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Picks
of the
Month**Jack Ingram - *This Is It***

There was a part of me that was hesitant to listen to this disc, mostly because I hold this guy in such high regard as one of the most talented artists in Texas music. Why? Because every so often one of our own gets eaten by the Nashville money monster, leaving only a shell of their former artistic selves. Sometimes it seems like some bad science fiction movie. To be honest, there is a fair amount of polish on *This Is It*, but mostly, the album avoids being too slick to stick. Moreover, it comes off sounding like a natural progression for an artist that has always had a hooky way of writing and delivering memorable songs. There is plenty for mainstream audiences to be happy about, like the opener "Measure Of A Man", penned by Rodney Foster, backed up with, "Hold On", a duet with Sheryl Crow. Also included are previous hits, "Lips Of Angel", "Wherever You Are" and the crowd pleaser, "Love You". By cut seven though, that ol' Jack magic really starts to kick in and he proceeds to deliver some of his best work to date. "Ava Adele" is a beautiful tribute to his daughter and proof that the best songs on this album favor substance over fluff. "Great Divide" is another superb song, written about the people of the plains. He sings, "They still listen to high school football on the radio in west Texas, the lights still shine bright every Friday night". Indeed, the whole second half of the album is classic Jack Ingram. So in the end our hero avoids getting consumed by the Nashville body snatchers and succeeds in doing what many others have not. Trying to please everybody. www.JackIngram.net

**Drew Kennedy - *Dollar Theatre Movie***

I guess it's been about 3 years now since I first met Drew Kennedy. At the time, he had his guitar, a dream and a full box containing his first CD, the ambitious, independent release, *Hillbilly Pilgrim*. From that point on, I have watched this guy play anywhere, for anything he could get, to anyone who would give him a listen. Hard work pays off, kids. He recently co-wrote the title track to Jason Boland's latest album and now he has presented the music loving community with a tremendous sophomore effort, *Dollar Theatre Movie*. With a down to earth voice and vision, the songs on *Dollar Theatre Movie* drift along like the Medina River on a hot summer day, cool, relaxing and satisfying. Drew also has an impressive list of players and contributors, including producer and guitarist Gerald Boyd, Keith Gattis, Kevin Szymanski, Bruce Robison and Kelly Willis. Most of the songs were written exclusively by Drew, with the exception of the first single, "Take Me Home", with Peter Dawson and the theatric "Can't Slow Down", written with Claire Cunningham. Kennedy says of the songs on *Dollar Theatre Movie*, "These songs are a part of me...all of them deal with the way we feel as we're trying to fit in with the rest of the world". Drew's decision to move from his native Virginia to the hills of Texas has certainly been a very nice fit for sure and with the support of everyone around him, this artist's second time around makes for one of the best albums of the year.

www.DrewKennedyMusic.com**Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Ray Price - *Last of The Breed***

Much like the main character in the Louis L' Amour book of the same title, Willie Nelson, Ray Price and Merle Haggard rely on the skills and wisdom they have procured over the years to overcome the barren wasteland that is today's mainstream country scene. The result is a stunning two disc retrospective of traditional country music, done in tried and true fashion. The first thing that must be pointed out is that all three of these gentlemen are still very much in top form, especially the 81 year old Ray Price, who's vocals sound as spirited as they did 30 years ago. Rebelliously old school, *Last Of The Breed* is a trip through some of county music's most beloved songs. Performances include, "Pick Me Up On Your Way Down", "Lost Highway", "Why Me" (with Kris Kristofferson) and "I Love You Because". Pulling it all together is a cast of legendary musicians that includes, Johnny Gimble, Buddy Emmons and The Jordanaires among others. Just as the title suggests, these three luminaries have had life experiences most of us will only read about in books. These men knew the people who wrote the timeless classics on this album and the love that's been poured into this project is felt on every single cut. Absolutely Brilliant! www.LostHighwayRecords.com

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