded. His last album, *Keepers*, cut live at Nashville's Douglas Corner, took you along to his small acoustic venue show, now he comes straight to your home, plunks himself down on the couch with a couple of friends and gives you the full force of his two packs a day voice, his guitar and 12 more good to great songs. OK, Emmylou Harris drops by to sing a couple of harmonies, this a metaphor, damn it. Not all of the songs are his own, and two of the covers, which also include Richard Dobson's *Forever, For Always, For Certain*, can perhaps be seen as reference points. Steve Earle's *Fort Worth Blues* was written for Townes Van Zandt while Keith Sykes & Anna McGarrigle's *Be Gone Forever* might as well have been. The effect on Clark of Van Zandt's death seems to permeate the album; it's hardly fanciful to speak of intimations of mortality when *Red River* contains fairly detailed instructions to Susanna Clark on where to bury him when his own time comes. Accompanied by multi-instrumentalists Verlon Thompson and Darrell Scott, who between them play acoustic guitars, banjo, mandolin, mandocello, accordion, dobro, autoharp and bass, as well as singing harmony vocals, Clark is at his best, even if he doesn't sound too happy with his lot in life. On the opening title track (by the way, Tom Waits really did work as a club doorman at one time according to Clark), he says, "Ain't no money in poetry, that's what sets a poet free. I've had all the freedom I can stand." Whether this signals another break from recording remains to be seen, in the meantime this may, just on stylistic grounds, be Clark's best album to date, though I guess you could have said that about any of them when they came out. **JC**

EDGE CITY • MYSTERY RIDE

(Edge City ****)

Last month, I specified intensity as, for me, an essential singer-songwriter quality, and on that front Jim Patton really delivers, both as singer and songwriter. To be honest, that dual intensity might get a bit much if he sang all twelve songs in his Dylanesque rasp, but his wife and partner Sherry Brokus has much better singing voice and by approaching each song individually in terms of leads and harmonies, they vary the album's texture, going from the urgent to the positively pretty and back again, in a way that holds attention and keeps the songs from running into each other. From the time they first moved to Austin from Baltimore, Edge City demonstrated a quick and keen appreciation of local musicianship (before the demise of Chicago House, which left them, like so many others, pretty much homeless, they were hosting remarkable evenings there), and their choice of players goes well beyond enlisting hired guns. I never cared for David Grissom as Ely's guitarist, but he does some absolutely remarkable, empathetic, work here, most notably on *I Turn To You*, while he and Darcie Deaville on mandolin and fiddle have some sparkling interplay, particularly on *No Reason*. Produced by Lloyd Maines, who also plays acoustic guitar and dobro, and also featuring Paul Percy drums and percussion, Glenn Fukunaga bass and Chip Dolan keyboards and accordion, this comes across as a real band album, the ultimate realization of Edge City's folk-rock wall of sound though, of course, in real life it'd be impossible to hold this aggregation together. Serving perhaps as a where we're coming from marker, the only cover is Dylan's *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*, but if Patton's eleven originals vary somewhat—I think *Outsider* must have some special significance to him but it seems rather crude compared to such remarkable songs as *By The Water*, *Aliceanna St*, *Million Miles Away*, *Prisoner Of The Blues*, *No Reason* and *I Turn To You*—he and Brokus are a demonstration of the Austin maxim that people who can barely get a gig here would be stars anywhere else. If you like musicians to sound like they mean it, check out Edge City. **JC**

RICK KENNEDY & RANDY McNUTT

LITTLE LABELS—BIG SOUND

SMALL RECORD COMPANIES AND THE RISE OF AMERICAN MUSIC

(Indiana University Press, cloth ***)

You would be hard put to it to come up with a title that would engage my attention as instantly as this, which is possibly why I feel so let down. Part of the problem in these profiles of ten independent labels is that Kennedy is mainly interested in those devoted to jazz and/or blues, while McNutt, who wrote one of the first histories of rockabilly, went for the obvious, Sun, whose history has already been sufficiently documented. Starting with Gennett (1915-34), which launched the recording careers of Louis Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael, Jelly Roll Morton, Bix Biederbecke and Earl Hines, not to mention Gene Autry and Roosevelt Sykes, the book takes us through Paramount (Ma Rainey, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charlie Patton, Blind Blake, Son House), Dial (Charlie Parker), King (Moon Mullican, James Brown, Hank Ballard, Roy Brown, Wynonie Harris, Delmore Brothers, Cowboy Copas, etc, etc, etc), Duke/Peacock (Johnny Ace, Gatemouth Brown, Big Mama Thornton, Bobby Bland), Sun (well, shit), Riverside (Theolonius Monk, Cannonball Adderley, etc), Ace (Earl King, Huey 'Piano' Smith, Jimmy Clanton), Monument (Roy Orbison) and Delmark (Junior Wells, Magic Sam, Otis Rush, etc). I have to admit that, apart from King and Ace, this is not a selection of labels I find madly exciting. The contrast between the coldbloodedness of Gennett and Paramount, which had no interest in music and robbed its artists blind, and the passionate dedication of Dial's Ross Russell and Delmark's Bob Koester, with King's Syd Nathan, Duke/Peacock's Don Robey ("a gangster with good taste," as Calvin Russell described the boss of his onetime French label) and Ace's Johnny Vincent falling across the spectrum in between, is certainly fascinating, but while not pretending to be comprehensive, this lacks density even in 200 pages on its chosen subjects. However, it has provided me with a new parlor game: Top 10 Indies I'd Like To Know More About. OK, I'll start. Jin, Excello, Discos Ideal, Del-Fi, Philles, Stax, Imperial, Cameo, Sue and Minit. Your turn. **JC**

JAMES M SALEM

THE LATE GREAT JOHNNY ACE

AND THE TRANSITION FROM R&B TO ROCK 'N' ROLL

(University of Illinois Press, cloth ***)

Drawing parallels and contrasts between two Memphis stars, the white who adopted black styles and the black who adopted white ones, Salem, Professor of American Studies at the University of Alabama, notes that there are over 400 books on Elvis Presley but this is the first on Johnny Ace. Dominating the R&B charts with a string of hits, from *My Song* in 1952 to the posthumously released *Pledging My Love* (curiously, the last song ever recorded by Elvis) in 1955, Ace is probably best remembered for the manner of his death, supposedly losing at Russian Roulette backstage at a Christmas show in Houston. While Salem's painstaking research throws up much interesting information about Beale Street, race relations in Memphis and Houston, black entrepreneurship, the music business in the 50s, the early days of R&B and much more (he even delves into the origins of Russian Roulette), his central figure remains enigmatic. Forty years later, basic information on Ace's life is sketchy and on his personality equivocal, if not downright speculative. More to the point, Salem never delivers on the 'Transition' role. Ace's entry into the pop Top 20 was symptomatic of a spontaneous and fascinating new development in American music, the sudden refusal of young adults and teenagers to accept white covers of black material. However, trying to portray the singer, unknown outside black America before his flamboyant death, into some kind of catalyst simply doesn't work. Nor, far as I'm concerned, does Salem's admiration, however qualified, for Don Robey, one of the great shits of music business history, who founded Peacock Records and stole Duke Records, of which Ace was the entire roster, at gunpoint from its founder, David Mattis. There's another parallel between Elvis and Ace that Salem seems not to have spotted when he quoted a remark by Mattis, who started the young John Alexander Jr on the road to stardom. "They brought his body back to Memphis and I was ready to cry. And I saw this great big fat bloated elephant." Ace may have been rock & roll's first casualty, but the best parts of his biography are the background. **JC**

JOHN T DAVIS

AUSTIN CITY LIMITS: 25 YEARS OF AMERICAN MUSIC

(Billboard Books, cloth ***)

Funny thing about Austin City Limits is that when you look through the calendar at the back of this anniversary celebration, it reads like one great show after another, but anytime you're actually in front of your TV, the one that's being shown that night is always someone you *really* don't want to see, like Trish Yearwood or Faith Hill, or, God help us, both. The words are an enormous puff piece, for which one can hardly fault Davis, that was the gig, and in any case the worst excesses of fatuous self-congratulation come from interpolations by the show's producer, Terry Lickona, who simply confirms my opinion that he's a complete idiot. However, it's hard to focus on the text when the eye is being constantly dazzled by Scott Newton's 300 photographs (my favorite is a candid of Lucinda Williams busking on the Drag in 1974). I've always been mildly conflicted about ACL, perhaps because the show itself varies between being an admirably eclectic showcase of American music and a sellout promotional vehicle for the major labels. While valid up to a point, it's hard to reconcile the much-touted presence of Yearwood, Hill, Garth Brooks, The Dixie Chicks, Susan Tedeschi, Hootie & The Blowfish et al with Lickona's claim that his show "has become a treasured chronicle of original American roots music for the past quarter century." Oh, fuck it, just look at Newton's pictures. They're cool. **JC**



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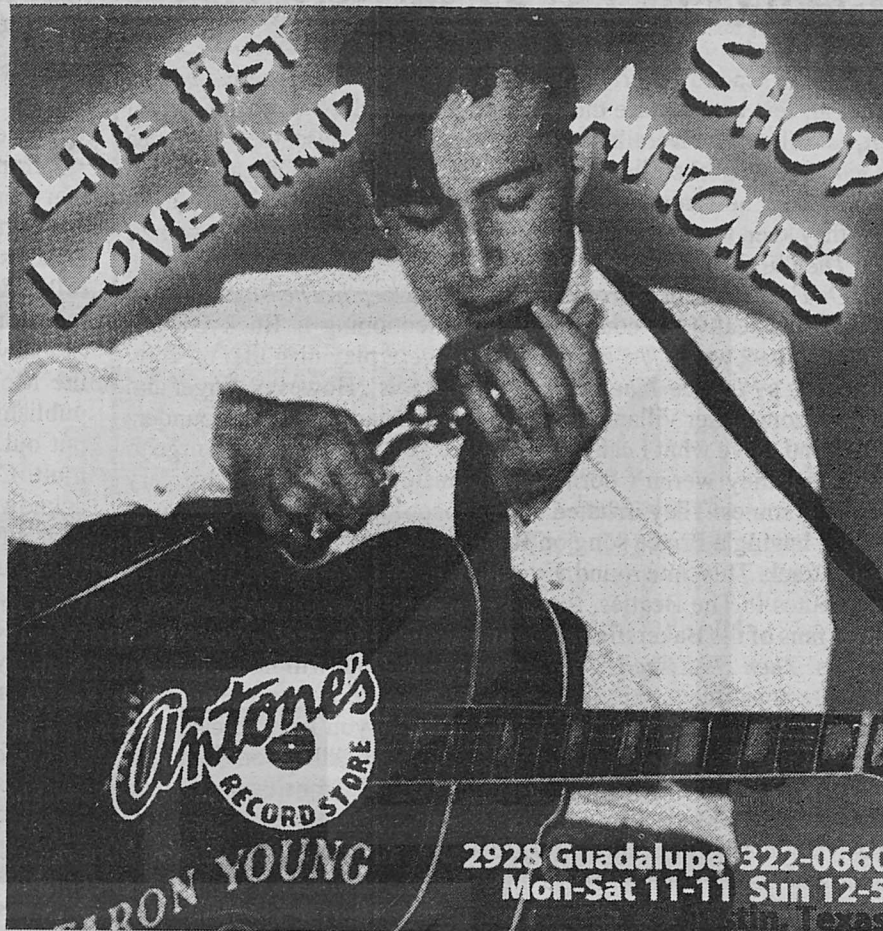
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THE DERAILERS • FULL WESTERN DRESS

(Sire *****)

Of all the second generation disciples of Stewart, Haggard, Owens, et al, few can capture the Bakersfield Sound, or write songs that fit it, as well as The Derailers. Apart from anything else, they emulate the visual style of their heroes, the title referring, I imagine, to the fact that no matter how humble the gig, spiffy is the order of the day. What's more they keep getting better at it and when everything comes together, as on *The Lost And Found*, *Me, Myself And I*, *Someone Else's Problem*, *Hold On Fool Heart* or Marty Robbins' *Knee Deep In The Blues*, they're real hard to beat. One coup that bears mentioning is Buck Owens, who, of course, wrote *The Waltz Of The Angels*, playing guitar on Tony Villanueva's *Play Me 'The Waltz Of The Angels'*. However, singer and principal songwriter Villanueva and guitarist Brian Hofeldt, cofounders of the band, have what I can only describe as a self-destructive urge to reveal that they weren't born to this music but came to it by very circuitous routes. They irritated a lot of people who otherwise admire them by having a Prince song on *Reverb Deluxe*, but at least it was a 'secret' track. This time round, I've already heard grumbles about their two tributes to The Beatles, for which I can't see there's a lot of call among fans of the Bakersfield Sound, and the jeu d'esprit cover of The Crystals' *Then He Kissed Me*, selfindulgences that will have much of their core constituency reaching for the Skip button or programming their CD players. Not a real good move when you have to establish your authenticity. Once again produced, not altogether convincingly, by Dave Alvin, and featuring such stellar additional musicians as Gene Elders on fiddle, Marty Muse pedal steel, Casper Rawls acoustic guitar and Alvin himself guitar, this is 10/13ths of a hot neo-Bakersfield album. Admittedly, Owens and Haggard themselves have put out albums with an even higher proportion of dud tracks. JC

LONE STAR • THE BEST OF FREDDY FENDER THE PRIME OF SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET KINGS OF CAJUN A TASTE OF TEX-MEX

(Music Club [UK])

Music Club (not to be confused with the Italian label Club De Musique) has an interesting approach, licensing tracks individually to put together offbeat budget-priced compilations (available in the US). Yet another British outfit working the Crazy Cajun motherlode, the first two packages are both anchored by a couple of well-known numbers, Fender's *Before The Next Teardrop Falls*, though in the Spanish version, and his 1958 Swamp Pop version of *Wasted Days And Wasted Night* and Sahm's big hit *She's About A Mover* and *The Rains Came*, but the rest of the 15 tracks on both albums are likely to be less familiar to any but hardcore fans. The Fender album (*****) is particularly fine, with knockout versions of Joe Simon's R&B hit *The Chokin' Kind* (oddly enough, written by Harlan Howard), Jivin' Gene's *Breaking Up Is Hard To Do*, Otis Redding's *These Arms Of Mine*, Irma Thomas' *It's Raining*, Sahm's *Cowboy Peyton Place*, The Who's *Squeeze Box* and a very fine reading of Johnny Ace's *The Clock*. The pseudo-British facade notwithstanding, the Sir Douglas Quintet CD (*****) manifested Sahm's eclecticism, covering Bob Wills (*Time Changes Everything*), Jim Reeves (*Image Of Me*, Harlan Howard again), Gary US Bonds (*Quarter To Three*), The Supremes (*The Beginning Of The End*) and Dylan (*One Too Many Mornings*). Personally, I'm glad to have it just for *She's About A Mover*, one of the all-time great singles.

♦ If you want to turn someone on to Cajun or Conjunto, get an instant radio library or line up a quick fix, the 15 track Cajun and 18 track Tex-Mex compilations, from the back catalogs of, respectively, Swallow and Hacienda, are little jukeboxes packed with goodies. The 'Kings' (*****) are Nathan Abshire, Balfa Brothers, Horace Trahan, Paul Daigle, Boozoo Chavis, Vin Bruce, Beausoleil, Belton Richard, DL Menard and Camey Doucet plus Zydeco tracks from John Delafosse and Clifton Chenier. The 'Taste' (*****) comes from Valerio Longoria, Steve Jordan, Ruben Vela, Santiago Jimenez, Los Campeones De Paul Ruiz, Janie C Ramirez, Los Arcos/Hermanos Peña, Rene Joslin y Los Favoritos, Grupo Badd, Jerry & The Ruf-Nex, Tony De La Rosa, Los Terribles Del Norte, Cabelleros Del Norte and Linda Escobar. Neither are quite the collections I personally would have put together if Floyd Soileau and Roland Garcia let me loose in their archives, but they still ain't half bad.

♦ One area in which Music Club does economize is liner notes. For the price, you sure don't get an Arhoolie-style operator's manual. JC

DEKE DICKERSON & THE ECCO-FONICS

MORE MILLION SELLERS

(Hightone *****)

Some months ago, I took a local journalist to task for complaining about fake hillbillies from Chicago on the grounds that Austin has plenty of its own, but it has to be said that there's an abundance, even a superfluity, of retro hillbilly music, to the point where it's getting to be somewhat tiresome. This, however, is not a problem with Deke Dickerson's schizoid hillbilly bop, a melange of rockabilly, country, jump blues, rock & roll, R&B, ballads, surf intro and beat poetry. Apart from anything else, he comes by it more or less honestly as both he and his former Dave & Deke Combo partner Dave Stuckey, are originally from Missouri, where Dickerson played in Untamed Youth. Also, the Mosrite double-neck guitarist's proved his abiding commitment to the music, publishing a Joe Maphis newsletter (*Flyin' Fingers*), running a label, Ecco-Fonic, that's put out singles and albums by, among many others, Jimmy Bryant, and producing a multi-CD retrospective of 50s Missouri hillbilly label Jan. In short, he walks the walk, acknowledged as the leading figure of the LA hillbilly scene. This follow-up to last year's *Number One Hit Record*, again featuring Comets' saxman Joey D'Ambrosio, steel guitarist Jeremy Wakefield, and Big Sandy pianist Carl Sonny Leyland, plus X guitarist Billy Zoom and fiddler Brantley Kearns, also has three guests whose presence alone demonstrates that Dickerson is a man to be reckoned with. The album is introduced by Billy Barty, the 'little person' whose movie career, including Elvis' *Roustabout* and *Harum Scarum*, has spanned 60 years, and is closed with a rewrite of the *Beverly Hillbillies*' theme done by Jerry Scoggins, the voice on the original. In between, Dickerson duets *You're My Cadillac* with 82-year old Hadda Brooks, 1940s singer and pianist once known as 'Queen of the Boogie,' but now all but forgotten (except by Dickerson). Not only does Dickerson have the music in his bones, he clearly has a whole lot of fun playing it, and his enthusiasm and enjoyment make this enormously enjoyable. Opening with Earl King's *Let The Good Times Roll*, and Lieber & Stoller's *The Hatchet Man*, Dickerson, his band and guests romp through Joe Maphis' *Rockin' Gypsy*, a Nervous Norvus rewrite, *My Name Is Deke*, Warren Smith's *So Long I'm Gone*, an 'unknown' jump blues, *Mean Son Of A Gun* and The Rebel Rousers' *Red Headed Woman*, along with a clutch of originals, notably *Nightmare Of A Woman*, featuring Zoom, and Dickerson/Leyland's crack-up *I Think You Gotta Pay For That*. Also, there's an unlisted track, Dickerson's Les Paul/Mary Ford style *It's A Beautiful Day*, which was in the movie *Election* but didn't make it on to the soundtrack album. JC

DANNY BARNES AND HIS OFT MENDED RAIMENT

(Minner Bucket *****)

Question I have to ask myself is, would I have any use for this album if it wasn't by a man I know to be a remarkable musician and songwriter? Now living in Washington State, Barnes seems to have got into gadgetry in a big way and his solo album bears only one credit apart from the 8 song titles (*Flat Head In A Phillips World*, *If You Would Die Then I Could Eat*, *I'm Not In The Swiss Army*, *I Just Have The Knife*, etc), "I played/programmed everything." You could call this experimental or just plain weird, but its redeeming features are that the inner working of Barnes's mind, as revealed here, are riveting, and his approach, using materials to hand like messages on his answering machine, somehow manages to combine high tech with down home. Whether there's any market for front porch avant-garde music is another question altogether. JC

POOR LITTLE KNITTER ON THE ROAD A TRIBUTE TO THE KNITTERS

(Bloodshot *****)

Now here's a problem. If I take time to explain who The Knitters were, will you all be drumming your fingers and thinking, "We know this already, Conquest, get on with it"? Briefly though, The Knitters was an acoustic version of LA punk legends X, with Dave Alvin supplementing Billy Zoom on guitar, that made one LP, *Poor Little Critter On The Road*, in 1985, featuring covers of their folk and country heroes with traditionalized versions of X songs by Exene Cervenka and John Doe. In short, this is a tribute album to what was essentially a tribute band, a very Bloodshotian concept. The LP tracks have been parcelled out among friends and associates of the label, Melissa Swingle (the original title track), The Sadies with Freakwater's Catherine Irwin (the Osborne Brothers' *Walkin' Cane*), Whiskeytown (Merle Haggard's *Silver Wings*), Ground Speed with Nora O'Connor (The Carter Family's *Poor Old Heartsick Me*), Robbie Fulks, with Rob Gjersoe on guitar (Alvin & Doe's *The Call Of The Wreckin' Ball*), The Handsome Family (The Delmore Brothers' *Trail Of Time*), 99 Tales (Karl & Harty's *Baby Out Of Jail*) and Devil In A Woodpile with Jane Baxter Miller (Leadbelly's *Rock Island Line*), while the Cervenka & Doe material is handled by Kelly Hogan & The Rock*A*Teens (the standout *Someone Like You*), The Blacks (*The New World*), The Old 97s with Doe himself on vocals (*Cryin' But My Tears Are Far Away*) and Anna Fermin (*Love Shack*). Additionally, providing context, there's a track by The Knitters themselves, Doe's *Why Don't We Try Anymore*. It's difficult now, thanks in no small part to Bloodshot, to remember the mutual loathing, across the board, that once divided punk and country, and the label will be the first to tell you that The Knitters, by ignoring that divide, inspired their vision of 'Insurgent Country.' The original album is available on CD, but it's worth having both because this one really grows on you. JC

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JOHN THE REVELATOR

Big apologies to **Texicalli Grille**, **Jovita's** and, of course, **Mr Ponty Bone** himself, for last month's back page ad disaster. In theory, the concept, putting the birthday greetings etc over Ponty's picture should have worked, but, as you may have noticed, sure didn't. I've only tried to get fancy with graphics a couple three times and it's always a disaster—there's a good reason why I concentrate on words rather than images. Anyway, sorry guys, next time I'll farm the work out to someone who knows what they're doing.

♦ Ponty's birthday show, by the way, was a blast, with a monster turnout, more people than I've seen at Jovita's since we got married there. Some of the faces in the crowd indicate the esteem in which the man is held. Two of them abandoned their own clubs to be there, though **Steve Voorhies** only had to pop round the corner from **Shaggy's**, but **Denny Johnson** left **Cibolo Creek Country Club** to its own devices on a Friday night. The big surprise, to everyone including Ponty, was **Wes McGhee**, who found out about the party only a couple of days beforehand and leapt onto a transatlantic flight to be present.

♦ Couple of other things to tidy up from last month. Making a throwaway remark about **Joe Ely**, I completely spaced out that he has, in fact, been on an indie label, making a couple of albums for **Hightone** between stints at **MCA**. **Hightone** had an Austin rep when they came out and I was in the doghouse with her because she was a big buddy of **Sue Foley's**, so she wouldn't give me review copies of **Hightone** albums and I've never really registered Ely's as part of the canon. Years later, the rep's then boyfriend told me that when she was raging about one of my **Foley** reviews, he said, "But, Sally, he's right. Sue can't sing," and she broke up with him on the spot. She wouldn't even speak to me for some years but last time I saw her had softened up because she was getting out of the music business, though I didn't see going to college to study herpetology as exactly a clean break.

♦ Also, though without conscious intent, I insensitively stereotyped **Raoul Hernandez** by referring to him as 'Raul.' There is, of course, absolutely no reason why someone with an Hispanic surname shouldn't have a French first name. Or write gobbledygook in English, come to that.

♦ Which reminds me, from time to time over the years I've drawn your attention to some of the more ludicrous pronouncements of people I regret having to call colleagues in this music writing business. It never ceases to amaze me how many people are willing to display their ignorance and/or stupidity in public, or how many editors are willing to print their crap and even pay them for it. At one time, early on, I considered making the title of a one-off roundup of local idiocies, *Fish In A Barrel*, that of a regular column, God knows, there'd never be any shortage of material. However, I think I may now be in a position to bestow the **3CM Dumber Than Dirt Music Writer of the Decade/Century/Millennium Award**. The winner is one **Matt Hanks** for a line in his review of **Richard Buckner's Bloomed** in the July/August (#22) issue of *No Depression* (page 90 should you want to check). If you're an admirer of, let's say, **Townes Van Zandt**, **Terry Allen**, **Guy Clark**, **Butch Hancock** or **Ray Wylie Hubbard**, you might ought to sit down while you're reading this. OK, ready? "The ages of 16-21 are the prime years for songwriterly musings." The more I look at this sentence, the more amazed I am that **Hanks** didn't notice there was something vaguely wrong with it when he wrote it or that *ND* editors **Peter Blackstock** and **Grant Alden** didn't check back to make sure he

really wanted to go on record with such a stupendously fatuous observation.

♦ Bad news for us, as we were just down the road, but sounding like a pretty good deal for them, **Old Settlers Music Festival** is leaving **Round Rock**. Next year (April 7th-9th 2000), they'll be at **Stone Mountain Event Center** on **Highway 290** in **Dripping Springs**. After a couple of years of supporting the Festival, and **Texas Folklife Resources' Accordion Kings**, **Round Rock** seems to have caught Austin's City Council's who gives a shit about music? attitude, but this apathy hasn't, so far, reached as far as **Dripping Springs**, which is rolling out the welcome mat. One of the major attractions of the new site, for a Festival that, like **Accordion Kings**, has been hammered by rain in past years, is a 5000 seat covered arena. No announcements yet about the lineup, in fact they haven't even decided whether or not to change the name. One thing they're promising though is that the Festival will be easy to find.

♦ Which is a good deal more than can be said for the second, and last, **Americana/alt country Hill Country Hoedown**, which was also thought to have been in the **Dripping Springs** area, though exactly where remains something of a mystery. Only 50 paying customers managed to find it and **The Damns**, who were headlining, clearly seeing the writing on the wall, decided to spare the organizers the embarrassment of owing them money by not showing up. Though I would not, for a moment, suggest any causal connection, I've never heard a word from them, not even a **PSA**.

♦ As a timely footnote to the **Austin City Limits** anniversary book (see **Reviews**), I'm told that when **Emmylou Harris** and **Linda Ronstadt** were coming here on their recent tour, **Harris** suggested they set up an **ACL** taping, which **Ronstadt** nixed on the grounds that she never does local TV shows. Reminds me of one my alltime favorite movie lines, from **To Be Or Not To Be**, "What do you mean you've never heard of me? I'm world famous in **Poland**."

♦ In his biography of **Johnny Ace** (see reviews), **James Salem** runs through various speculations about **Ace's** death, such as his being wacked, for talking about signing to another label, by a **Robey**-hired hit man of whom the witnesses were so terrified they concocted the **Russian Roulette** story. However, he doesn't mention, even to discount, one I've heard more than once from people deeply involved in **R&B**, that he was actually shot by **Big Mama Thornton**. In this account, the witnesses covered for her on the grounds that, **Ace** being beyond question brown bread, there was nothing to gain by handing her over to the **Houston** police, who could be relied on to make the most cursory investigation of a fatality in which no whites were involved. Whether this story, not inherently incredible, is true or not, I have no idea, but I'm surprised **Ace's** biographer didn't come across it.

♦ However, **Salem** does have a whole bunch of other good stuff, such as the remark by **Duke/Peacock's** radio promoter, "We paid a lot of money on **Johnny Ace's Pledging My Love**. We paid black payola and we paid white payola. Only difference is that white payola cost more money." In a section on the daily humiliations of **Jim Crow** laws that impacted even the most famous black performers touring in the South, he relates how "**BB King** learned to use the 150-gallon tank on his bus as leverage to negotiate food service, but even that tactic could not protect a band member's sense of dignity as he watched a restaurant worker 'ceremoniously' break a coffee cup he had just drunk from."

DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL

From the wunnerful world of broadcast radio, we'll start with some local stuff. First off, **John Hauser**, host of Tuesday morning's *Country Roots* on **KOOP**, is getting another show. I've bitched and moaned about all the good stuff on **KOOP** being in the am, and the station seems to have twigged that no one listens to their dreary pm bullshit. Anyway, **Hauser's** been given a drive time slot, 4.30-5.30 every Monday (91.7fm), for *Keep It Country*.

♦ From **Jim Ellinger**, wearing his *Austin Airwaves* hat, comes a roundup of the results of Austin's non-commercial radio stations' Fall Pledge Drives, as provided to him by each station. **KMFA** (Classical Music For Austin): \$194,000 with 636 new members and 1401 renewals. **KAZI** (The Voice of Austin) did not conduct a Fall Pledge Drive this year. **KUT** (Public Radio from the University of Texas-Austin): \$332,341.29, a new record (Ellinger notes, "it's not clear who pledged \$1.29"). **KO.O.P.** ("Mr & Mrs Eduardo Vera's Personal Station"): "It's claimed that around \$25,000 was pledged but this figure should be taken with a grain of salt. Actual pledge amounts paid have traditionally been low at **KOOP** and much lower since the takeover of the station by the so-called 'Cadre.'"

♦ Ellinger also notes, "For those of you who can't get, or read, enuf' about public radio, the October 18th edition of *Current*, the bi-weekly "public telecommunications newspaper" outta' DC, has an excellent cover story about public radio and television in Austin, TX. The cover features a photo of C&W bottle blondes **The Dixie Chicks** at **Austin City Limits**. The story, penned by Austinite **Diana Claitor**, mentions many names familiar to public radio-types, including **Latino USA**, **WINGS**, yours truly, the controversy about the 'KOOP coup,' ("frustrated at **KOOP**, rebels helped start illegal microradio station **Free Radio Austin**"), **Austin City Limits**, **KAZI**, **KMFA**, **KUT** and more."

FAR CHARACTERS

FAR adds four new reporters this month. I can only apologize to **John Hauser** and **Rod Moag** for not roping them in from the start, as originally intended. Going national, as it were, I lost sight of these sterling characters right under my nose.

Paul Daly, **KSYM**, San Antonio, TX

Dan Ferguson, **WRIU**, Kingston, Rhode Island

John Hauser, **KOOP**, Austin, TX

Rod Moag, **KOOP**, Austin, TX

♦ Promotional dilemma corner: Recently **Marti Brom's** husband, **Bob Brom**, who's a Major in the Air Force Reserve, discovered that **FAR** reporter **Bill Conner**, of **KNBT**, **New Braunfels**, is an Air Force Sergeant. An interesting question, both in military law and ethics, is whether **Bob** can order **Bill** to play **Marti's** records.

♦ Last month, I mentioned that I technically qualify to be a **FAR** reporter myself, but this is no longer true as **Johnny Conqueso** has been taken off the air and will no longer be heard on the first Saturday of the month on **Third Coast Music Network**. On one level, I kinda want to vent about this, but then it's a subject of limited interest outside limited circles in San Antonio. I may come back to this. Or not. Right now I'm waiting to find out if two and a half years voluntary work earns me any thanks or I just have to make do with the peremptory fuck off.

♦ Hope you caught **Mr Rock 'n' Roll; The Alan Freed Story** on TV, but good as it was, it skipped the one thing that's made **Freed** an eternal hero of mine. While he was king of the New York City airwaves, he persuaded **WINS** to institute a formal policy of only playing the original (ie black) versions, and ignoring the poxy **Georgia Gibbs**, **Crew Cuts**, **Four Lads** and **Maguire Sisters** white covers.



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HELL YES, I'M ELITIST

Had I been paying attention, I'm sure I'd've learned much from my philosophy seminars at university, and be a better and wiser person for it. In practice, I've had to cobble my own philosophy together out of odds and ends, a ragtag school of thought in which the sayings of Lenny Bruce are a major feature. Of the three pillars which seem to relate most directly to music, I've already expounded on the relevance of Theodore Sturgeon's response to the criticism that 90% of science fiction is crap, "Yes, but then 90% of *everything* is crap" (different people remember the percentage as either 90% or 99%, probably reflecting their own degrees of cynicism). The second, the punchline of a Soviet-era Russian joke in which average is defined as "worse than last year, but not as bad as next year," encapsulates a universal truth about everything from the country charts to the Presidency to Austin traffic.

◆ Which brings us to the third, an observation I don't, I'm sorry to say, recall the source of, though it's stuck in my mind ever since I heard it some years ago. "McDonald's have sold a trillion hamburgers, which only proves that most people don't know shit about hamburgers." From the philosophical point of view, what seems like an obvious truth conceals layers of ambiguity: do the people who patronise McDonald's really think they're buying a good hamburger, or have they been brainwashed into thinking they're buying a good hamburger, can they tell the difference between good and bad or do they simply not care, or have they had good burgers and actually prefer the ersatz? However, from the practical (ie McDonald's) point of view, these distinctions don't matter much, as long as enough people head for the golden arches whenever they hear the bell ring.

◆ Thing is, you can rewrite that sentence, with appropriate amendments, about many things, Budweiser, for instance, or, bringing us back to music content, Garth Brooks or Ricky Martin, or Kenny G or any other of a host of stars who purport to play Country or Latin or Jazz or R&B or whatever. And you can ask pretty much the exact same follow-up questions. Though watered down music—"broadening the appeal," as the weasels put it—has always been with us, what bothers me about current trends, which seem irreversible, is that I lean more and more towards believing the answer to that last question is yes, most people actually do prefer the ersatz to the real thing.

◆ Maybe all the other genres are taking their cues from the success of light classical (I always feel sorry for those poor bastards who've mastered Beethoven but have to put on formals to play orchestral versions of Beatles' hits). In any event, the music business has discovered that by taking almost any genre and offering it in a homogenized, pasteurized, decaffeinated, fat-free, neutered, declawed, non-alcoholic, low tar version, you can make a bucket of money selling records to people who would never buy the genuine item. Country Lite, R&B Lite, Latin Lite, Jazz Lite, Blues Lite—music for people who don't really like music.

◆ Which wouldn't matter much except as rather loathsome sideshows but for the sales figures. However, I figure there's an upside to all this. Most of my life, you couldn't tell from the numbers whether a bestselling single (hey, I go way back) or album was good, bad or indifferent, you had to hear it for yourself to find out which, but now you can be absolutely certain that an anything that's selling big is unmitigated crap, which is kind of a relief. One reason I love the FAR chart is that it has nothing to do with the mainstream record buying public. Am I elitist? Hell, yes.

JC

PEE WEE KING's COUNTRY HOEDOWN

(Bloodshot/Soundies, double CD *****)

Having noted, over the years, a rather distressing correlation between good taste in music and a perennial shortage of folding stuff, you'll forgive me if I assume you don't tend to satisfy idle curiosity with Bear Family box sets. Which means there's a pretty good chance you've heard little, if any, of the music of Pee Wee King & The Golden West Cowboys. Though he was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame back in 1974, when only 15 other artists had been so honored, he is, far as I can see, the only one in it whose labels, specifically RCA, for whom he recorded between 1946 and 1961, his commercial heyday, have not seen fit to reissue any of their back catalog.

◆ Mind you, King seems, on the face of it, a pretty unlikely person to be in the Country Music Hall of Fame in the first place. I mean, looking down the roster, how many other Polish-American accordionists do you see? Come to that, how many other Polish-Americans or accordionists? Born (2/18/1914) and raised in Milwaukee, Frank Koczynski was the son of a polka bandleader, well-known in Wisconsin, learned to play harmonica, violin and concertina before settling on the accordion and formed his first band while he was still in high school, though, taking his cue from Polish-American star Wayne King, he went out as Frankie King & the Jesters. Mainly playing polkas and Big Band swing, The Jesters did enough country to get booked on the *Badger State Barn Dance*, modelled on Chicago's *National Barn Dance*.

◆ King's big break came in 1934 he was hired to back Gene Autry, several of whose band member had been injured in a car wreck, for a Midwest tour (probably pure coincidence, but Autry's manager, Joe Frank, one of the first great country promoters, and a fellow Hall of Famer, later became King's father-in-law). Frank then brought King down to Louisville, KY, for the final episodes of the *Gene Autry Show* before the star moved to Hollywood. Things get a bit hazy at this point, various sources offering different and conflicting accounts, but after a brief stay in Knoxville with The Log Cabin Boys, King moved back to Louisville, which was to be his home town for the rest of his life, and formed The Golden West Cowboys, very much in the Autry/Sons Of The Pioneers mold.

◆ In 1937, King & The Golden West Cowboys joined the Grand Ole Opry, where they remained for ten years. The only 'western' group on what was still a hillbilly show, King made an abiding impression on the development of country music. His band's snappy cowboy image and smooth, romantic style and repertoire were in marked contrast to the overalls, gingham dresses and folksy material of the down home crowd, and their well-rehearsed professionalism was distinctly unusual for the time. Also, though Wills fans may dispute this, it seems to have been King who introduced drums to the Opry stage, and even experimented with the then novel concept of the electric guitar.

◆ Though specific dates are elusive in the information available, King's vocalists during this period included Ernest Tubb, Eddy Arnold and Cowboy Copas, but the man who was with him during his real boom period, after he left the Grand Ole Opry in 1947, was Henry 'Redd' Stewart, the featured singer on these albums. As Bill C Malone observes in his liner notes, "running through the performances like a clear and refreshing stream is the soothing, honeyed sound of Redd Stewart... Few singers of that or any other country music era could equal the impeccable articulation, precise phrasing and smooth cadences that Stewart brings to these songs." Moreover, Stewart, who wrote the Ernest Tubb hit *The Soldier's Last Letter* while he was in the wartime Army, cowrote with King *The Tennessee Waltz*, a country hit for King himself, Cowboy Copas and Roy Acuff and then an enormous #1 crossover pop smash for Patti Page (later, of course, adopted by Tennessee as its state song), *Bonaparte's Retreat*, *Slow Poke*, *You Belong To Me* and *Silver And Gold*.

◆ The 51 tracks on this double CD were recorded about 1952 by Standard Radio Transcription Services for sale or lease to radio stations. Malone observes that though they were made in the era of both Hank Williams and Bill Monroe, there's no trace of either honky tonk (with the possible exception of *Doghound Blues*) or bluegrass in King's music. Closer in style and arrangements to Spade Cooley than Bob Wills, King's version of Western Swing shared their jazz, blues, swing, country and Tin Pan Alley influences while adding a dash of Midwestern polka rhythm and leaning far harder on Western (at least in the romanticized Hollywood oater sense) themes and material.

◆ Though King hit the charts ten times and had a death grip on both *Billboard* and *Cash Box's* Best Country Band titles from 1950 to 1955, the hits stopped coming after 1954. His TV show aired nationally until 1957 and in markets such as Cleveland and Chicago into the early 60s, but he gradually wound his activities down and retired from performing and recording in 1969. Today, he still with us though, sadly, suffering from Alzheimer's.

◆ That it should be Bloodshot that recognizes and reissues such a neglected giant seems to me the best argument yet for the future of alternative country. JC

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1st --- Tony De La Rosa • 1931 • Sarita, TX
 ----- Kinky Friedman • 1944 • Chicago, IL
 ----- Lyle Lovett • 1956 • Klein, TX
 ----- Kim Lenz • 1966 • San Diego, CA
 ----- 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
 4th --- Delbert McClinton • 1940 • Lubbock, TX
 5th --- Etta Moten • 1901 • San Antonio, TX
 ----- Roy Rogers • 1911 • Cincinnati, OH
 ----- Ike Turner • 1931 • Clarksdale, MS
 ----- Gram Parson • 1946 • Winterhaven, FL
 ----- Johnny Horton † 1960
 6th --- Stonewall Jackson • 1932 • Tabor City, NC
 ----- Frenchie Burke • 1933 • Kaplan, LA
 ----- Guy Clark • 1941 • Monahans, TX
 ----- Doug Sahm • 1942 • San Antonio, TX
 7th --- Little Bob • 1937 • Arnaudville, LA
 ----- AP Carter † 1960
 ----- Black Ace † 1972
 8th --- Ivory Joe Hunter † 1974
 11th - Sippie Wallace • 1898 • Houston, TX
 ----- Mose Allison • 1927 • Tippo, MS
 ----- Hank Garland • 1930 • Cowpens, NC
 ----- Dave Alvin • 1955 • Los Angeles, CA
 ----- Beau Jocque • 1957 • Basile, LA
 12th - Bukka White • 1906 • Houston, TX
 ----- Booker T Jones • 1944 • Memphis, TN
 ----- Neil Young • 1945 • Toronto, Canada
 ----- James Intveld • 19?? • Los Angeles, CA
 13th - Sonny Fisher • 1931 • Tyler, TX
 ----- Little Frankie Lee • 1941 • Mart, TX
 ----- Ray Wylie Hubbard • 1946 • Hugo, OK
 ----- Ruth Ann Logsdon • 19?? • New London, CT
 14th - Buckwheat • 1947 • Lafayette, LA
 ----- Joe Gracey • 1951 • Fort Worth, TX
 ----- Tex Edwards • 1954 • Dallas, TX
 15th - Wes Reeves • 1933 • La Mesa, TX
 ----- Clyde McPhatter • 1933 • Durham, NC
 16th - Bois-Sec Ardoin • 1916 • Duralde, LA
 ----- Earl Bollick • 1919 • Hickory, NC
 ----- Shirley Bergeron • 1933 • Church Point, LA
 ----- WC Clark • 1939 • Austin, TX
 ----- Albert Collins † 1993
 17th - Terry Noland • 1938 • Abilene, TX
 ----- Gene Clark • 1941 • Tipton, MO
 ----- Black Ardoin • 1946 • Duralde, LA
 18th - Hank Ballard • 1936 • Detroit, MI
 ----- Leeann Atherton • 1955 • Birmingham, AL

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
 ----- Dr John • 1941 • New Orleans, LA
 ----- Cecil Brower † 1965
 22nd - Whistling Alex Moore • 1899 • Dallas, TX
 ----- Hoagy Carmichael • 1899 • Bloomington, IN
 ----- Charles Mann • 1945 • Welsh, LA
 23rd -- Tyree Glenn • 1919 • Corsicana, TX
 ----- Spade Cooley † 1969
 ----- Big Joe Turner † 1985
 ----- Roy Acuff † 1992
 24th - Scott Joplin • 1868 • Bowie Co, TX
 ----- Johnny Degollado • 1935 • Austin, TX
 ----- Buster Pickens † 1964
 25th - Matthew Gee Jr • 1925 • Houston, TX
 26th - Curley Mays • 1938 • Maxie, LA
 ----- Bob Livingston • 1948 • San Antonio, TX
 27th - Werly Fairburn • 1924 • Folsom, LA
 ----- Jimi Hendrix • 1942 • Seattle, WA
 ----- Lotte Lenya † 1981
 ----- Charline Arthur † 1987
 28th - Cecil Brower • 1914 • Bellevue, TX
 ----- Bruce Channel • 1940 • Jacksonville, TX
 ----- Libbi Bosworth • 1964 • Galveston, TX
 ----- Wanna Coffman † 1991
 29th - Merle Travis • 1917 • Rosewood, KY
 ----- Mason Ruffner • 1952 • Fort Worth, TX
 ----- Joe Falcon † 1965
 ----- Ray Smith † 1979
 30th - Fred 'Papa' Calhoun • 1904 • Chico, TX
 ----- Walter Mouton • 1938 • Scott, LA
 ----- Guy Forsyth • 1968 • Denver, CO
 ----- Jim Patton • 1950 • Alton, IL
 ----- Jeannie Kendall • 1954 • St Louis, MO

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