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Feb. '14

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Ameripolitan Warrior

Dale Watson believes country music has abandoned its roots, and he's on a crusade. "One of my main complaints about Nashville," Watson says, "is that whenever you hear interviews with those guys – like Rascal Flatts or somebody – they say their influences are George Jones and Merle Haggard. That's a flat-out lie. If you're going to state your influences, be honest with yourself. You listen to Boyz II Men – you don't listen to Merle." In response, Watson has established a new genre, Ameripolitan, a collective that includes honky tonk, outlaw, Western swing and rockabilly. "Ameripolitan

is about keeping the roots connected," Watson says. "We got the roots out of country and planted 'em in Ameripolitan soil." To launch the genre, Watson has organized the first-ever Ameripolitan Music Awards, which will take place Feb. 18 in Austin. Funded via a GoFundMe campaign with no corporate support, the sold-out show will feature appearances by the Derailers, James Hand, Ray Benson and Rosie Flores. "This thing is taking off like a big dog,"



Watson says. "We've got radio stations doing Ameripolitan hours in Europe and Missouri and San Antonio."

Watson attributes much of the genre's success to accessibility via the Internet. "Video killed radio," he says, "but the Internet is saving country – that and satellite radio. It's saving Ameripolitan."



Original "Oh Pretty Woman" session player Wayne Moss (left) with Chris Isaak. (Ronald C. Modra)

Roy's Riff

The Musicians Hall of Fame honored Roy Orbison Jan. 28 by citing his 1964 No. 1 hit "Oh Pretty Woman" as winner of its Iconic Riff Award. Orbison's surviving sons accepted the award on behalf of their late father at the

ceremony, held at Nashville's historic Municipal Auditorium. Chris Isaak performed "Oh Pretty Woman" after opening the evening with a performance of Orbison's "Only The Lonely." Isaak was a friend of both Orbison and Barbara Orbison, Roy's widow. "Roy Orbison has been my idol since I was a kid," Isaak said. "When I met Roy years later we hit it off right away. It makes it a pleasure to be part of the folks honoring his work, because I believe every nice thing I'm saying." Musicians Hall of Fame founder Joe Chambers said the "Oh Pretty Woman" riff "gets your blood going from the very beginning," adding, "it's one of those things ... you hear it once and you remember it." Orbison wasn't the only Texan honored at the event, as Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble were inducted into the Hall, credited with igniting the '80s blues revival. ZZ Top was on hand to honor the inductees.

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Reznicek, Vogeler, Blair and Lewis (l-r) plan to hit the road 20 years on from their intense, swirling, guitar-rock debut.

Rubberneckers

The Toadies – consisting of Vaden Todd Lewis, Mark Reznicek (drums), Clark Vogeler (guitar/vocals) and Doni Blair (bass) – are embarking on a major U.S. tour in support of the 20-year anniversary reissue of *Rubberneck*, due out April 1. The nationwide trek kicks off at this year's SXSW and will have the band hitting notable venues across the country. "Twenty years ago," Lewis says, "I would never have imagined the album would have not only caught on, but held on for so long." The album went platinum – spending 49 weeks on the *Billboard* 200 – thanks in part to its single, "Possum Kingdom."

March Madness: SXSW '14

Texas acts are again a staple at this year's SXSW Music Festival. Here are some you won't want to miss.

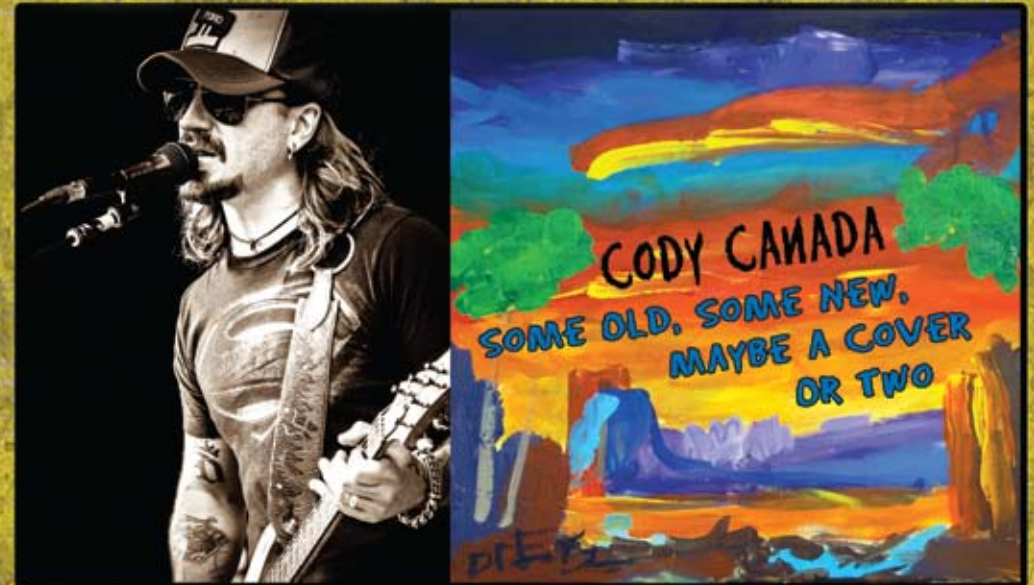
Wild Moccasins: Fans of Blondie and the Talking Heads will enjoy the high-energy sets of Houston new wave pop quintet Wild Moccasins. Co-singers Zahira Gutierrez and Cody Swann swap off-kilter observations about languishing love and social status over jangly guitar riffs and buzzing basslines. Known for their dynamic live shows, which often feature colorful clothing, confetti and balloons, the Moccasins spent the better part of 2013 touring with Athens psych-rockers Of Montreal and completing their sophomore full-length, *88 92*. "You don't plan what happens onstage," says Swann. "Every show leads somewhere different. We just know that we're going to go onstage and perform our asses off."



Max Frost: One day into his sophomore year at UT-Austin, Max Frost dropped out of the English program to pursue music. Eight months later, it became clear that he'd made the right choice. Super-catchy single "White Lies" set the music blogosphere ablaze with its nimble guitars, synths and soaring falsetto, and Frost secured a coveted record deal with Atlantic, all before he was even old enough to buy booze. He released his debut EP *Low High Low* last October following a slew of festival appearances and a tour with Gary Clark Jr. Frost's eclectic



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brand of progressive pop incorporates elements of electronica, hip-hop and soul, or, as Frost puts it, "It's influenced by everything I've ever heard."

Unlikely Candidates: Kyle Morris and Cole Male, the two frontmen of Fort Worth rock quintet the Unlikely Candidates, met in the most unlikely of places: a juvenile detention center when they were both 14. When they ended up at the same high school later that year, the pair forged a musical partnership to explore their mutual love of gritty garage rock and British Invasion-styled pop. A decade and many band reincarnations later, it was their theatrical live shows that caught the attention of reps from Atlantic Records, and the Candidates released their debut EP, *Follow My Feet*.

Conner Youngblood: Dallas-based Conner Youngblood makes lush, modern, multilayered soundscapes that are equal parts dub-step, bluegrass and Bon Iver. Banjos, ukuleles, guitars, synths, echoey drum beats – Youngblood can play 'em all, and somehow integrate such seemingly disparate parts into a new and cohesive sound, all tied together by his warm, airy vocals.



Wild Party: San Antonio four-piece Wild Party delivers irresistibly danceable rhythms and catchy hooks galore in the vein of the Killers and the Strokes. Thrust into the spotlight early on, the band was offered the chance

news
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to support the Wombats on a whirlwind U.K. tour in 2010 after 19-year-old frontman Lincoln Kreifels had played a grand total of just two live shows.

David Ramirez: The Austin-based songwriter makes simple, smoldering folk with sparse production and carefully-crafted lyrics. "I grew up on nineties alternative radio," he confesses. "Then in college someone gave me a Ryan Adams record, which led me to discover artists like Bob Dylan. From those guys, I learned about the power of words and melody, and their ability to affect change in people." Ramirez has played hundreds of shows from Burlington, Vt., to San Diego, including a co-headlining tour with Noah Gundersen. His latest experimental folk EP is *The Rooster*.

Recommendations

Tuesday, 3/11: The Carper Family is at Stephen F's Bar, and Bruce Robison and Kelly Willis are at the Main on Sixth Street.

Wednesday, 3/12: Billy Joe Shaver is at Shotguns, Wild Party at Bar 96, and Folk Family Revival at the Hilton Garden Inn.

Thursday, 3/13: Catch Aisha Burns in the Victorian Room at the Driskill, Eliza Gilkyson at the Saxon Pub, Mother Falcon at the Central Presbyterian Church, and the Mastersons at the Velveeta Room.

Friday, 3/14: Enjoy the *Texas Music* Reader Appreciation Party at Scholz Garten.

Saturday, 3/15: BettySoo is at the Central Presbyterian Church, while Shakey Graves plays at the Holy Mountain Backyard, and David Ramirez takes the stage on the 18th floor of the Hilton Garden Inn. Colin Gilmore plays a set at Shotguns, and Mike Stinson takes on the Continental Club.

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was Little
Nashville

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Kevin Russell and Shinyribs play Friday, March 14, at Joe Jimmy's.

RIO FRIO FEST
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www.riofriofest.com

Ask anyone who's attended Rio Frio Fest: it's a Texas thing. So if you're seeking a vacation a few hours down the road from San Angelo, here's a festival that features some of the most entertaining acts in Texas music. The week-long celebration embodies the different musical styles of the Lone Star State, with performances by Randy Rogers Band, Shinyribs, Josh Abbott Band, Kevin Fowler, Turnpike Troubadours, Crooks, Spazmatics, William Clark Green, American Aquarium, Rockoholics, John D. Hale, Zane Williams, Kiss Destroyer and People's Choice. When it comes to lodging, you can stay right on the Frio River, at the Concan Golf Course, near the legendary swimming hole or even right next to the concerts and activities. Camping and RV sites are available as well. And while you're visiting, you can take part in South Texas experiences like hog sackin', chicken bingo, washer tournaments, calf fries, crawfish boils and more. Festival passes and single-day tickets are available.

FEBRUARY

21-22

Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering

Sul Ross State University
Alpine
www.texascowboypoetry.com

23-3/2

Charro Days Fiesta

Downtown Brownsville
www.charrodaysfiesta.com

28-3/2

North Texas Irish Festival

Fair Park
Dallas
www.ntif.org

MARCH

1-16

Star of Texas Fair & Rodeo

Travis County Expo Center
Austin
www.rodeoaustin.com

13-16

Best Little Cowboy Gathering in Texas

Fayette County Fairgrounds
La Grange
www.bestlittlecowboygathering.com

14

Texas Music Reader Appreciation Party

Scholz Garten
Austin
www.txmusic.com

23-24

SpringFest

Historic Old Town Spring
www.winefestoldtownspring.com

28-30

Outlaws & Legends Music Fest

The Back Porch of Austin
Abilene
www.outlawsandlegends.com

new releases

Jan. 21	Ray Benson	<i>A Little Piece</i>	Bismieux
Jan. 21	Jason Eady	<i>Daylight and Dark</i>	Old Guitar
Jan. 21	Joe King Carrasco	<i>Rucca</i>	Anaconda
Jan. 21	Chase Gassaway	<i>Certain Circles</i>	Self-Released
Jan. 21	Hard Working Americans	<i>Hard Working Americans</i>	Melvin
Jan. 28	Waylon Jennings	<i>The Box Set Series</i>	Sony Legacy
Jan. 28	George Jones	<i>The Epic Years: The Box Set Series</i>	Sony Legacy
Feb. 4	Wild Moccasins	<i>88 92</i>	New West
Feb. 4	Eric Paslay	<i>Eric Paslay</i>	Universal
Feb. 4	Scott Biram	<i>Nothin' But Blood</i>	Bloodshot
Feb. 10	John Lockhart	<i>Guilty Pleasure</i>	Self-Released
Feb. 11	Erin Ivey	<i>Whisper of the Moon</i>	Self-Released
Feb. 11	Curtis Grimes	<i>Our Side of the Fence</i>	AMP
Feb. 11	Robert Ellis	<i>Lights From the Chemical Plant</i>	New West
Feb. 18	Clay McClinton	<i>Bitin' at the Bit</i>	Red Chili
Feb. 18	Cody Jasper	<i>Cody Jasper</i>	Self-Released
Feb. 25	Jeremy Steding	<i>My Own American Dream</i>	Smith
Feb. 25	St. Vincent	<i>St. Vincent</i>	Republic
Mar. 1	The Tontons	<i>Make Out King and Other Love Stories</i>	Self-Released
Mar. 4	Jeff Whitehead	<i>Bloodhound Heart</i>	Self-Released
Mar. 4	Kevin Fowler	<i>How Country Are Ya?</i>	Self-Released
Mar. 4	Eli Young Band	<i>10,000 Towns</i>	Universal
Mar. 11	Midnight River Choir	<i>Fresh Air</i>	Smith
Mar. 11	Don Williams	<i>Reflections</i>	Sugar Hill
Mar. 18	Eliza Gilkyson	<i>The Nocturne Diaries</i>	Red House
Mar. 18	Richard Buckner	<i>Bloomed (Reissue)</i>	Merge
Mar. 18	Lost & Nameless Orchestra	<i>Empty Space</i>	Self-Released
Apr. 15	Rodney Crowell	<i>Tarpaper Sky</i>	New West

Jaime Cortinas

Coyotes & Quail

Self-Released



Austin-area songwriter Jaime Cortinas' promising debut record sort of doubles as a snapshot of his home amongst the under-the-radar pickers that converge

around San Marcos' venerated Cheatham Street Warehouse: there's Forest Wayne Allen on production duties, Paul Eason on guitar, Kris Smith kicking in the one song Cortinas didn't pen himself, even a little heavyweight support from Reckless Kelly's Cody Braun on fiddle and mandolin. It all gels nicely, overachieving well beyond its modest budget on the strength of the songs and the driving country-rock arrangements. Cortinas' voice is a little on the muddy and inflexible side, but it does give some masculine heft to the outlaw tales that stand out as the record's most compelling numbers ("You & Me," "Flyin'") as well as the cheerier, catchier likes of "Dancing On The Moon" and "Loretta." It's not a stumble-free affair, bogging down a bit in the middle with a spoken-word bit and a meandering waltz, but it is an intriguing boot in the door for yet another promising Hill Country balladeer.

– MIKE MESSICK

Brian Beattie

Ivy & the Wicker Suitcase

Self-Released



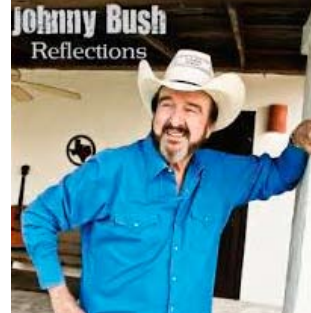
Part musical, part storybook, Austin-based producer, songwriter and bassist Brian Beattie's latest project offers something for kids and grown-ups alike, taking listeners on a surreal sonic

adventure à la *Alice in Wonderland* or *The Wizard of Oz* with songs, sounds, dialogue and a book of intricate black-and-white illustrations. The tale begins in 1938 Austin as 10-year-old Ivy Wire (voiced by SXSW songbird Grace London) strums her guitar and sings to the birds. One day a flash flood washes Ivy into the Underworld, where she meets a host of quirky characters brought to life by local musicians. Will Sheff of Okkervil River is an underworld bureaucrat who's always "busy, busy, busy with efficient repetitions," Daniel Johnston manages to be both devilish and pitiful in the howling "Nobody Understands Me," and Bill Callahan intones the words of the Supreme Deity in his warm, growling timbre. Some themes are darker than your usual children's fare, but the treatment is tender, thought-provoking and always imaginative. James Hand's doleful rendition of "Sorry Won't Mend the Trouble I Made" paints a realistic portrayal of a flawed father figure, while channeling classic country crooners like Hank Williams. But it's London who shines in her starring role, braving musical styles from psychedelic rock to sunny pop and cabaret as the story progresses, showcasing vocal chops well beyond her years. – ALLIE ESSLER

Johnny Bush

Reflections

Heart of Texas



For a hot minute in the late '60s and early '70s, Johnny Bush was, as the song goes, "all the rage in Paris, San Antonio and Dallas, and every honky-tonk and dancehall in be-

tween." Emerging from the shadow of mentors Ray Price and Willie Nelson, Bush was on the verge of a major national breakout when he began experiencing vocal problems, the result of a rare neurological condition affecting the larynx, making it difficult to speak, much less sing. *Reflections* contains a mix of previously unreleased recordings from earlier in his career and recent sessions co-produced by Justin Trevino. It's a tribute to Bush's vocal chops and the success of his medical treatment that it's difficult to tell which are which. Three tracks – Nelson's "A Moment Isn't Very Long" and Bush originals "Jealously Insane" and "I Can Feel You In His Arms" – appeared in different versions on Bush's long-lost 1967 debut, *Sound of a Heartache*. If you've never heard these songs, you need to; this is the true essence of Texas honky-tonk. Among the more recent recordings is a note-perfect cover of George Jones' "She Thinks I Still Care," and two duets with Bush fan Randy Rogers – Jim Lauderdale's "All the Rage in Paris," previously covered by the Derailers, and "Troubadour," the title track of George Strait's 2008 album. Make no mistake: this old troubadour still sings rings around most of the young ones. – RICK MITCHELL

The Bigsby

Good Will Suitcase

Self-Released



Built up from the same roots-rock bones as several decades of worthy, soulful guitar-slinging bar bands – alternately reminiscent of everyone from Little Feat to Stoney LaRue

to the Georgia Satellites, without ever settling for an imitation of anyone in particular – DFW barroom rockers the Bigsby's give it their all on their latest record. It takes a few songs to properly catch fire, with the lyrical inventiveness finally catching up to the band's chops around the time the hip-shaking "Can't Keep Me Waiting" blends into the stripped-down resonator rattle of "The One." There's a Ryan Adams cover in the mix for good measure, well calibrated for Alex Smith's tuneful tenor wail, but the originals are just as catchy and compelling once the album really starts to click. It's already a crowd-pleaser, but once it grabs that second gear of songcraft it gives you a reason to give it another spin after the crowd's all gone. – MIKE MESSICK

Q&A David Grissom

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Even in a town full of super sidemen like Austin, guitarist David Grissom stands tall with a career that runs from Joe Ely to John Mellencamp to Storyville to the Dixie Chicks. He's also contributed his signature bad-assery to numerous Nashville productions, including the original breakout album by Chris Knight.

These days, Grissom also produces records of his own. His fourth, *How It Feels To Fly*, features a half-dozen studio cuts with his ace band – Scott Nelson on bass, Bryan Austin on drums and Stefano Intelisano on keys – and another half-dozen recorded live at his regular haunt, the Saxon Pub in Austin.

We caught up with Grissom as he was preparing for his regular Monday gig at the Saxon.

What's the difference between being music director for, say, the Dixie Chicks versus your own band?

The sideman role is all about making the artist happy. With the Chicks, my job was to speak for the band and convey their thoughts and/or requests at the same time. That was a massive operation with everything happening on a very tight schedule, so there was a certain degree of diplomacy involved that had nothing to do with how well I played my instrument. With my band, I write the material and front the band, but I try to play to everyone's strengths. The result of not trying to direct or control everything is that the band has morphed into its own unique thing, better than what I initially envisioned, stylistically straddling a lot of territory in a cool way.

When you're music director for the Chicks, you don't get "to paint a new painting" every night as an artist. How do you deal with the repetitive nature of gigs like that?

It's pretty much the same every night. On the last tour, I had to work hard to stay focused. It can be like driving down the highway and suddenly realizing you've gone 50 miles without noticing. They were cool about letting us have some freedom with our solos, but so much of a show that size has to be the same every night to accommodate the lighting guys, etc.

You were there when Natalie Maines made her inflammatory remarks. Did you realize what was happening immediately?

It was London, my first full gig. We were staying in a Hyde Park Hotel where there were massive anti-war demonstrations every day – a very different perspective. Remember, we hadn't invaded yet. The remark she made was offhand, and not said in a mean-spirited way. But yes, I had a bad feeling the minute I heard it. Little did I know.



When during the Maines brouhaha did you realize, "I need a new gig"?

I never really felt that way. It was an amazing experience to be at ground zero of this debate that became a national conversation. It was weird to have bomb-sniffing dogs in the dressing room every day, though.

When you came to the Joe Ely band in 1985, he was retooling his show. What did he tell you about your role and his expectations?

Joe basically encouraged me to do what I do, and not listen to anyone who thought I wasn't "traditional" enough or not as good as Jesse Taylor – all that negative crap. He believed in me. He gave me the freedom to find my style, he taught me about dynamics, about pacing a show, and, above all, always kicking ass even if we were on the 10th night in a row in some out-of-the way, freezing-cold town in Europe with 10 people in the audience.

You've road-dogged the world. What were your biggest thrill moments?

The Joe Ely experience – the opportunity to develop my style on great songs, the chance to learn from a true artist, the wonderful feeling of being in a band of brothers, seeing the world – that entire six-year tenure was

the highlight. But I'd also list playing with the Allman Brothers for three weeks, playing on the last three Buddy Guy records, and playing with my current band.

What were you aiming for on your new album?

I never know until I'm about halfway in, then the bigger picture starts to show itself. I love playing guitar and I love writing songs, so even though I'm a marketing guy's nightmare, that's what I do. At the end of the day I tried to strike a balance between not making a record just for guitar players, yet having plenty of guitar on there. The gigs with my band the last two years influenced the sound and chemistry.

Keith Wyatt of the Blasters recently stated that these are tough times for guitarists because outside of country music, guitar isn't much used as a lead instrument anymore, especially in pop music. What's your take on "becoming a guitar player" at the moment?

Do it while you're young. Find out if it's just something that sounds like fun or is something in your blood that you absolutely *have* to do. You either do this or you don't, if that makes any sense. They don't teach you that on *America Idol*. There's still plenty of room out there for guitar players. Things change – they always have and always will – so keep moving.

Going forward, will your emphasis be on your own projects or will you tour as a sideman?

I love making my own records and playing with my band. I'd love to take it to another level where I could afford to really take it on the road. But I still love making records, period, and I want to continue doing that with other artists as much as possible. The road? I'd rather do it with my band, but you never know who might call.

– WILLIAM MICHAEL SMITH