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Good Ol' Honky-Tonk Days



Waylon and Willie brought their brand of outlaw country to San Bernardino, Calif., in '83. (Courtesy Shout! Factory)

A new CD/DVD series lets fans relive two country music legends in their heyday. While *Waylon Jennings Live at the US Festival - 1983* arrives at the 10-year mark of Jennings' death, *Willie Nelson Live at the US Festival - 1983* shows that time has left Texas' favorite outlaw relatively unscathed. The performances were recorded on "Country Day" of the US Festival in San Bernardino, Calif., one of the most memorable music festivals of all time, funded and organized by Steve Wozniak of Apple fame. Both songwriters deliver more than 20 songs apiece, with highlights including Jennings' "Don't You Think This Outlaw Bit's Done Got out of Hand" and "Luckenbach,

Texas (Back to the Basics of Love)" and Nelson's "Whiskey River" and "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain." At one point, headliner Nelson welcomes Jennings for a couple duets, including the bone-rattling "Bloody Mary Morning." In November, Shout! Factory released the DVD concert, but the CDs will drop Feb. 28.

Hardcore Reunion

For loyal fans of At the Drive-In, a peculiar tweet from the band's Twitter account proved cause for celebration: "AT THE DRIVE-IN will be breaking their 11-year silence THIS STATION IS ... NOW ... OPERATIONAL," it read, implying that the band is reuniting. Before its 2001 breakup, the El Paso post-hardcore outfit was known for its energetic live performances.

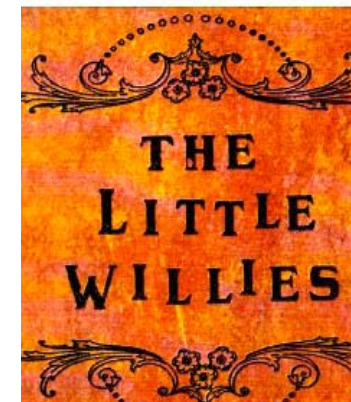


The El Paso band took the national punk rock scene by storm in the '90s. (Courtesy www.myspace.com/atdi)

Its breakup was attributed to vocalist Cedric Bixler-Zavala's desire to experiment beyond punk rock. Following the split, band members Jim Ward, Paul Hinojos and Tony Hajjar began Sparta, while Bixler-Zavala and Omar Rodriguez-Lopez formed The Mars Volta. For years, the band has hinted at its potential reunion as they've patched up old wounds, but with a confirmed April appearance at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, Calif., At the Drive-In has officially hit the play button after an 11-year pause.

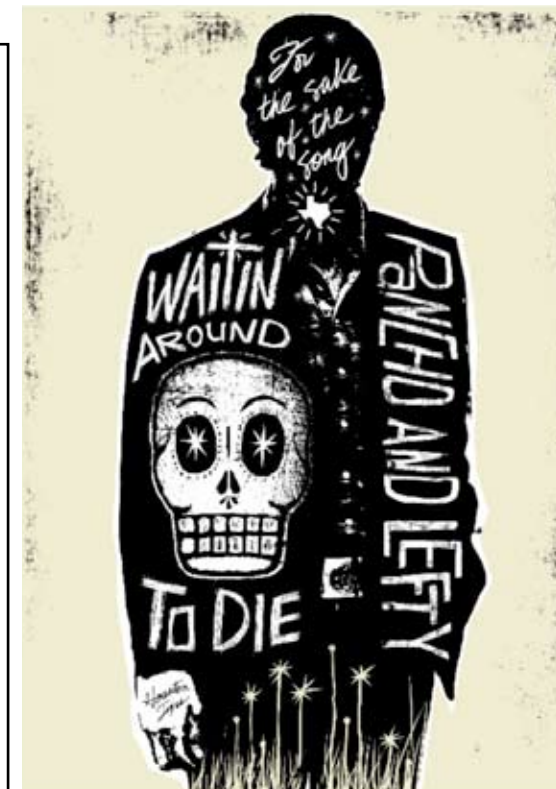
Country Sensibilities

If you hadn't guessed it by listening to *For the Good Times*, the Little Willies' January release, Norah Jones' country music taste is spot on. The jazz chanteuse and Little Willies vocalist recently revealed her top five Texas country songs: "Permanently Lonely" by Wil-



Cindy Walker. Whether in her solo work or singing with the Little Willies, Jones has recorded all of them except for Sly's.

El Townes Van Zandt



A print from Carlos Hernandez's *Day of the Dead Rock Stars* series. Read about Hernandez and his art in our upcoming spring issue. (Courtesy of www.carloshernandezart.com)

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Paul's Campaign Success?

Presidential candidate Ron Paul has an unexpected knack for promoting musicians – or so it might seem. On Dec. 28, *American Idol* star and Fort Worth native Kelly Clarkson announced on Twitter, “I love Ron Paul. ... If he wins the nomination for the Republican Party in 2012, he’s got my vote.” In the following days, her 2011 album, *Stronger*, saw a four-fold jump in Amazon.com sales. Paul referenced the phenomenon in a pre-caucus Iowa speech, saying “[Our] supporters were so enthusiastic ... they went out and bumped up sales of her record.” So can Clarkson credit the boost to Paul? Well, that’s open to interpretation. *Billboard* instead attributes the spike to a well-timed Amazon price drop on the digital download. For the time being, it looks like Paul is sticking to the campaign trail and not trying out a new gig as music publicist.

In Memory



Country singer Billie Jo Spears passed away Dec. 14 outside her home in Vidor, Texas, a month before her 74th birthday. Though the Beaumont native tried her hand at Nashville in the '60s, her earthy voice eschewed the

popular “countrypolitan” of the day. She was best known for the 1975 No. 1 hit, “Blanket on the Ground,” as well as “Mr. Walker, It’s All Over” and “If You Want Me.” Between 1969 and 1977, she climbed to the top 10 of the country music charts five times. Though her career ebbed in the '80s, her last album, *I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry*, was released in 2005.

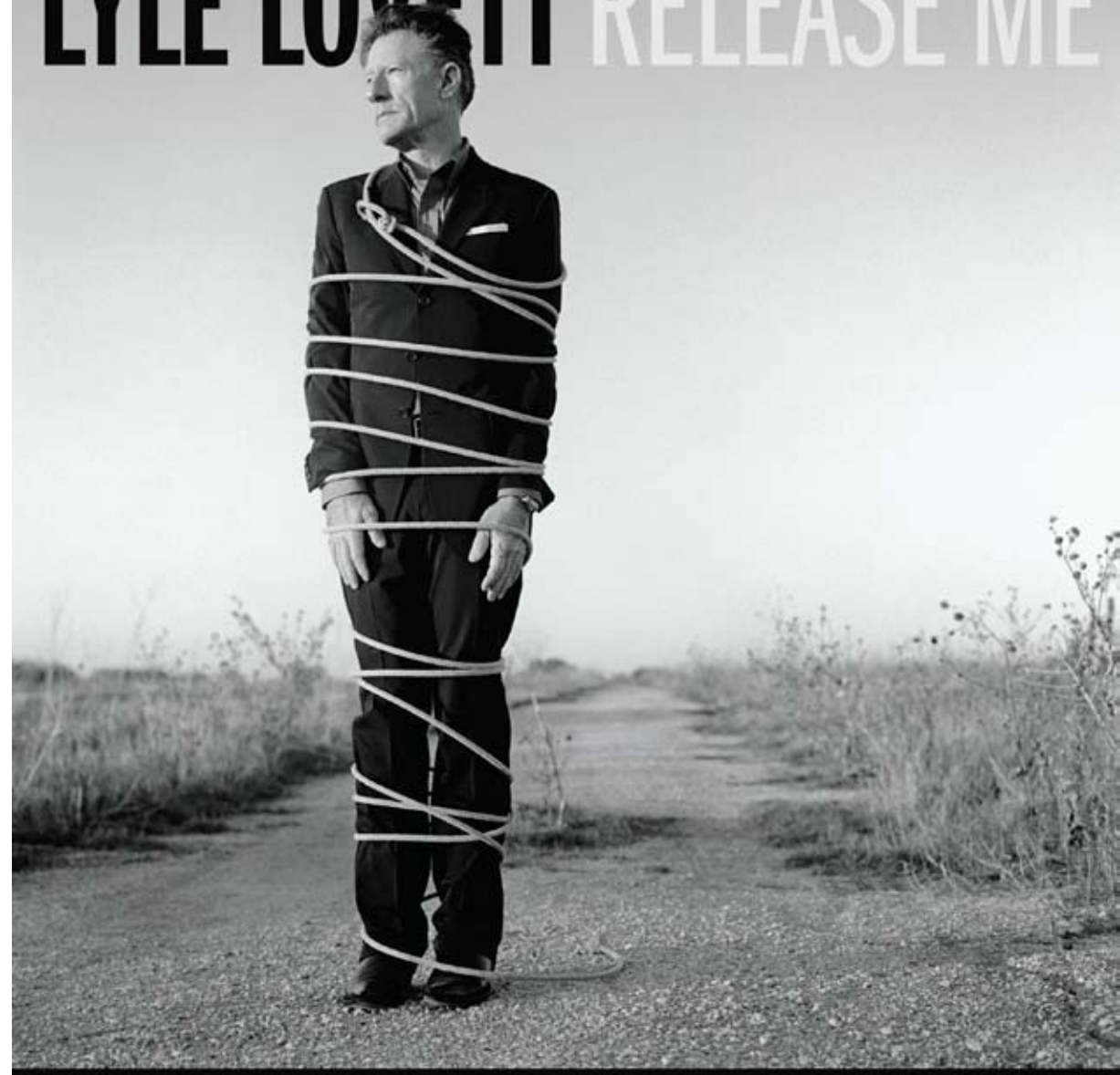
Terrifying Proposition

Might Miranda Lambert become America’s next prime-time star? The country songstress will make her acting debut on an upcoming episode of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. Lambert, whose album titles include *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and *Kerosene*, will portray an actress who claims to have been sexually assaulted by a reality-show producer. But if her character is anything like the narrator in “Gunpowder and Lead” – the song that won her *Esquire*’s nod as 2008’s “Terrifying Woman of the Year” – he’d better watch out. An air date has yet to be announced for the episode.

End of an Era

Austin was plagued with more than its fair share of venue closings at the end of 2011, with two particular closings leaving 6th Street a little less lively and a lot less loud. Much to the chagrin of Austin’s punk rock and metal enthusiasts, Emo’s 6th and Red River location has closed. “After nearly two decades as the definitive venue in a city that is known as the Live Music Capital of the World, Emo’s closed its doors last Friday, Dec. 30,” read a post on the venue’s blog. “Noise-rock pioneers Killdozer played before a packed house for nearly two hours, ringing in a stellar performance that paid just tribute to the Emo’s legacy.” The venue first opened in 1992 and will live on (though not in quite the same form) at its new 1,700-capacity location on Austin’s East Riverside Drive. Just two days earlier, Momo’s rocked Austin with a similar Facebook pronouncement: “It is with a heavy heart that I announce after 11 years Momo’s on 6th is closing,” wrote owner Paul Oveisi. “The building currently home to Momo’s is under construction and undergoing a large renovation. ... The [owner] is working with Momo’s to secure a new home.” So far, there have been no announcements, so for now, Austinites wondering about the fate of their well-loved rock and Americana venue will just have to wait.

LYLE LOVETT RELEASE ME



NEW STUDIO ALBUM INCLUDES: “ISN’T THAT SO,”

“RELEASE ME” FEATURING k.d. lang, “BROWN EYED HANDSOME MAN,”

AND “NIGHT’S LULLABY” FEATURING Sara AND Sean Watkins

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Back in the Saddle



(Photo Jordan Graber)

It's official: *Houston Press* music editor Chris Gray has a day to call his own. Nearly three months after the 36-year-old suffered a heart attack while riding the metro to work, the City of Houston declared Jan. 14 "Chris Gray Day." That day, Houston's Continental Club hosted a mini-festival that included a performance by Hayes Carll to raise funds for Gray's mounting medical bills. (A benefit for Gray the following night at Austin's Continental Club included performances by James McMurtry and the Gourds.) Autographed items

from Willie Nelson and Neil Young and recording time at SugarHill Studios were among numerous items and services auctioned or raffled off. Gray began working at the *Houston Press* in 2007 after more than a decade spent writing for the *Austin Chronicle*. A beloved fixture within the music community, he'll return to work this month.

Band of Steel

New Music USA recently awarded a 2012 music composition grant to Hank Hehmsoth, professor in the School of Music at Texas State University-San Marcos. The project-based grant has already enabled the first public performance of Hehmsoth's composition, *Carlos 'n' Charlie's* – which in 2010 received an award from Columbia University – during Austin's 15th Annual Inside Out Steelband Festival. Knights of Steel, from McCallum High School in Austin – one of the country's finest steel bands – will perform the piece April 17 at One World Theatre in Austin.

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(www.joshabbottband.com)

MARDI GRAS! GALVESTON
Uptown Entertainment District
February 10-21 • Galveston
www.mardigrasgalveston.com

Rich in history, Mardi Gras! Galveston will celebrate 101 years on the island in 2012. More than three million beads will be thrown at the celebration, and that's just the beginning of the elaborate parades, headliner performances, family events, feasting and other festivities that come with hosting Mardi Gras "island style." In total, Mardi Gras! Galveston will feature 26 concerts, 24 parades, 19 balcony parties and five masked balls. In fact, this year's festival has added a third stage to the mix. The Dubstep Dance-ateria Stage will feature local, regional and national DJs over four days, as well as a seven-hour laser-light show on Feb. 11. The addition of the laser show, DJ stage and the presence of live music on the adjacent Landshark Stage is certain to make the intersection at 21st and Strand another epicenter for entertainment. Musical acts include the Josh Abbott Band (above), Fred Andrews and Honeybrowne, Sam Sliva and the Good and Brandon McDermott. Due to the revival of a ticketed entertainment district, last year's event was an impressive success with increased attendance, making it one of the largest and safest Mardi Gras events on record. The 2012 event will likely be even bigger and better, providing plenty of reasons to consider joining the 300,000 attendees.

FEBRUARY

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Carnaval Brasileiro
Palmer Events Center
Austin
www.sambaparty.com

5-12

Cayamo Cruise 2012
Miami to Cayo Levantado,
St. Maarten & St. Barts
www.cayamo.com

8-11

**Texas Music Educators
Association Clinic/Convention**
Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center
San Antonio
www.tmea.org/conventions/2012

11

Hug-In & Valentine Ball
Luckenbach Dance Hall
Luckenbach
www.luckenbachtexas.com

12

54th Annual Grammy Awards
Staples Center
Los Angeles
www.grammy.com



Gary P. Nunn headlines the 37th Annual Hug-In and Valentine Ball in Luckenbach. (www.garypnunn.com)



Austin's Acadêmicos da Ópera, a group of more than 100 drummers, performs at Carnaval Brasileiro Feb. 4. (www.austinsambaschool.com)

Gospel Brunch with a Texas Twist
Gruene Hall
Gruene
www.gruenehall.com

16-19

Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas
Downtown Port Arthur
www.mardigras.portarthur.com

16-26

San Angelo Stock Show & Rodeo
San Angelo Coliseum
San Angelo
www.sanangelorodeo.com

17-19

Mardi Gras Upriver
Jefferson
www.mardigrasupriver.com

19-26

Charro Days Fiesta
Downtown Brownsville
www.charrodaysfiesta.com

25

Kenneth Threadgill Concert Series
Municipal Auditorium
Greenville
www.greenville-texas.com

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Inside the music of Texas

Winter 2012 / Issue 49
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Townes
VAN ZANDT

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OF THOSE
HE INFLUENCED

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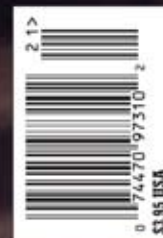
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BY TOM BUCKLEY



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Boxcar Bandits
Live at Dan's Silverleaf
Flight

Dan's Silverleaf is one of Denton's coolest music venues, so it's not surprising that one of Denton's coolest acts, the Boxcar Bandits, would record a live album there. But *Live at Dan's Silverleaf* is more than just some perfunctory live recording. In front of an audience is simply where this skunkgrass five-piece does its best work. From the spot-on cover parody of Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* to the final notes of the closing song, "Tall Cactus," there isn't an error to be found. And while some might think the cover indicative of some sort of hayseed hokum gone astray, the music will convince you otherwise. Playing with a ragged ferocity (but with a surprising sonic clarity), the Boxcar Bandits put everything they have into all 14 cuts. Highlights include "Whiskey Before Breakfast," "High and Lonesome" and "Green Room Rag." Ryan Williams writes the majority of the songs, but all the members contribute on a variety of instruments. Taken

together, this is one of those live albums that makes you wish you'd been there. And *Live at Dan's* is solid and engaging enough to make you feel like you really were.
- **DARRYL SMYERS**



The Pons
The Blackest Shine
Coup d'état

Pons frontman Thomas Mazzi already proved his pop chops with Austin's bygone Lalaland, which transitioned into the more adventurous current trio for 2008's *In the Belly of the Giant*. Their sophomore effort pushes those naturally melodic folds even further behind percussion-propelled bursts of up-tempo, if often conflicted and contorted, tunes. Songs like the opening title track and standout "Can't Get Through" assuage the darker sentiments with undeniably delectable catchiness like makeup lathered upon the tapestry of black-eyed portraits that stare back from the cover. Yet the Pons also seem to be fighting their own instincts as much as Mazzi's solipsistic lyrical lashings, often twisting songs out of their comfort zone just

new releases

Dec. 13	A Tribute to Guy Clark (various)	<i>This One's for Him</i>	Icehouse
Jan. 3	Fred Andrews and Honeybrowne	<i>This Side of Crazy</i>	Smith
Jan. 15	Lincoln Durham	<i>The Shovel [vs] the Howling Bones</i>	Rayburn
Jan. 17	Cory Morrow	<i>Live at Billy Bob's Texas</i>	Smith
Jan. 21	Brittany Shane	<i>Loud Nights on a Short String</i>	Painted Lady
Jan. 22	Befriend the Bears	<i>Before They Take Over</i>	Self-Released
Jan. 23	Tee-Double	<i>Goddess Galactic</i>	Kinetic Global
Jan. 24	Kirk Franklin	<i>The Essential Kirk Franklin</i>	Fo Yo Soul/Verity
Jan. 31	Ruthie Foster	<i>Let It Burn</i>	Blue Corn
Feb. 3	Eleven Hundred Springs	<i>Midway</i>	Self-Released
Feb. 7	Ben Kweller	<i>Go Fly a Kite</i>	Noise Company
Feb. 7	Josh Grider	<i>Live at Billy Bob's Texas</i>	Smith
Feb. 10	Nate Kipp	<i>The Holding Pattern</i>	Real McCoy
Feb. 13	Javier Chaparro and Salúd	<i>Tuyo</i>	Fable
Feb. 14	Gene Watson	<i>Best of the Best: 25 Greatest Hits</i>	Fourteen Carat
Feb. 14	Eisley	<i>Deep Space EP</i>	Equal Vision
Feb. 14	Granger Smith	<i>Live at the Chicken</i>	Self-Released
Feb. 21	The Freddie Steady 5	<i>1000 Miles</i>	Steady Boy
Feb. 28	Lyle Lovett	<i>Release Me</i>	Lost Highway
Feb. 28	Shellee Coley	<i>Where It Began</i>	Magnolia Red
March 6	Todd Snider	<i>Agnostic Hymns and Stoner Fables</i>	Aimless
March 13	Janis Joplin	<i>Live at the Carousel Ballroom 1968</i>	Columbia/Legacy

as they manage to strike the pop sweet pop, as with "The Future's Past" or hefty closer "Black Twin." Whether intentionally mirroring the album's internal struggles against itself or simply refusing to follow the natural melodic threads, *The Blackest Shine* unfortunately ultimately undermines itself more than allowing the flourishes to accentuate the core sound. - **DOUG FREEMAN**

Lew Card
Good Boy
Self-Released

Austin's Card, who's played mandolin for the last decade in multiple bands, has traveled the well-worn songwriter highway between Texas and Tennessee, and his debut features tunes steeped in the familiarity of comforts like good whiskey and John Prine records.



Joined by a self-described ragtag team of down-home players from a number of Austin bands, the talented Card offers mediations on love, loss and what exists in between in six songs that go down effortlessly.
- **CALISSA LECLERC**

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Will Johnson, far left, fronts Centro-matic. (Photo by Anna Webber)

Labeling Will Johnson a prolific artist is to miss the point of what makes his industrious work schedule so impressive. The Austin-based lead singer of one of *Texas Music's* 2011 Artists of the Year, Centro-matic, proffers an impressive body of music, but he does so in a spectacularly diverse and all-star manner. From producing albums for promising young acts to drumming for the ballyhooed Monsters of Folk to playing guitar on solo projects such as Patterson Hood and Craig Finn, Johnson seems to make friends as easily as he creates his unique brand of indie rock. Oh, he's a painter, too, whose work has hung in galleries around the country. Johnson is currently gearing up for a tour in support of Centro-matic's new album, *New Multitudes*, a collection of Woody Guthrie lyrics set to the arrangements of Johnson, Son Volt's Jay Farrar, Varnaline's Anders Parker and My Morning Jacket's Jim James. With a memorable year in the rear-view mirror – and a promising year ahead – Johnson spoke about his creative endeavors.

New Multitudes is a fascinating project. Your song, "VD City," has perhaps the most intriguing title on the record. What attracted you to that set of Guthrie's lyrics?

That song specifically seemed to come from a really dark place. Obviously, venereal disease had an even bigger stigma attached to it in those days and wasn't so easily treated, so it was an especially harsh set of lyrics for that time. When I first read the lyrics, they seemed to need full-on three- or four-part harmonies, like an old Roger McGuinn pop song, so I tried to do that. Because the lyrics are so dark, I wanted to make it into this sing-songy rock song. [Laughs]

Speaking of the lyrics, were you sent typed sheets, or did you have access to Guthrie's actual notebooks?

I received a priority mailer from Jay [Farrar] and it was filled with 18 to 20 pages of photocopied lyrics from the Guthrie archives, so the pages I looked at had Guthrie's handwriting – or was from some old, beat-up typewriter he used. There were math equations in the margins, coffee cup stains and little drawings here and there. That authenticity helped the urgency of the music writing that wouldn't have happened had it just been typed and emailed to me. Guthrie's writing, especially toward the latter part of his life when his faculties were clearly waning and his handwriting was quite feeble, still had fortitude and fire, and the voice remained strong and powerful. Seeing all of that on paper was inspiring, and it helped put this project into perspective. It gave me a better sense of what was going on in his life at that time.

The Mermaid Avenue albums from Wilco and Billy Bragg were examples of Guthrie's lyrics put to new music. Did those records inform the recording of New Multitudes?

As a fan of both Wilco and Billy Bragg, I eagerly awaited both of those albums, and I love them both. As far as informing my writing on this album, I worked hard to just let the lyrics inform the writing. I relied on the energy of the

individual page. The words for my songs were the guiding energy.

This project had four key players from different parts of the country with different schedules. How did that work?

Well, to add to my thoughts about seeing the handwritten lyrics, that same spirit went into the recording sessions. Anders [Parker] and Jay had recorded most of their songs before Jim [James] and I came on board. In March 2009, Jim and I went to New York and met Anders and Jay to record our songs in a loft studio in a very DIY setting. It was really cold at that time, and we recorded the songs in a gritty, lo-fi way. I think the type of recording we did inspired the songs in a different way than if we'd just gone to some sterile, Manhattan studio. That's how Woody would've done it, I think.

Over the years, you've made collaborating with others a regular habit. What do you get out of stepping away from your frontman role and supporting other artists?

The frequent change of atmosphere excites me. I tend to learn a great deal from putting myself in different musical situations. More specifically, I think I learn more about what it is I love about music – whether it's behind the drums or playing guitar and singing back-up vocals. It'll hopefully make my own music better, too. With the Monsters of Folk, I had the best seat in the house, playing drums for three of my favorite songwriters. I think I'd just get bored doing the same thing musically all the time. I'm really not wired that way. Also, the people I collaborate with are people I'm a fan of and have been friends with over the years. Those projects are never just jobs.

You've added producer to your roles of band leader, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist sideman. What's your approach?

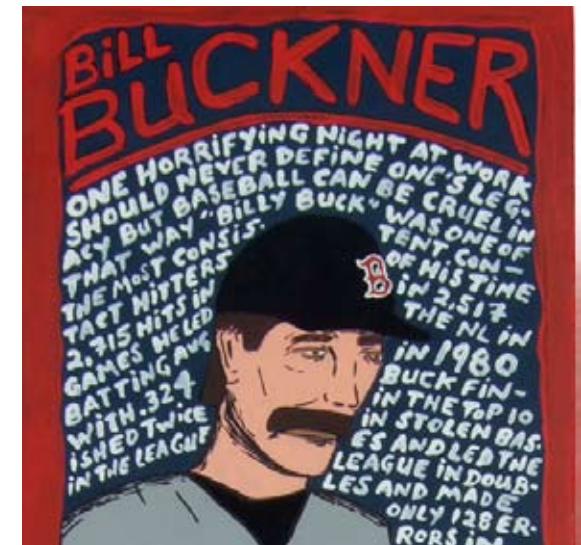
I'm still getting my wheels in terms of producing. I see many flaws in the work that I've done so far. I just try to walk in and integrate myself into the band as an extra member. I try not

to separate myself and think of it as a producer thing. I think of myself as a guest who gets to throw some ideas around. The title of producer is so heavy handed. I mean, T Bone Burnett or Brian Eno deserve to be called a producer, but I don't see myself that way at all. I'm just happy to be asked since I'm still learning. Also, I never want to jam a producing job in the middle of tours and rush it. I need to be all in. It can't be a four-day errand, because it's not fair to the people who've been so kind to hire you.

You're a big baseball fan, and as an artist, you've painted a series of baseball-themed pieces. Recently, your Bill Buckner piece was featured on Catching Hell, an ESPN documentary about the infamous Chicago Cubs fan, Steve Bartman. What was behind that?

The director called me about using the painting in that film. I was excited to have it on there, but my only requirement was that it had to be used in a positive light. Buckner was a great player; I think it's so unfair that in spite of all of his accomplishments, he's remembered most for that one error in 1986.

– KELLY DEARMORE



Johnson, also an artist, has painted a series about baseball. (www.willjohnsonart.com)