

# FAR & AWAY: THE BEST OF 2002

## ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

- #1 STARLINE RHYTHM BOYS: HONKY TONK LIVIN'** (Tin Town) \*
- 2 Flatlanders: Now Again (New West)
- 3 Cornell Hurd Band: Song of South Austin (Behemoth)
- 4 Bobby Bare Jr: Young Criminal's Starvation League (Blookshot)
- 5 Buddy Miller: Midnight And Lonesome (Hightone)
- 6 Chip Taylor & Carrie Rodriguez: Let's Leave This Town (TMG/Trainwreck)
- 7 VA: Happy Birthday Buck (Texas Music Roundup)
- 8 Justine Trevio: The Scene Of the Crying (TMG)
- 9 Solomon Burke: Don't Give Up On Me (Fat Possum)
- 10 Tom Armstrong: Songs That Make the Jukebox Play (Carsell)
- 11 Stan Martin: Cigarettes And Cheap Whisky (Twangstone)
- 12 Bill Chambers: Sleeping With the Blues (Reckless)
- 13 Rex Hobart & The Misery Boys: Your Favorite Food (Bloodshot)
- 14 Necko Case: Blacklisted (Bloodshot)
- Steve Earle: Jerusalem (E-Squared/Artemis)
- 15 James McMurtry: St. Mary Of the Woods (Sugar Hill)
- Johnny Cash: American IV; The Man Comes Around (American/Lost Highway)
- 16 Hank Williams III: Lovesick, Broke & Driftin' (Curb)
- 17 Welcome to Porter Hall TN (Slewfoot)
- Mary Gauthier: Filth & Fire (Signature Sounds/Munich)
- 18 Kelly Kessler: The Salt Of Your Skin (Melungeon)
- 19 Guy Clark: The Dark (Sugar Hill)
- 20 Roger Wallace: The Lowdown (TMG)
- 21 Honky Tonk Confidential: Your Trailer of Mine? (Too Many Dogs)
- 22 Eric Hisaw: Never Could Walk the Line (Stockade/Dusty)
- 23 Terri Hendrix: The Ring (Wilory)
- 24 John Lilly: Broken Moon (self)
- Jesse Sykes & The Sweet Hereafter: Reckless Burning (Burn Burn Burn)
- James Talley: Touchstones (Cimarron)
- Ian Tyson: Live at Longview (Stony Plain)

\* FAR chart reporters voting Honky Tonk Livin' #1:  
Dave Bryce, Fresh-FM, Nelson, New Zealand  
Dave Chamberlain, WRFG, Atlanta, GA  
Joe Farara, WJSC, Johnson, VT  
Robert Silverberg, WCUW, Worcester, MA  
Steve Hathaway, KKUP, Cupertino, CA  
Thomas Greener, KVMR, Nevada City, CA



# FAR APPLES, AMA ORANGES

**H**ope you're a radio chart geek, because this month's screed aims to compare and contrast two different approaches. In early August, the Americana Music Association, which, after *The Gavin Report* folded its Americana chart two years ago, refused to even consider adopting the Freeform American Roots chart, the only alternative actually up and running, finally launched its own radio chart.

The two charts are admittedly, apples and oranges, but how important the various disparities are depends entirely on your point of view, in fact I'm not even sure how to prioritize them. However, let's start with the distinction the AMA made; FAR is a 'fan' chart, and the AMA wanted an 'industry' chart. It's true that very few of the FAR reports are professional DJs, in fact most of them are unpaid volunteer hosts of weekly shows on college, public and community stations, quite often the *only* roots show on those stations, so FAR is, necessarily, based on their opinions because number of spins or weight of rotation (heavy, medium, light), the building blocks of an industry chart, simply don't apply. **The Starline Rhythm Boys were FAR's #1 because a preponderance of reporters thought *Honky Tonk Livin'* was the best album they got to play in July, The Flatlanders were the AMA's #1 because *Now Again* got the most airplay on the reporting stations.**

To put this in plain language, FAR measures the enthusiasm of highly dedicated fans, the AMA chart, like *The Gavin Report's* or *Album Network's*, measures the effectiveness of independent radio promoters. The distinction reminds me of an old *Time Out* music section slogan: "What we like and what they'd like us to like." Fans are kind of an essential component of the music business, but while some genres may be able to get away with it, the AMA is hardly in a position to take them for granted. Americana has a tenuous enough presence on the airwaves and in trying to model itself on the big boys, the AMA spurns the music's foot soldiers, the men and women who play it for love.

Apart from anything else, its debut chart doesn't bode well for the exposure of self-released albums, a staple of Americana, the highest ranking, which was quite heavily promoted, coming in at #22. In the FAR chart for the same period, three of the top five albums, including #1, were self-released. Also, though it may be due to teething problems, or just promotion to playlist delay, FAR would seem to be quite a bit earlier with the good stuff. Moreover, while the two charts have many albums in common, the definition of Americana that emerges from the AMA's is much narrower than any FAR reporter would accept.

In the big picture, these differences are fairly inconsequential. The number of spins, nationwide, that took *The Flatlanders* to the top slot would be considered disastrously low in almost any other genre, as would the sales this level of airplay might generate. Still, this is our world and we take it seriously. I'll let one of the FAR reporters have the last word: "All in all, there is enough overlap between the two to invalidate Grant Alden's view that we're a bunch of amateurs and enough difference to make be glad I am where I am."

**-JC**