

# FREEFORM AMERICAN ROOTS #163

REAL MUSIC PLAYED FOR REAL PEOPLE BY REAL DJS  
DURING FEBRUARY 2013

## #1 Gurf Morlix Finds The Present Tense

(Rootball) \*BB/\*BR/\*GG/\*RA/\*SC/\*TR

- 2 **Stella! Sorry Stella** (Detroit Radio Co)  
\*AA/\*CJ/\*JP/\*KP/\*PGS/\*TA/\*TF
- 3 **Wayne Hancock: Ride** (Bloodshot) \*BL/\*CP/\*DV/\*GS/\*JF/\*JM/\*NA
- 4 **Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell: Old Yellow Moon**  
(Nonesuch) \*AB/\*JB/\*RF/\*RL/\*TG
- 5 **Yvette Landry: No Man's Land** (Soko) \*ATC/\*KC/\*LB
- 6 **Amanda Cevallos: I'll Never Honky Tonk You** (self)  
\*MI/\*RC/\*R78/\*RT
- 7 **Kelly Willis & Bruce Robison: Cheater's Game** (Premium)  
\*BS/\*RV/\*TS
- 8 **Roger Knox & The Pine Valley Cosmonauts: Stranger In My Land**  
(Bloodshot) \*AN/\*DF/\*DG/\*KF/\*KW
- 9 **Amanda Pearly: Royal Street** (self) \*FH/\*MF/\*RH
- 10 **Dale Watson: El Rancho Azul** (Red House) \*GA/\*LMG
- 11 **Carrie Rodriguez: Give Me All You Got** (Ninth Street Opus)  
\*AH/\*DS/\*MO
- 12 **The Mavericks: In Time** (Valory) \*N&T
- 13 **Chris Wall: El Western Motel** (Cold Spring) \*MM/\*OO
- 14 **Rich Mahan: Blame It On Bobby Bare** (Snortin' Horse) \*GRR
- 15= **Al Dressen's Super Swing Revue: Songs From Beautiful Texas!**  
(Range Cube) \*RM/\*SH/\*TB
- Phil Lee: **The Fall & Further Decline Of The Mighty King Of Love**  
(Palookaville) \*RE/\*RS
- 16 **The Steeldrivers: Hammer Down** (Rounder)
- 17 **Rachel Brooke: A Killer's Dream** (Mai) \*CTS/\*SS
- 18 **Amber Digby: The World You're Living In** (Heart Of Texas) \*MT
- 19 **Terry Allen: Bottom Of The World** (Fate) \*GM/\*PP
- 20 **Pharis & Jason Romero: Long Gone Out West Blues** (Lula) \*BG
- 21= **Mary Gauthier: Live At Blue Rock** (In The Black)  
Chris O'Connell: **Be Right Back!** (Song)  
Daniel Romano: **Come Cry With Me** (Normaltown) \*JZ
- 22= **Bobby Bare: Darker Than Light** (Plowboy) \*CS  
Rob Lutes: **The Bravest Bird** (Lucky Bear)  
Jimmy Ryan: **Readville** (Ruido Grande) \*CF
- 23 **Shooter Jennings: The Other Life** (Black Country Rock) \*JT
- 24 **Beautiful Loser Society: The Desperate Promenade**  
(Pearl Palace) \*TM
- 25= **James Hand: Mighty Lonesome Man** (Hillgrass Bluebilly)  
**The Leavers: Once Upon A Time** (South Of The River) \*EW  
**Holly Williams: The Highway** (Georgiana)
- 26= **Beth Lee & The Breakups: One More Time Again** (self) \*OAM  
**Marcy Maxer: Things Are Coming My Way** (community music) \*DJ  
**Son Volt: Honky Tonk** (Rounder)

## AMANDA PEARCY • ROYAL STREET

(self \*\*\*\*.5)

Usually, an album that's been in works for a few years has a sort of patchwork quilt effect, you can pretty much hear the seams between the tracks, but while she's been working on her second album since 2010, Pearly has a fully realized album, in the truest sense of the word. Rather oddly, the Austin-based singer-songwriter went to Franklin and Nashville TN to record it, but, after a turbulent period of unemployment and couch-surfing, had to turn to Kickstarter to finance the mixing, mastering and production. If, like Ray Wylie Hubbard, you believe that the essence of songwriting is to tear strips off your soul, then Pearly is your girl. Or, rather, your woman because I can't help feeling that she must be somewhat older than she looks, though a life of hard knocks, including being a young widow with a small child and a second marriage to an ex-con junkie may have fast tracked the maturity that underpins **Royal Street**. Her twelve songs, plus Jagger/Richards' *No Expectations*, are extraordinarily well crafted, each one, though they vary in tempo and style, is given its own individual setting and atmosphere, Pearly modulating her expressive vocals to maximize the effect of her poetic lyrics and evocative melodies. There's a lot of sadness and loss in Pearly's songs, but no lachrymose self-pity, rather a search for clarity and growth. You can play this over and over and still not plumb its depths. **JC**

## SLAID CLEAVES STILL FIGHTING THE WAR

(Music Road \*\*\*\*)

For the first few of the 13 tracks, you'll feel that Cleaves is in 'Very Serious' mode, opening with the title track, about an Iraq war veteran, then mourning a lost love (*Without Her*) and a devastated home town (*Rust Belt Field*, written with Rod Picott), followed by dashed dreams (*Hometown USA*), another lost love (*Gone*), another look at a lost America (*Welding Burns*, also cowritten with Picott) and a still raw breakup (*I Bet She Does*). However, he lightens up a bit with *Whim Of Iron* and then very much so with a potential crowdpleaser hit, at least locally hit, *Texas Love Song* ("For you I'd trade my truck in for a Lexus... I love you even more than I love Texas"). That anthem's closing yodel leads to a hommage to Don Walser, *God's Own Yodeller*, while *Go For The Gold* is a superb Louvin Brothers style country gospel pastiche, though Cleaves does close the album with intimations of mortality (*Voices Of Midnight*). The credits are a bit complicated, but the album features Scrappy Jud Newcomb, also the main producer, Jimmy LaFave, Lloyd Maines, Richard Bowden and Eliza Gilkyson. Guy Clark supposedly said that rather than writing twelve songs because it was time to make an album, he figured that when he'd written twelve songs, it was time to make an album, and this is fairly obviously Cleaves' philosophy, spacing his albums of original material out at four or five year intervals. I'm not sure when it happened, but it occurs to me that I no longer have to position Slaid Cleaves ("Austin singer-songwriter originally from Maine"), I can assume you all know who he is, and know that he makes albums that are worth your attention. **JC**

## MELISSA GREENER • TRANSISTOR CORAZON

(Anima \*\*\*\*)

Unless you were already aware of Melissa Greener as a singer-songwriter, were I to show you a picture of her, you would immediately peg her as Someone, even if you had no earthly idea in what field she might be a Someone. Her striking, if very unconventional, looks suggest a rising star in almost anything from Haute Couture to High Finance. Whether, with "no record label, no manager, no booking agent, no publicist," but a van load of gigs, she'd regard herself as a rising star in folk music, Greener is the epitome of the kind of artist people like me hear about from other musicians and, in particular, club bookers, rather than the media. For whatever it's worth, Greener has buzz, generated by a marvelous voice, exceptional lyrics, a subtle way of owning covers (Jonathan Byrd has surrendered his *It Gets Harder To Leave Texas Every Time* to her) and sensational flat-picking. Her third album is something of a departure from *Dwelling* (Anima, 2010), produced by John Jennings, the man behind Mary Chapin Carpenter's best albums, who was one of only three supporting musicians. This time the producer is Brad Jones, and there are 11 backing musicians. The title track was cowritten with David Rodriguez, whose *Ballad Of The Snow Leopard* & *The Tanqueray Cowboy* Greener covered on *Dwelling*, another cowrite was with BettySoo and there are covers of Jesse Winchester's *That's What Makes You Strong* and Lennon/McCartney's vacuous *If I Fell*, a showcase for Greener's guitar playing. I have to admit that I prefer the aesthetic of *Dwelling*, but then I'm the worst possible judge of these things, so this may well be Greener's breakout album. **JC**



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WHERE MUSIC STILL MATTERS

\*XX = DJ's Album of the Month, see chart IDs at [tcmnradio.com/far](http://tcmnradio.com/far)