

BEST ALBUMS OF 2004 LISTS – VAN LEAR ROSE

Blender

December 2004

50 Greatest CDs of 2004

3. Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose. The year's best country album, or its best garage-rock album? Both. This near-perfect collaboration between Lynn, who wrote and sang the songs, and Jack White, who produced and arranged them, weds the White Stripes' galloping blues to the coal miner's daughter's sloe-gin drawl. Part May-December love letter ("Portland Oregon") and part life story ("Little Red Shoes"), it's Lynn's finest in years.

Newsweek

December 13, 2004

By Lorraine Ali

10. Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose." Country music's First Lady sings about her mama ("the rose"), the coal mine her daddy worked in (Van Lear) and many more Loretta-esque tales. Producer Jack White did away with the slick production, so when you look at Lynn you really are lookin' at country.

GQ

December 2004

The Ten Best Albums of 2004

6. Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose. Not to be too flippant, but everything you need to know about this 69-year-old porch mama's comeback is in the opening lines to the Jack White duet "Portland Oregon": Well, Portland Oregon, and sloe gin fizz / If that ain't love, then tell me what it. Uh-huh.

Details

December 2004

Year-end best – The List

4. Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose. With a little nudge from Jack White, country's sauciest female legend shows the new blood a thing or three.

Spin

January 2005

By Yancey Strickler

40 Best Albums of the Year

8. Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose. Thanks to Jack White's hard-nosed production, Van Lear Rose may be Lynn's greatest album to date – a triumphant steel-and-rhinestones hootenanny. White tethers the beautifully hazy "Portland Oregon" with chunky riffs, while Lynn one-ups the White Stripes' "Hotel Yorba" with "This Old House." Like fellow golden gals Dolly, Patsy and Reba, Loretta has been on a first-name basis with country fans for years, but by playing Maude to White's Harold, she hit the less-familiar blue states like a stiff Panhandle breeze.

Tracks

December 2004

By Mikael Wood

Top 20 Albums of 2004

3. Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose. The true thrill of this dream-team pairing of the country-music doyenne and the blues-punk conceptualist Jack White isn't the "real music" vibe that anti-Nashville types hailed. It's hearing one of country's most enduring stars rock as authoritatively as she does on "Have Mercy" and "Portland Oregon," a vinegary his-and-hers duet waiting for a truck stop to call its own.

Q Magazine

January 2005

50 Best Albums of the Year

43. Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose." Now almost 70, country queen Loretta Lynn has done some serious living – married at 13 and raising four kids before her first hit single in 1960. But the increasing commercialization of country music over the ensuing years left many of her ilk by the wayside. Having The White Stripes' Jack White – a huge Lynn fan – produce your new album, though, can change all that. Like one of his own records, it's sparse, scratchy, at times tender and sometimes raucous. It's also a reminder of how powerful country music – in the right hands – can be.

Rolling Stone

December 29, 2004

Critics' Top Ten Lists

From Ambulance to the Zutons, our favorite albums of 2004

Meredith Ochs (music critic)

1. **Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose*** (Interscope): On this inspired collaboration with Jack White, the tough and tender country treasure proves she can rock.

James Sullivan (music critic)

4. **Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose*** (Interscope): With Jack White, a match made in Gothic heaven. Far superior to Tammy Wynette's collaboration with the KLF.

David Peisner (music critic)

9. **Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose*** (Interscope): Put aside all the Jack White hype and the critical salivating and you still have one hell of a Loretta Lynn album.

Brian Orloff (music critic)

7. **Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose*** (Interscope): Thanks Jack White for revitalizing Lynn's career. The hype is true. This disc is divine.

No Depression

January-February 2005

The 50 Finest Alt.Country (or y'know whatever) Albums of 2004

1. Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose.

USA Today

December 28, 2004

Album of the Year

3. Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose

www.usatoday.com

12/14/2004

And the honorees are ...

By Whitney Matheson, USATODAY.com

First, let me tell you who *didn't* rank as my top 100 people of 2004: Ashlee Simpson, Paris Hilton, Jude Law and the cast of *Ocean's Twelve*.

Confused? Each year, when compiling this humongous column, I ask myself which pop-culture figures affected me the most during the past 12 months. Not tabloid magazine sales — just little, entertainment-lovin' me.

Hopefully, this list will both ring true (I know I'm not the only one who loved that Loretta Lynn record!) and turn you on to some stuff you missed:

23. **Loretta Lynn.** I wasn't sure whether to include her or Jack White on the list, the unlikely producer of *Van Lear Rose*. Since it's her vocals and down-home songwriting I love, Loretta won.

The Associated Press

Dec. 17, 2004

By John Gerome

Loretta Lynn tops in country music in '04

**White Stripes' Jack White produced
Grammy-nominated 'Van Lear Rose'**

Loretta Lynn's "Van Lear Rose" is a sometimes dark collection of songs produced by Jack White of the Detroit rock group White Stripes.

One writer's top 10 country albums of 2004:

1. **"Van Lear Rose," Loretta Lynn:** In one of the most unexpected pairings of the year, Lynn teams with rocker Jack White of the White Stripes — and sounds as innovative as she did 30 years ago. White produced the record, and Lynn wrote all the songs. The tracks were cut in one or two takes without any polish from Nashville's studio pros, giving them a raw, urgent feel. A surprising and worthy addition to the legendary singer's catalog.

Knight-Ridder Tribune
(Philadelphia Inquirer, Kansas City Star, Montgomery Advertiser, etc.)
Jan. 2, 2005

By Dan DeLuca

Top 10 CDs of 2004

Loretta Lynn: "Van Lear Rose." The 69-year-old coal miner's daughter gets spurred on by a pasty-faced garage rocker, and writes her best new songs in years. This comeback-of-the-year pairs Lynn with producer Jack White of the White Stripes and finds the author of "Fist City" to be as tough-talking as ever, her voice steely enough to fight back when the guitars get cranked up.

The Star-Ledger (New Jersey)
Wednesday, December 29, 2004

By Jay Lustig

3. "Van Lear Rose," Loretta Lynn (Interscope)

Produced by Jack White of the bluesy, minimalistic garage-rock band The White Stripes, and featuring him on guitar and other instruments, this is the rawest album of country queen Lynn's career, and one of the best. She pulls no punches in her songwriting, and the music is just as bold. Who would have thought these two were kindred spirits?

Los Angeles Times
Dec. 20, 2004

By Robert Hilburn, Times Staff Writer

Wherever they fit on the pop spectrum, none of these 10 artists took an easy path. Each album on this year-end best list is marked by a winning individuality and passion.

3. Loretta Lynn's "Van Lear Rose" Interscope. In making this album with the veteran country star, rock's Jack White aimed for the classic country sensibility that would enable it to fit on a honky-tonk jukebox alongside records by Hank, Lefty, Patsy and Merle. In doing so, he and Lynn sacrificed all chance of fitting into today's conservative country music format. But the CD was championed by some college and alt-rock radio outlets and critics.

Chicago Sun-Times
December 26, 2004

By Bobby Reed

Here are my choices for the best country albums of 2004:

Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose" (Interscope): Loretta Lynn wrote these songs, and White Stripes guitarist Jack White arranged and produced the material. This unlikely collaboration between two strong-willed artists from different genres and different generations is a wild, rollicking ride.

Boston Globe
December 12, 2004

By Steve Morse

2. Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose." Lynn's dignity as one of the all-time great country singers was not only affirmed but enhanced by producer Jack White of the White Stripes. Their unlikely pairing elevated both artists. White proved he could put his ego aside, while Lynn seemed reborn.

Tennessean
January 6, 2005

By Peter Cooper

With pats on the tush and words of encouragement, our critics ride these 15 discs to the top for 2004

Pop music connoisseurs will probably long remember 2004 as the year erstwhile Beach Boy Brian Wilson finally unearthed his storied *Smile*— and rightfully so; it's certainly a pearly one. But quite a few folks, from young upstarts to scrappy veterans, delivered discs we're not about to lose track of.

Loud/soft, tender/vitriolic, revolutionary, religious or soothing, there's a wide world of sound and intent rolled into *The Tennessean's* top 15 music picks of 2004 (alphabetically arranged). But we think it's a tasty *Bubblegum and Crunk Juice* cocktail that goes down pretty smooth.

Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose* (Interscope). "This is the first time I wrote all the songs on a record, and I hope you like 'em," is Lynn's wish, as printed in the liner notes to this nearly universally praised album.

It was also the first time the Coal Miner's Daughter had worked on an album with gritty Detroit rocker Jack White, the first time she'd made an album in a rickety east Nashville house, and the first time she'd recorded with backing from young garage rockers instead of Music Row session pros.

All those changes worked out quite well as Lynn wound up at or near the top of most year-end best-of lists, and she has five nominations going into next month's Grammy Awards. A thrilling return that's not really a return at all: It's the first time she'd traveled these parts, and she made herself quite at home.

Houston Chronicle
Jan. 3, 2005

By Michael D. Clark

The year's best musicians redefined themselves

That is the exact moment that I settled on my favorites albums of 2004. It's important to note because, as a guy who spends a majority of his waking hours listening to new tunes, it's hard to stick with a "best of" list that feels definitive.

Instead of asking what my favorite albums of 2004 are the more accurate question should be "What are my favorite albums of 2004 *at this moment?*"

The list below represents artists that did something to either redefine their own music or the genre in which they play in. These albums kept finding their way into my car, home and work all year.

5. *Van Lear Rose*, Loretta Lynn — Producer Jack White has an affinity for the blues and country legends as his covers of songs from Leadbelly to Dolly Parton can attest. Lynn is best when she's out on a risque ledge as past favorites like *The Pill* and *Rated X* suggest. In retrospect, anything they did short of miraculous would have been disappointing.

Las Vegas Mercury News

December 16, 2004

Best Music of 2004

After a year of listening--and bickering--Mercury scribes sound off on the best music of 2004

Geoff Schumacher (music critic)

8. **Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose***. Jack White successfully resuscitates a country legend. Best track: "Portland, Oregon."

Mike Prevatt (music critic)

Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose*. Enough with crediting Jack White for the attention paid to this charming project. Lynn is so much the star here, you forget the celebrity producer is even in the same room--which was probably his goal all along. And as far as attitude goes, Gretchen Wilson could learn a thing or two from Loretta about being a lady.

Newt Briggs (music critic)

Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose*. A decade ago, Johnny Cash turned to bearded wonder Rick Rubin to resuscitate his slumping career. This year, Loretta Lynn snatched up blues-rock messiah Jack White for the same purpose--a move that would have smacked of abject desperation had it not been such an unqualified success. White, who used to play in a Dee-troyt country band called Goober and the Peas, crafted the perfect backdrop for Lynn's half-sung, half-spoken tales of love, despair and murder. Alt-country hipsters, you have a new goddess; her name is Loretta.

Boston Herald

December 17, 2004

Best 2004 CDs

Larry Katz (music critic)

1. Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose." Country legend makes the comeback album of a music lover's dreams with help from the White Stripes' Jack White.

Sarah Rodman (music critic)

4. Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose." Jack White helps the coal miner's daughter return to raw, rootsy form.

Baltimore Sun
December 30, 2005

By Rashod D. Ollison
Sun Pop Music Critic

The year's best: from Kanye West to Loretta Lynn
They covered the classics and wallowed in crunk

As for albums, some were able to smoothly meld moderately conservative conventions with sweaty crunkness: Usher's Confessions, the biggest album of 2004 with more than 7 million copies sold, is the finest example. However, Destiny's Child's Destiny Fulfilled faltered as Beyonce, Kelly and Michelle tried to reconcile their sweet and salty sides. Some of the best albums of 2004 dusted off classic harmonies and melodies, making them feel new again; some looked backward and forward all at once. Here are my picks, in no particular order.

Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose: OK. Garage punk rocker Jack White and country queen Loretta Lynn seem like an odd combination. But the pairing produced the best country album of 2004. White, a longtime Lynn fan, provides spare, sympathetic arrangements that luminously showcase the singer's still-vigorous voice and powerful songwriting. He freshens her classic sound with a biting blues-rock edge. Earthy wisdom, humor, frankness, intimacy, resiliency - all the qualities we love about Loretta Lynn bloomed wondrously on Van Lear Rose.

St. Paul Pioneer Press
December 23, 2004

By Ross Raihala

Hear ye, hear ye; here comes the music judged 2004's best

4. Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose." Thanks to his production work and guitar playing, White Stripes main man Jack White deserves some, but hardly all, of the credit for this rootsy masterpiece. Lynn wrote the often deeply personal songs, giving the proceedings an emotional heft rarely encountered in mainstream country music.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer
December 31, 2004

Amid milestones and madness, the muses smiled on some

By Gene Stout
Pop Music Critic

There was plenty of bad to go along with the good in 2004.

Here's a top-10 list of highs and lows, milestones and madness:

10. Country is queen: The once-mighty Dixie Chicks' surprising career nosedive -- following their infamous anti-Bush remarks in 2003 -- left a void on the feminine side of country music. Two unlikely artists helped fill the gap: country golden girl Loretta Lynn and newbie Gretchen Wilson. Lynn's remarkable "Van Lear Rose," produced by the White Stripes' Jack White, is one of the best of her career, fusing old-time "Coal Miner's Daughter" sentiments with the hipness of alt-country. Wilson burst on the scene with the feisty "Here for the Party." Her catchy, self-penned single, "Redneck Woman," brought down-home authenticity to radio playlists.

The Capital Times
January 12, 2005

Loretta edges out Wilco for top CD

By Rob Thomas

If you had told me a year ago that Loretta Lynn was going to top my list of the best CDs of 2004, I'd say you were crazy.

If you then told me she was going to do so by edging out my favorite band, Wilco, I'd back away from you slowly and make calming gestures with my hands.

But it was that kind of year, a truly surprising one.

Veteran artists who you thought were done suddenly roared back with wonderful, forward-thinking albums. A ton of great new bands released debut albums that promise long careers ahead, and other terrific under-the-radar bands finally and deservedly burst into the mainstream consciousness.

Here, then, is my extremely subjective list of the best albums of 2004. A lot of good albums didn't make the list, but if you've got a candidate that truly deserves a mention, let me know:

1. **Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose," Interscope.** I truly thought the alt-country genre had gone as far as it could, but Lynn and producer Jack White really found something wonderfully new here. White's fuzzed-up blues rock and Lynn's graceful country western charm make for an unlikely but exciting couple, especially on the duet "Portland Oregon."

San Antonio Express-News
12/27/2004 06:33 PM CST

Best of 2004

Robert Johnson (music critic)

1. **Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose"** — With help from the White Stripes' Jack White, Lynn makes the album Nashville wouldn't let her make — raw, edgy and honest.

John Goodspeed (music critic)

3. **Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose":** The 70-year-old grandmother of 18 teamed with Detroit rocker Jack White, who produced the album, for the most daring CD of the year. It worked. Lynn sounded better than ever with the sparse instrumentation on powerful songs she wrote about her up-and-down life.

The Republican
Sunday, December 26, 2004

By Kevin O'Hare

It's been quite a year for musical comebacks, and some of the artists who made some of the best albums of 2004 seemed way past the point of no return. Prince? Brian Wilson? Loretta Lynn? Somebody's got to be kidding.

But in truth those three in particular proved that there is life indeed for great artists still willing to tap deep into their creative soul. Every Top 10 list is purely subjective, but after reviewing more than 250 albums this year, here's a look at the discs that made the strongest impression on me, lingering long after the last note was heard:

3. Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose" (Interscope).

If you read the tabloids, you'd swear that Loretta Lynn was on the way out, but don't believe those headlines for a second. She's never sounded more alive than she does on this extraordinary recording. Just as Rick Rubin brought Johnny Cash a new sound and a new audience during the latter years of his life, "The Coal Miner's Daughter" is getting a new lease on her musical life thanks to her association with Jack White of the White Stripes. White produced this disc and put some fire into Lynn's sound, but it's still the veteran country songwriter who makes these tracks come alive. She sounds playful in the first single "Portland, Oregon," bluesy in the song she wrote for Elvis Presley "Have Mercy," and like she's back in the backwoods during the wonderfully loose sing-along "High on a Mountain."

The Daily Press (Hampton Roads, VA)
December 31 2004

Ten things cooler than Janet Jackson

By Sam McDonald

Janet Jackson didn't entirely dominate the musical discussions of 2004. Heck, by June or so, she was hardly a blip on the radar screen.

I'm thankful that pop music continued to evolve beyond the grunge-and-gangsta cycle that gripped our radios for so long. There were signs of life coming from strange corners in 2004. A band from Scotland called Franz Ferdinand injected some life into the rock 'n' roll world. Meanwhile, Modest Mouse arrived from Washington State - where bands have been sprouting like toadstools for years. But who would have predicted that this group of underground veterans would produce a cool radio hit? "Float On" was one of 2004's magical radio moments.

And what about the pleasant sucker punches delivered by country queen Loretta Lynn and precocious upstart Nellie McKay? But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Here's a look at my favorite new music of the year.

Loretta Lynn "Van Lear Rose" (Interscope). Discussion topic: Is "Van Lear Rose" more a Loretta Lynn album or a Jack White disc? Either way, it's a firecracker. Stripping away the production gloss of modern Nashville allowed Lynn's voice to shine through in all its wild, wonderful, mountain beauty. Her original songs - including "Family Tree" and "Miss Being Mrs." - conveyed pure, raw emotion.

Hernando Today
Dec 31, 2004

By Terry Atkinson (Tribune Media Services)

The 10 best albums of 2004

It was a very good year, compared to recent ones, for new albums. So good, in fact, that any of the top six or seven below could have rated No. 1 had they been released in 2003, 2002 or 2001. Here, in reverse order, are my picks for the best CDs of a terrific 2004.

8. LORETTA LYNN: VAN LEAR ROSE" (Interscope). This album marks a miraculous rebound for the veteran country singer-songwriter. Lynn's richly nuanced songs like "Portland, Oregon" receive sublimely multi-textured settings thanks to producer/accompanist Jack White of the White Stripes.

Grand Rapids Press
December 26, 2004

By Jack Leaver

Best Music of 2004

Loretta Lynn, "Van Lear Rose" – White Stripe rocker Jack White paired up with the legendary singer, lending his raw, anti-Nashville production effort, which resulted in Lynn's most compelling release.

The Memphis Flyer
January 14, 2005

Kanye West, Loretta Lynn impress in 2004.

Chris Herrington (music critic)

4. *Van Lear Rose* Loretta Lynn (Interscope): This is just the kind of high-concept reclamation project (see all those Johnny Cash/Rick Rubin records or Solomon Burke's borderline-unlistenable *Don't Give Up On Me*) so consistently and predictably overrated that I found myself underrating it until a late-year round of relistening reminded me how grand it really is. Lynn's all-new songs are shockingly, uniformly excellent (tell me "Family Tree" isn't the equal of "Fist City" or "You're Not Woman Enough To Take My Man"), but hipster-backlash victim Jack White deserves equal billing for his genius production. With Lynn a better singer than Meg White or Holly Golightly and a better songwriter than Jack himself, *Van Lear Rose* might be a better lovestruck mash-note follow-up to the White Stripes' *White Blood Cells* than *Elephant* was.

Stephen Deusner (music critic)

3. *Van Lear Rose* Loretta Lynn (Interscope): *Van Lear Rose* introduced a new generation to the feisty Butcher Holler native Loretta Lynn and added "producer" to Jack White's c.v. Lynn sounds best vulnerable, heartbroken, steely, strong-willed on quieter numbers such as "Trouble on the Line," the spoken "Little Red Shoes," and "Miss Being Mrs." Generous and good-hearted, closely observed but casual, they're less songs than late-in-life ruminations, coming from somewhere beyond the stage, the studio, and the record label.

Andria Lisle (music critic)

2. *Van Lear Rose* Loretta Lynn (Interscope): The blacktop highway that stretches from Nashville to Memphis is exactly 200 miles long. It's listed on maps as Interstate 40, but everyone from truckers to tourists knows this ribbon winding between the pine trees as "The Music Highway." Loretta Lynn and Jack White burned up that road working on *Van Lear Rose*, recording on location at Lynn's Double L Ranch and Memphis' Easley-McCain studio. On the self-explanatory "Story of My Life," Lynn hammers her point home: She's gambled on her life, and she's loved, laughed, and lived and lost a few things along the way. But, with *Van Lear Rose*, she's scored a winning hand once again. "I have to say that I've been blessed/Not bad for this ol' Kentucky girl I guess," she sings with a laugh on the song's last verse. It's the perfect ending to a perfect album typically understated, characteristically jubilant, and 100 percent Loretta Lynn.