



# HOMEGROWN



## JASON ISBELL SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE

THIRTY TIGERS

The personal story surrounding **Jason Isbell's** last, breakthrough album, *Southeastern*, is widely known and easily reprised. A troubled young troubadour, newly married, stepped away from the darkness of addiction into a new, uncertain life of clarity and commitment, reflecting ruefully on his hard won victories and the price he paid attaining them. It was an album of aching elegance, marked by the sort of lyrical precision that brought to mind certain literary masters of the melancholy American scene, from Flannery O'Connor to Raymond Carver – an album of memorably infectious empathy. With *Something More Than Free*, he stretches himself further, greatly expanding the boundaries of **Isbell** country, that territory of the heart and mind where people strive against their imperfections, and simultaneously against their circumstances, in a landscape that's often unfriendly to their hopes. The album deepens as it goes along, offering some of the pleasures of a fine novel, including a collection of sharp vignettes that stick in the mind, impossible to shake. This isn't an album of easy certainty, but what makes his songwriting so rich and gripping, besides its observational precision, is the honesty of his inquiries. He doesn't flinch.



## DAVE RAWLINGS MACHINE NASHVILLE OBSOLETE

ACONY

The **Dave Rawlings Machine** finds the power couple of Gillian Welch and **Dave Rawlings** reversing roles, not to mention dispositions. Where Welch can often sound harrowing (this is a compliment!) **Rawlings'** records – and especially the live shows – are more lighthearted affairs adorned with cover songs and freewheeling energy. That said, *Nashville Obsolete* tweaks the formula by showcasing seven original compositions written by Gillian Welch and **Dave Rawlings**. Recorded on analog tape at Woodland Sound Studios in Nashville, TN, and produced by Rawlings, *Nashville Obsolete* highlights the brilliant musicianship of **Rawlings** and Welch on lead vocals and guitar, with Paul Kowert (Punch Brothers) on bass, Willie Watson on vocals and guitar and guest appearances from Brittany Haas (fiddle) and Jordan Tice (mandolin). *Nashville Obsolete* marks the 7<sup>th</sup> studio album on which Welch and **Rawlings** have collaborated during their acclaimed two decade long creative partnership. Long may they run.



## LEIGH NASH THE STATE I'M IN

ONE SON RECORDS

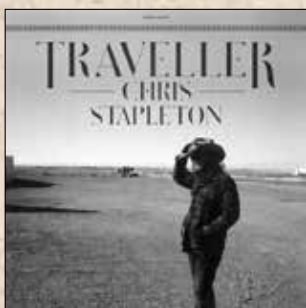
More than two decades into her career, singer-songwriter **Leigh Nash** shines a light on her Texas roots with *The State I'm In*, a solo album that plants its feet on both sides of the border. **Nash** was raised in the Texas Hill Country, and *The State I'm In* marks a return to her days in the Lone Star State, though, with **Nash** whipping up a combination of Texas twang, Tejano, orchestral pop hooks and heartbroken lyrics. In classic country style she sings about heartache and bad luck in a voice that swoons, sweeps and swaggers, backed by a band whose members include Emmylou Harris's pianist, Jack White's fiddle player, and the award-winning a cappella group, Street Corner Symphony. Looking for a fellow rule-breaker who wouldn't mind pushing the envelope, **Nash** turned to Grammy-nominated musician Brendan Benson, who co-wrote one of the songs and produced the entire record.



## THE POLLIES NOT HERE

SINGLE LOCK RECORDS

"When you write a song, you have a million different things you can do with that song," says Jay Burgess – lead singer and songwriter for **The Pollies**. "On our records, we always try to shake up the landscape. On this one, we incorporated a lot of elements that we normally wouldn't think about using. It changed the atmosphere of the music and pushed it in a different direction." *Not Here* finds the Florence, AL band some of its alt-country skin in favor of new atmospheres and unadulterated risk. "*Not Here* is how I felt when I wrote the majority of the songs for this record," lead singer and songwriter Jay Burgess says. "I was almost living parallel to myself." *Not Here* he hits on familiar topics — love, loss, triumph and regret — with an edge and ferocity. Simply put, these are compelling songs—and **The Pollies** have found new ways to play them.



## CHRIS STAPLETON TRAVELLER

MERCURY NASHVILLE

Already a world-renowned songwriter, **Chris Stapleton** has enjoyed five #1 hits including "Never Wanted Nothing More" recorded by Kenny Chesney, George Strait's "Love's Gonna Make it Alright" and Luke Bryan's "Drink A Beer." Additionally, **Stapleton** has shared the stage with such respected artists as Vince Gill, Alison Krauss, Marty Stuart, Emmylou Harris and more. As lead vocalist for The SteelDrivers, **Stapleton** earned three Grammy nominations as well as an International Bluegrass Music Association Award. **Stapleton's** new solo album, *Traveller* was produced by Dave Cobb (Sturgill Simpson, Jason Isbell) and recorded by Vance Powell (Jack White). In addition to renditions of Dean Dillon and Linda Hargrove's "Tennessee Whiskey" and Don Sampson's "Was It 26," the album features twelve original songs, including fan-favorite "Sometimes I Cry." "This record was made standing on the shoulders of friends, family, and heroes," says **Stapleton**. "I hope people enjoy listening to it as much as I've enjoyed making it."

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## DONNIE FRITTS OH MY GOODNESS

SINGLE LOCK RECORDS

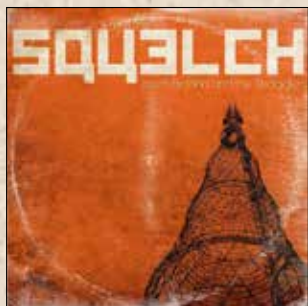
**Donnie Fritts** is a lauded songwriter from Florence, AL noted for his tracks "We Had It All" (recorded by scores of artists from Waylon Jennings to Ray Charles) and "Breakfast in Bed" which he co-wrote for Dusty Springfield's album *Dusty in Memphis*. He played with Kris Kristofferson's band for nearly 20 years, and has released three previous albums – all stacked with hit original tracks. John Paul White, formerly of the Grammy-winning duo The Civil Wars, befriended **Donnie** in 2013 at the premier of the Muscle Shoals documentary premiere in Florence. Later, John Paul insisted the two cut an album. What began as a minimalist work – j **Donnie's** raspy voice and his 1970's-era Wurlitzer – morphed into an amalgamation of fresh sound and honed talent backed by Nashville and Muscle Shoals legends, and rising brilliants alike, including John Prine, Jason Isbell, and Amana Shires. *Oh My Goodness*, indeed.



## JOE ELY PANHANDLE RAMBLER

RACK EM RECORDS

*Panhandle Rambler* is one of the most personal albums that Texas native **Joe Ely** has ever made. It brings forth this terrain, the spirited people it produces, and that special sense of destiny – be it terrible or glorious – that its very vastness creates. "Wounded Creek" starts the album with what you might call a Western fantasy, except that the "bushes and the brambles," the traffic light, the stray dog and the cold wind are all completely brought to life. "Here's to the Weary" is the story of all the great musical refugees, from Woody Guthrie, Muddy Waters, to Buddy Holly, and Chuck Berry (among many others) – who soothed our "weary and restless souls." It's typical of all the songs on the album: The place doesn't necessarily always win, but, as with "Magdalene" and "Coyotes are Howlin'," it carries a sense of inevitably – on *Panhandle Rambler* Texas is a state of mind.



## JASON BOLAND & THE STRAGGLERS SQUELCH

PROUD SOULS ENTERTAINMENT

At a time when the need for depth in country music is finally being acknowledged, and accepted, with the rise of a handful of quality newer artists, we should look to **Jason Boland & The Stragglers** as artists who have been an unwavering beacons of authenticity for over a decade. *Squelch* contains 11 new songs, featuring **Boland's** soulful baritone, and the impeccable musicianship of **The Stragglers** – Cody Angel (guitars/pedal steel), Nick Worley (fiddle), Grant Tracy (bass) and Brad Rice (drums). As an honest, intelligent, thought-provoking lyricist, **Boland** has always pushed the boundaries of what country music could, and should be, while maintaining a high level of artistic integrity. *Squelch* features an infusion of hard-edged rock via "I Guess It's Alright", swinging honky tonk on "Break 19", driving Americana on "Heartland Bypass" and heartfelt country ballads, such as the beautiful "Do You Love Me Any Less".



## THE BLACK LILLIES HARD TO PLEASE

ATTACK MONKEY PRODUCTIONS

In February 2015, the **Black Lillies** seemed poised to sail through the recording process of their fourth studio album. They had studio time booked, a GRAMMY award-winning producer, a string of high-energy sold-out shows in their wake, and a fan-funding campaign that surpassed its goal. There were only two problems: first, on the eve of the band's first pre-production session, two veteran members announced that they were moving on to pursue other interests. And second, the band only had three songs ready to go. With deadlines looming, a well-timed snowstorm afforded hard-touring front man Cruz Contreras the opportunity to hunker down in a basement-level studio to re-group and get to work penning 10 songs for the roots, country and soul-inspired *Hard To Please*. With additional contributions from an array of guest musicians, *Hard To Please* illustrates the band's diversity both sonically and instrumentally. Never underestimate the power of a deadline.



## SHAWN COLVIN UNCOVERED

FANTASY/CONCORD

On her new album *Uncovered*, acclaimed singer/songwriter **Shawn Colvin** shines with sublime sensitivity, casting new light on songs from some of the most admired writers in popular music history. *Uncovered's* twelve tunes include songs by Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, Tom Waits, Stevie Wonder, Robbie Robertson and Graham Nash to name a few, but in their selection and delivery, they are pure **Shawn Colvin**. As **Shawn** says: "Unless a song moves you, it doesn't matter what you do with it." That said *Uncovered* is not your typical covers record. "The title *Uncovered* has a few meanings," **Shawn** reveals. "It means uncovering as in an excavation, and uncovered in the sense of vulnerability. This album was made very spontaneously, we didn't over-think or overdub it. One of my friends said to me, 'You sound so exposed on this record!' and I think that's the thematic key, vulnerability."

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## DAVID RAMIREZ FABLES

THIRTY TIGERS

*Fables* is a sparse, poignant set of songs crafted around **David Ramirez'** starkly beautiful baritone, which the *New York Times* once described as full of "haggard loneliness." **Ramirez** has fiercely loyal fans that are drawn to his intimately personal songwriting. The album's title, *Fables*, was inspired by the first single, "Harder to Lie," which captures the moment **Ramirez** realized, as he puts it, "I couldn't bullsh\*t with [my girlfriend] anymore. She knew me completely. It got me thinking about how much I bullsh\*t in my life... When you don't know who you really are you can end up hurting people." That newfound maturity and clarity translated into his approach in the studio. "My previous albums were a bit less personal. I had never just walked in and said 'let's just see what happens.' And that's what we did this time. From the writing to the recording, it was just based on instincts."



## SHEMKIA COPELAND OUTSKIRTS OF LOVE

ALLIGATOR RECORDS

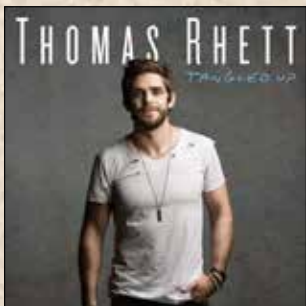
Whether she's belting out a raucous blues-rocker, firing up a blistering soul-shouter, bringing the spirit to a gospel-fueled R&B rave-up or digging deep down into a subtle, country-tinged ballad, **Shemekia Copeland** sounds like no one else. *Outskirts Of Love* finds her at her most charismatic, performing roots rock, Americana, and blues with power and authority, nuance and shading. Produced by The Wood Brothers' Oliver Wood, *Outskirts Of Love* is a musical tour-de-force, with **Copeland** rocking out on the title track, taking charge in "Crossbone Beach," honoring her father, the late Johnny Clyde Copeland with her Afro-Beat-infused take on his "Devil's Hand," tackling homelessness on "Cardboard Box" and showing off her country swagger on "Drivin' Out Of Nashville." Friends including Billy Gibbons, Robert Randolph, Alvin Youngblood Hart and Will Kimbrough add their talent with unbridled enthusiasm. The result is **Copeland's** most decidedly contemporary and musically adventurous album of her still-evolving career.



## BART CROW THE PARADE

BERYN ART RECORDS

Always known as "the nice guy" with a smile on his face, **Bart Crow's** chiseled his foothold in the edifice of Americana through hard work, talent, determination and a deep love for making music and building the best life he can for his family. Now the tides are turning and the gloves are coming off - on his new album *The Parade*, boundaries disappear and things are getting real. Myriad spirits haunt his music: A choir of real American country in the fashion of Merle and Waylon, John Conlee, George Jones and Jerry Jeff Walker, razor-edged rock from Metallica, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, deep-fried Southern soul from Otis Redding and more. Yet in the end, **Bart Crow** is what you get: A blue-collar balladeer with his own unique message and sense of 60's pop that you rarely hear in music of the twangy variety.



## THOMAS RHETT TANGLED

VALORY MUSIC GROUP

"Growing up, there was no such thing as listening to one radio station." Instead, **Thomas Rhett** would regularly flip from one station to another, cranking up a mix of country, pop, R&B, rap, rock, and oldies. It was a tangle of music. Decades later, he's tipping his hat to those days with *Tangled Up*, an album that mixes the sound of his influences with equal doses of groove, melody and twang. *Tangled Up* is filled with party anthems, dance tunes, drinking songs, love ballads, and everything in between, all tied together by a dynamic singer who's unafraid to blur the lines between genres. Some songs take their influence from country stars like Eric Church. Others are more reminiscent of pop idols like Justin Timberlake or Bruno Mars. None of the tracks sound alike, but they do all sound like **Thomas Rhett**.



## DAVE ALVIN AND PHIL ALVIN LOST TIME

YEP ROC RECORDS

"Lost time is not found again." This ancient idiom is at the heart of brothers **Dave Alvin and Phil Alvin's** tumultuous relationship. However, in **Dave's** own words, "Sometimes Fate, or God or the Universe, gives you a rare chance to prove an old saying is wrong." The brothers' new album, appropriately titled *Lost Time* does just that. Over *Lost Time's* twelve tracks, **Dave and Phil** pay homage to a number of artists and songs that had an early, formative influence, in **Dave's** words "the masters of the Blues, the most transcendental form of American music." Everyone from Lead Belly to James Brown is represented, but the figure who looms largest is Big Joe Turner. **The Alvins** met Big Joe as teenagers, and he would mentor them for the remainder of his life. They remain his humble students, and cut four of his songs for *Lost Time*.