

Country Music People

TOP 10 ALBUMS OF 2020!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
PAUL RILEY



RACHEL BROOKE
THE LONELINESS IN ME

The underrated singer Rachel Brooke is best known for her dark Americana albums. Here though she wins album of the year for a real country album. Sadness drips through the songs, despair never far away. In the song *Ghost Of You*, Rachel Brooke sings "every time I take a drink the closer I get to you". This may be 2020's saddest song. A stunning album.

1

2 ELIZABETH COOK
AFTERMATH

The new album from the wonderful Elizabeth Cook features a superb production - probably the best of 2020. It also has a neat mix of country, Americana, and rock. It's a very entertaining ride. Not as country as the singer's early albums though.



MEAN MARY
ALONE

Mean Mary's 17th album is a masterpiece. With the virus crisis, the very talented singer/songwriter was forced to only have only the minimal backing of just a banjo. The lyrics are pure poetry. The album embraces Americana, folk, and religion. In one song Mean Mary talks to God. The lyrics feature dark humour like, "another sleep in the car but this time I'll park". We also get bursts of cynicism like, "I'm just a banjo player on that one-way road to poverty". Mean Mary remains a vital singer in the Americana area.

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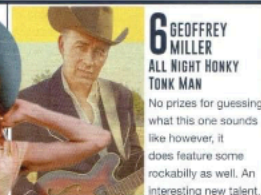
4 SHAWN WILLIAMS
THE FEAR OF LIVING,
THE FEAR OF DYING

Probably the year's most relevant album. A kind of dark soundtrack to the doomed summer of 2020. This slightly off-beat slab of Americana will not be for everyone but anyone who has spent 2020 self-isolating should get it. Decidedly lo-fi, it was recorded on a mobile phone and on the title track Williams hits the nerve of 2020 - fear. She sings "fear of living, feelin' like I can't go on". 2020 has caused mental health issues for many people and Shawn Williams's album is aimed at those folks. Fans of quality Americana should also like it. An important album but, not for everyone.



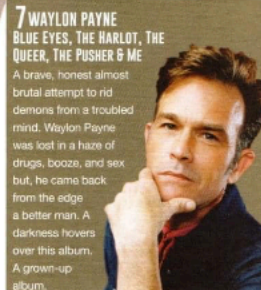
5 MICHELLE BILLINGSLEY
NOT THE MARRYING KIND

A superb debut with several of the original songs having a wonderful timeless feel. An album for fans of real country music.



6 GEOFFREY MILLER
ALL NIGHT HONKY TONK MAN

No prizes for guessing what this one sounds like however, it does feature some rockabilly as well. An interesting new talent.



7 WAYLON PAYNE
BLUE EYES, THE HARLOT, THE QUEER, THE PUSHER & ME

A brave, honest almost brutal attempt to rid demons from a troubled mind. Waylon Payne was lost in a haze of drugs, booze, and sex but, he came back from the edge a better man. A darkness hovers over this album. A grown-up album.



CARRIE UNDERWOOD
MY GIFT

Carrie Underwood has always had the voice but sometimes not the songs. Here for her Christmas album, everything falls right. We get well-chosen quality songs and oh, those vocals. Yes.

8



9 CHIP TAYLOR
DAD AND THE MONKEY

Three more fine albums from Chip Taylor this year all are worth buying. The master songwriter continues his late-career flourish. Long may he continue.

10 KACY AND CLAYTON WITH MARLON WILLIAMS
PLASTIC BOUQUET

Canadian duo Kacy and Clayton are joined by Kiwi singer Marlon Williams for an album of country, Americana, and a dash of rock. Very entertaining and just edging out Gretchen Peters, Charlie Crockett, Honey Harper, and Ray Wylie Hubbard. 2020 has been a fine year for country fans.