

# The Hummingbirds

**Karen Poston**  
**Jim Stringer**  
**Susanna Van Tassel**

The story goes.....

Karen, Jim and Susanna carry on the legacy which began with Maxine Humman and Arlen Boyd who, near the close of World War II in 1946, in rural South Carolina, formed The Humman-Boyd Band, and began taking their original brand of gospel-tinged country music to listeners throughout the eastern United States. A misunderstanding while appearing in Long Island resulted in renaming the group The Hummingbirds and when Maxine and Arlen married in November 1947, they adopted Hummingbird as their joint surname.

Ernest Rufus Otis James Hummingbird (named for his granddaddies) was born April 6, 1948. A precocious child, he picked up guitar at an early age and joined his parents on stage as "Little Jimmy" Hummingbird. Though a love for his parent's music has remained over the years, his own musical path has taken some wide detours. At the tender age of thirteen, he formed The Bumming Herd and scored a minor hit (#91 on the Billboard Hot 100) in 1961 with the instrumental track, "Don't Sit On My Hat".

The twins, Susanna Lawanda and Karen Willie Mae Hummingbird were a late life surprise for Maxine and Arlen. A predicted Swine Flu Epidemic in 1976 never materialized on a large scale, but tragically Maxine was one of the few unfortunate victims. Arlen passed away mere months later. People kindly said it was from a broken heart, but most suspected his copious drinking contributed significantly. The twins, already showing the family penchant for precocious talent, were taken in by older brother Jim Hummingbird who raised them on the road as if they were his own.

Today, The Hummingbirds continue in the tradition set by their parents. They render people speechless with their tight family style harmonies and keep spinning the family yarns with traditional takes on far reaching covers, and songs they just made up in their heads. As Mama Maxine used to say, "Keep it humble." Or as Papa Arlen would say, "I'll drink to that!"

[www.texashummingbirds.com](http://www.texashummingbirds.com) / 512-302-0766

## **Karen Poston**

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### ***From Country Music People***

....The sort of material that, if Nashville was still about country, would have won her prominence in Music City. And when Poston delivers a rollicking version of Liz Anderson's "Ride, Ride, Ride", it's also clear that the Music City that once was would have also embraced her as a singer!

- Rob Patterson

### ***From Rockzilla.com***

Ms. Poston doesn't just sing like the icons, she writes genuine honky tonk songs like they did. Some people simply have the magic, and Poston is one of the lucky ones who do. Her debut CD for Austin's Music Room proves beyond any doubt that Ms. Poston is a major Americana singing and songwriting talent.

For someone so young, Ms. Poston writes bull's-eye lyrics. Her rhymes are good and her stories and settings are even better. The title track sounds like it was penned with Loretta Lynn in mind.

- William Michael Smith

### ***From The Austin Chronicle***

Make no mistake, though, even among such rarefied country company, Poston's the real star, mixing her love and heartbreak-laden originals with choice covers from the likes of Lynn Anderson, Conway Twitty, and Loretta Lynn. You say you've never heard of Karen Poston? Well, if you're an Austin music fan, surely you've heard at least one of her songs. Say for example, "Lydia" the tale of a widowed woman who's lost two of her loved ones in the Virginia coal mine. It was one of the highlights on Slaid Cleaves 2000 breakout, *Broke Down*.

- Jim Caligiuri

## **Jim Stringer**

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### ***From Freight Train Boogie:***

JIM STRINGER & THE AM BAND

In My Hand... (The Music Room)

Austin and Chicago have been duking it out for the title of "Home Of Real Country Music" and with this CD, Jim Stringer & His AM Band land a hard left hook right to Chicago's kisser. Without ever sounding cliché, the Texan's original songs on this CD bring in a touch of bluegrass, a touch of folk, a touch of polka, a touch of western swing, a touch of Gothic Americana, and a whole lot of authenticity. The covers are wonderfully chosen, with Joni Mitchell's "Raised On Robbery" being a wonderfully executed surprise that gets a lot of play on my iPod. The musicianship is executed well enough that the playing frames Stringer's voice -- a wonderful, rich baritone -- and lets him weave stories for us. The songs can be a bit dark, but even the dark ones celebrate what is happy in life. The production is also well done, crystal-clear and mixed expertly so the feeling of being right there comes through nicely. This CD is a 38 minute clinic on how to write, perform, and engineer a real country CD -- a clinic that Music Row would do well to attend.

Jim's site. Buy from Amazon.

Released May '04, reviewed by Clint Weathers.

### ***From St. Louis Riverfront Times:***

On May 11, the Music Room released Jim Stringer and the Austin Music Band's In My Hand, a crackerjack 12-track example of traditional country music. For In My Hand, the band's third CD, Stringer, who wrote all but two of the songs, provides vocals and plays acoustic guitar, electric guitar, lap steel guitar, baritone guitar, six-string bass, tic-tac bass, and other instruments—the poor bastard should apply for combat pay.

Stringer, a fiftysomething transplant from Kansas, boasts a timeless tenor, unassailable talent as guitarist and bandleader both, and often breathtaking skill as a lyricist. He and the AM Band—rightly characterized by 3rd Coast Music as “the closest thing Austin has to a supergroup”—handle with fluency material reminiscent of the finest western swing, rockabilly, and classic country, romping through Joni Mitchell's “Raised on Robbery” (a duet with Karen Poston), performing with stately sonority the love song “Dance Like a Child,” gleefully juking on “Pink Tornado.” Finally, beyond all of its other graces, the title track and opener to In My Hand unfolds with all of the lovely implacability of a Greek tragedy, a work deceptively easy in its cadence and dreadfully hard in all other respects. In short, it's a disc of considerable artistry.

--St. Louis Riverfront Times

## Susanna Van Tassel

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### ***From CMT.com***

Susanna Van Tassel earned initial respect within the neo-traditionalist country scene during the early 2000s for both her songwriting and her singing. Originally rooted in California, Van Tassel moved from Santa Rosa to Austin, TX, in 1995 to further her career as a country artist. In Austin she polished her craft, infusing her neo-traditionalist songwriting style with a hearty dose of honky-tonk and incorporating occasional old-timey songs into her performances, yet did so without seeming ostensibly retro. Following contributions to compilations such as *Pushing the Norton* and *The Edge of Country*, she debuted with a solo album in 2000, *The Heart I Wear*, and followed with another in 2002, *My Little Star*.

~ Jason Birchmeier, All Music Guide

### ***From The Austin Chronicle***

***My Little Star (The Music Room)*** There's something almost eerie, or otherworldly, about Susanna Van Tassel's voice. Human voices crack, croak, sputter, and fail, but hers doesn't. It's as pure as a stream that might flow through the "golden rolling hills" of her idyllic "On the Hill." In any case, Van Tassel's honey-coated soprano is as good a reason as any for the phrase "honky-tonk angel" to exist. Better yet, this second album shows the local honky-tonker becoming as strong a songwriter as she is a singer. Penning all but one of the album's 12 tracks, she tackles familiar country subject matter (family and fidelity, mostly) with a perspective that nurtures familiarity without falling into cliché -- she even gets away with a lullaby to her young son on the moonlit title track. As most albums produced by Jim Stringer, the arrangements on *My Little Star* are impeccable, particularly the combined pedal-steel talents of Marty Muse, Kevin Owens, and Tommy Detamore, but also Meat Purveyor Pete Stiles for a delicate mandolin turn on "I Had a Feeling." Still, it all comes back to Van Tassel's voice, and whether gliding through the swamp-poppy "Takin' My Time," giving it some extra gas on "A Love That's True," or negotiating the only five-syllable word in country-music history on Mel Tillis' "Unmitigated Gall," it's one for the ages. One minor criticism: If the bright lights and temporary heartache cures of "Closing Time" can seduce this heavenly creature, what hope is there for the rest of us?

★★★★

- Christopher Gray